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Former Employee Charged with Stealing Over $60,000 in DOE funds

Special Commissioner of Investigation Richard J. Condon announced today that former New York City Department of Education ("DOE") Custodial Secretary Karen Nowaski has been charged with stealing more than $60,000 in DOE funds from the custodial payroll of Grover Cleveland High School in Queens over a period of five years. Nowaski, 38, was arrested on February 9th in her hometown of Honedale, PA, waived extradition, and was scheduled to be arraigned today in New York City Criminal Court in Queens on a charge of Grand Larceny in the Third Degree. The charge stemmed from a June 2008 report by the Special Commissioner which found that Nowaski, aided by John Lotito, a 46-year-old custodial worker formerly assigned to the school, stole approximately $30,000 in funds by forging and cashing fraudulent payroll checks. Separately, Nowaski garnered approximately $30,000 more by increasing her hourly wage without authorization. She then extorted a $9,000 payment from Lotito in exchange for her silence on his involvement in the forgery scheme. Grand Larceny in the Third Degree is punishable by up to seven years in State prison.

Nowaski and Lotito no longer work within the DOE. Commissioner Condon thanked Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown and Assistant District Attorney Daniel J. O'Leary, who is assigned to prosecute the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney James Liander, Chief of the Integrity Bureau.

The Office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation is part of the New York City Department of Investigation and Special Commissioner Condon reports to Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn.