



Jason E. Mumpower, Comptroller of the Treasury

December 17, 2021

California Woman Indicted for Stealing from Haywood County Library

An investigation by the Tennessee Comptroller's Office has resulted in the indictment of Shekinah Edwards who stole \$32,366.89 from the Elma Ross Public Library in Haywood County by issuing fraudulent checks to herself.

Comptroller investigators, working in conjunction with the Brownsville Police Department and the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, determined that Edwards, who lives in California, was somehow able to gain access to the library's bank account and check information even though she has never been employed by the library and has no apparent connection to any employees.

Edwards issued 14 checks payable to herself from May 22, 2020, through July 10, 2020. Each of the checks also bore the forged signatures of two library officials. The checks were deposited into Edwards' personal checking and savings accounts.

In November 2021, the Haywood County Grand Jury indicted Shekinah Edwards on one count of theft over \$10,000.

Investigators also determined the library director failed to fulfill her duties by not reconciling the library's bank account each month. Although many of the fraudulent checks were issued in May and June 2020, the library director didn't discover the problem until she was preparing financials to present to the library board in July 2020.

If the library's bank had been informed of the theft within 30 days, bank officials confirmed to investigators that the likelihood of recovering all funds would have been greater. As a result of not discovering the fraudulent activity earlier, the library was only able to recover \$9,751.06 of the stolen funds.

Additionally, when the library board was informed of the fraudulent checks in July, the board instructed the director to contact the police and report the theft; however, the director did not contact the police until September 2020.

"The library board should take steps to improve oversight by insisting on monthly bank account reconciliations and separating financial responsibilities between more than one person," said Comptroller Jason Mumpower. "The board must also ensure a timely annual audit of the library's accounts is performed. I'm pleased to note that library officials have corrected or will correct these problems."

To view the investigative report, go to: <https://comptroller.tn.gov/office-functions/investigations/find.html>



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