



COMPTROLLER'S INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Volunteer High School Baseball

March 4, 2020

Justin P. Wilson
Comptroller of the Treasury



DIVISION OF INVESTIGATIONS



JUSTIN P. WILSON
Comptroller

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Deputy Comptroller

March 4, 2020

Hawkins County School District
Director of Schools and Board of Education
200 North Depot Street
Rogersville, TN 37857

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury conducted an investigation of selected records of Volunteer High School Baseball, and the results are presented herein.

Copies of this report are being forwarded to Governor Bill Lee, the State Attorney General, the District Attorney General of the 3rd Judicial District, certain state legislators, and various other interested parties. A copy is available for public inspection in our office and may be viewed at <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/ia/>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin P. Wilson", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Justin P. Wilson
Comptroller of the Treasury

JPW/MLC

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Volunteer High School Baseball

The Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury investigated allegations of malfeasance involving Volunteer High School Baseball. The Comptroller's Office initiated the investigation after officials with Hawkins County School District reported concerns regarding an unauthorized fundraiser conducted by a former head baseball coach. The results of the investigation were communicated with the Office of the District Attorney General of the 3rd Judicial District.

BACKGROUND



Volunteer High School, located in Church Hill, Tennessee is operated by the Hawkins County School District. The school serves ninth through twelfth grades and has a student population of 1,050 as of January 2020. The baseball team is one of more than ten extra-curricular athletic opportunities offered by the school.

In recent years, most of the baseball program's fundraising efforts have been the responsibility of its booster support organization.

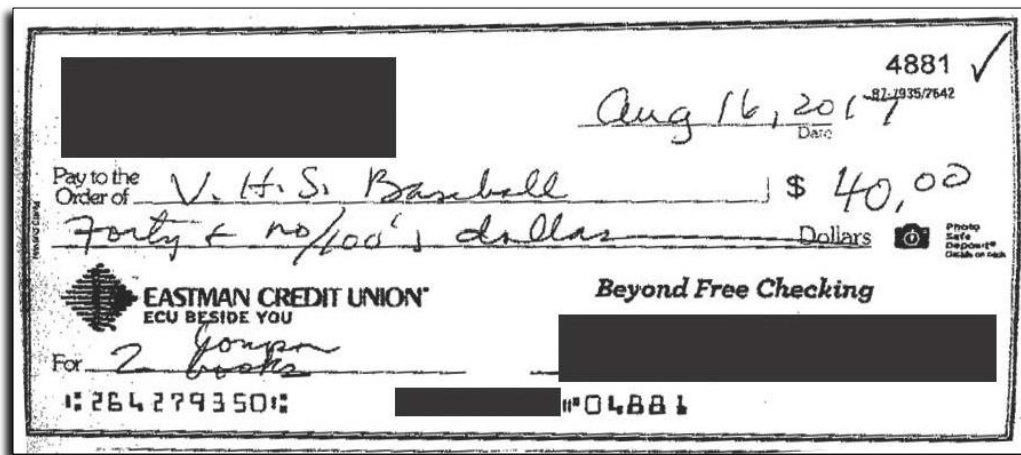
RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION

- **FORMER HEAD BASEBALL COACH FAILED TO ACCOUNT FOR PROCEEDS TOTALING AT LEAST \$1,680 FROM AN UNAUTHORIZED FUNDRAISING ACTIVITY**

The former Volunteer High School head baseball coach did not remit for deposit at least \$1,680 of proceeds received from a baseball fundraiser, failed to otherwise account for its use, and failed to pay \$880 due to the fundraiser vendor. The coach organized a fundraiser involving Volunteer High School baseball players in July 2017 in which the players sold community discount coupon cards accessed through a cell phone application (app). School officials did not discover the fundraiser until they found \$420 in checks in the coach's desk after he left the school system's employment in December 2017. Inquiries with the payors by school officials revealed the checks were related to the fundraiser. **(See example in Exhibit 1.)** Investigators spoke with several parents, including two whose checks were

located, and were told that the coach held a parent meeting in summer 2017 to discuss the fundraiser and that money, including cash, would have been turned in to the coach.

Exhibit 1



Check from unauthorized fundraiser discovered in the former head coach's desk.

Unaccounted Collections

Investigator analysis of vendor records indicated that the coach should have collected at least \$1,260 in addition to the \$420 in checks found in his desk for a total of \$1,680. School officials located cash totaling \$6.45 from an unknown source in the coach's desk after his separation from employment. No other cash was ever recovered. Available records, including a listing of app access codes provided to team members for distribution, were insufficient for investigators to make a definitive determination of the amount of fundraiser proceeds actually collected and retained by the coach.

Unknown, Unauthorized, and Unpaid Debt

The coach incurred a debt of \$880 in the name of the Volunteer High School Baseball program with a vendor as a result of the unauthorized fundraiser. The school subsequently discovered that the coach had not paid the vendor when it received the outstanding fundraiser invoice. The school did not pay the invoice citing lack of requisite authorization. State law and Hawkins County School Board policies require schools and school support organizations to obtain approval prior to conducting fundraising activities involving students and/or the use of the school name or facilities.

A representative of the fundraiser vendor stated that the coach had initially represented to her that the fundraiser was sanctioned and being handled by the baseball team's booster club. Booster club officials stated, however, that the club had not approved and was not involved in this fundraiser. The booster club also did not pay the invoice.

The vendor made numerous documented attempts to discuss the matter with the coach including phone calls to his personal cell, prior to sending the matter to a collection agency. (See portion of vendor's account call log in Exhibit 2.) According to the vendor, the debt was never settled.

Exhibit 2

Follow up	SPON ANSWERED THE PHONE	
Message left	MAILED LEGAL LETTER TO BOTH	05/30/2018
Other information	RCVD LETTER FROM SCHOOL-ATTACHED	
Message left	CALLED SPON CELL	05/30/2018
Message left	CALLED SPONS CELL-HE PICKED UP	
Message left	REC'D THIS EMAIL FROM	
Invoice information	RECEIVED LETTER FROM SCHOOL	
Message left	CALLED SPON CELL GOT HIS	
Message left	CALLED SPON CELL	
Message left	CALLED SPON CELL GOT HIS	
Follow up	REP CALLED ME BACK-SHE SAID	
Message left	REP CALLED BUT I WAS ON ANOTHER	
Follow up	RCVD EMAIL FROM REP	
Message left	CALLED SPON CELL WENT	
Message left	SENT EMAIL TO REP	
Message left	LEFT URGENT MSG SPON CELL	
Message left	CALLED SPON CELL	
Message left	CALLED SPON CELL	
Message left	CALLED SPON CELL GOT	
Message left	CALLED SPON CELL	
Follow up	RECVD EMAIL FORM REP	03/20/2018
Message left	LEFT MSG REPS CELL SENT	
Message left	REP CALLED LEFT MESSAGE	
Message left	REP CALLED LEFT MESSAGE	
Follow up	REC'D THIS EMAIL FROM	
Message left	CALLED SPONSOR CELL	

Portion of vendor call log showing communication related to Volunteer High School Baseball fundraiser account

The coach denied any knowledge of the unapproved fundraiser to Comptroller investigators. He stated that he never collected any funds for it, and that any funds he might have collected at Volunteer High School would have been from other fundraisers. The coach's statements were inconsistent with documentation and emails from the vendor, conversations with parents and school officials, and the existence of checks located in his desk. The coach claimed no responsibility for the unauthorized fundraiser. When he spoke to Comptroller investigators, however, he offered to pay off the debt in monthly installments of \$20.

As previously noted, the former head coach left the school system's employment in December 2017.