On a fall afternoon, hundreds of Philadelphia Housing Authority employees piddled away the workday at a Bucks County fun zone where they played laser tag, shot pool and bowled, and grazed on fresh salmon and roast beef.

Money for the all-day field trip came from a fund established by PHA Executive Director Carl Greene. Roughly 300 PHA staffers pay $2.12 each week to the fund, which Greene dubbed the “Pennsylvania Institute of Affordable Housing.”

The $2.12 fee, automatically deducted from paychecks of non-union PHA staffers, does not include an additional $300 to $600 that senior staffers say they’re expected to kick in each year for gifts and events celebrating Greene — his birthday, his employment anniversary and Christmas.

Staff gifts to Greene have included a regal oil painting of their boss, an expensive watch and a big-screen TV, at least eight former and current PHA employees told the Daily News.

In 2006, Greene created the “Pennsylvania Institute of Affordable Housing” and at the time, he named his spokesman, Kirk Dorn, as “president” and “tax responsible party,” state records show.

Dorn, who now works for PHA on contract, said yesterday that he actually served as fund “secretary” and was no longer connected with it.

The fund’s purpose is to “provide education to the community,” according to a state corporate filing.

But four times a year, Greene taps into the fund to throw events that include excursions to the zoo, the Brunswick Zone XL in Feasterville, and barbecue cook-offs.

Former and current employees told the Daily News that they felt forced to pay into this fund and that Greene and PHA supervisors prodded them to play hooky on taxpayer time.

“We’re compelled to join and you can’t quit,” said a PHA manager who requested anonymity. “You don’t have a choice.”

“There were no statements, no public accounting of the money,” said a former PHA senior staffer.

Yesterday, Dorn described the fund as a “professional development” opportunity for staffers. He estimated that about 300 employees pay $100 annually to the fund. As of last night, Dorn could not provide financial statements requested by the Daily News.

Dorn said the fund pays for social and educational events. He said that when staffers go on the outings, they are on company time.

“PHA feels it’s a team-building day. It’s a legitimate use of managers’ time,” Dorn said. “You get to know each other better.

“It’s a very positive thing,” he added. “People are voluntarily joining a group and paying $2 a week to join something that is going to improve their careers.”

Asked why the fund’s name suggests a statewide organization, Dorn said: “Our plan was to reach out and form a network of similar entities. We really didn’t get that far.”

Greene is at the center of a growing firestorm that began last week, when news surfaced that he had stopped paying the mortgage on his upscale $615,000 condo and had recently paid off a $52,480 federal tax lien.

On Wednesday, Greene, who last year earned $306,370, plus a $44,188 bonus, announced that he was taking a leave from PHA.

The leave came amid allegations that he had sexually harassed a young, attractive PHA architect. In addition to the architect, Elizabeth Helm, at least five other female staffers have filed
complaints with the U.S. Equal Employment
Opportunity Commission since 2004. The
women alleged that Greene had subjected
them to sexual harassment, verbal abuse, retal-
iation and sex discrimination. Greene has de-
nied those allegations.

In an April 21 letter to PHA, John M. Elliott,
an attorney representing Helm, accused
Greene of improperly using his position for “his
personal benefit,” including soliciting cash and
personal gifts from PHA’s employees, vendors
and law firms. Elliott sent copies of the letter
to Gov. Rendell, Mayor Nutter and former May-
or John Street, who is the chairman of the PHA
Board of Commissioners.

At a news conference yesterday, reporters
asked Rendell about the allegations against
Greene.

“Mayor Street, who remains as [board]
chair … and the board will take whatever ap-
propriate action they feel is appropriate,” Ren-
dell said. “But, gosh, Carl Greene has improved
the lives of poorer Philadelphians more than
anybody I know.”

Charles Gaskins, who worked as Greene’s as-
sistant general manager of operations in 2004,
said he left PHA after he was expected to kick
in $100 for Greene’s lavish Christmas bash.

“I wasn’t going to pay for his party. That’s the
reason I left,” he said.

Richard Zappile, the PHA chief of police, was
responsible for collecting money for Greene’s
parties, PHA staffers told the Daily News. Zap-
pile did not return a phone message last night.

A former senior PHA staffer who requested
anonymity said Zappile collected $125 from
him for a party in 2008 to mark Greene’s 10th
anniversary as executive director.

At the party, held at the Greater Grays Ferry
Estates, staffers presented Greene with an oil-
painted portrait of himself, with a pensive, al-
most presidential expression. The roughly
3-feet-by-3-feet painting was framed in a dark,
rich wood.

That night, staffers also presented college-
scholarship money to a few teens who lived in
PHA housing. The money came out of the $2.12
weekly fund, according to the former senior
staffer.

Last fall, busloads of PHA staffers flooded
the Brunswick Zone XL on Street Road in
Feasterville.

Jon Antonelli, Brunswick Zone general man-
ger, said PHA staffers filled all 48 bowling
lanes and lounged in the Brunswick Bar &
Grill, where they enjoyed “a nice buffet spread”
that included salmon and sliced roast beef.

Antonelli said PHA staffers competed in
teams against each other. They played billiards
and video games, and bowled to win prizes, he
said.

They also played laser tag, which Brunswick
Zone bills as “a heart-racing game of skill and
strategy,” where players have to “watch out
around the next corner or you may get tagged.
ZAP!”

“We should not have been getting paid while
on a field trip,” the former PHA staffer said.
“We were still drawing our salaries for that.
“We bowled and played laser tag and games
the entire day.” ★
GREENE RETREAT

BELEAGUERED PHA BOSS HEADED TO MENTAL HEALTH ‘RESORT’

PLUS, HE DENIES ALLEGATIONS OF SEX HARASSMENT, FORCED GIFT-GIVING

GREENE APPointee, A PHA RESIDENT, EArNS 100G+

PAGES 5-6
Sweet deal at PHA: 6-figure salary, $654-a-month rent

By BARBARA LAKER, WENDY RUDERMAN & CATHERINE LUCEY

Asia Coney was a poor single mom and tenant leader living off welfare in the projects.

Then she met Carl Greene.

In early 1998, then-Mayor Ed Rendell and then-City Council President John Street asked Coney to go to Detroit, where Greene headed the city’s housing commission to help size up if he’d be a good choice to the helm of the Philadelphia Housing Authority.

She returned a huge fan. Greene landed the job. And Coney’s life took an upswing.

It was payback time.

“She came back and was his golden child,” said Cynthia Jones, a former PHA manager.

Greene appointed Coney to run Tenant Support Services, Inc. (TSSI), a nonprofit subsidiary under contract with PHA to provide services to tenants. Since TSSI was launched in 1992 by former PHA director John White Jr., no employee, including the president, secretary and treasurer, earned a salary.

In 1999, one year after Greene became PHA’s executive director, Coney’s starting salary was $38,447. It only got better — and fast.


By 2007, the most-recent IRS filing available, she broke the six-figure mark at $101,170.

Meanwhile, she still lives in public housing, paying $654 a month in rent.

As a PHA resident, she serves as president of the Resident Advisory Board, an independent group that advocates for tenants.

This doesn’t sit right with Greg Brinkley, 51, who lives at Abbottsford Homes in East Falls.

“How can you really represent us in an aggressive and unbiased fashion and then turn around and have a PHA contract that Carl Greene has to sign off on?” he asked.

Greene said he doesn’t believe Coney’s dual role as tenant advocate and TSSI director is a conflict of interest. “She’s elected by the residents to head the RAB,” he said.

But Coney’s sweet deal could thrust Greene into an even bigger firestorm. At a party marking Greene’s 10th year as executive director in 2008, Greene asked hundreds of vendors, attorneys and other friends of PHA to pony up a $1,000 to $5,000 donation to TSSI.

Coney’s TSSI raked in $38,200 in donations; $16,266 went to pay for the lavish 10th-anniversary party, which left TSSI with a $21,934 profit.

Yesterday Greene said the profit went toward college scholarships for needy teens who live in PHA housing.

Greene said that asking contractors who do work for PHA to donate money is “not pay-to-play.” He said the donations are voluntary and don’t violate any U.S. Housing and Urban Development rules.

Nor does the fact that Coney lives in public housing.

According to HUD spokesman Brian Sullivan, there is no income level at which tenants can be kicked out of public housing.

Sullivan said tenants are required to pay higher rates as incomes increase, up to fair market value.

Greene said Coney’s entitled to live there. “We really don’t have the right to evict them,” he said.

Tell that to the 32,000 families on the PHA waiting list.

“Sure. You can live in public housing if you make $100,000 or even $1 million,” said Virginia Wilks, a tenant leader for 27 years and president of the Richard Allen/Gladys B. Jacobs Manor Resident Council in North Philadelphia. “But most people when they get a good job move out. Because now, a person who really needs housing can’t live in a PHA house because she’s there.

“If you aren’t poor, why would you tie up a house?”

See CONEY Next Page

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PHA chief plans a ‘retreat’ to battle stress

By WENDY RUDERMAN

CARL R. GREENE, the embattled leader of the Philadelphia Housing Authority, plans to check himself into a “retreat” or “resort” that specializes in helping people cope with emotional distress and other mental health issues.

“It’s some kind of place to help him deal with stress,” PHA spokesman Kirk Dorn said last night.

Dorn made clear that Greene is not going into “some institution to get rehab help,” as Gov. Rendell blurted during an interview yesterday with 6ABC. The governor, who called the development “very, very sad,” didn’t elaborate. Rendell spokesman Gary Tuma did not return a call from the Daily News last night.

Dorn refuted Rendell’s characterization. “Carl doesn’t require rehab because he doesn’t have any addictions, but he does need some type of resort or some type of retreat, where they specialize in stress,” Dorn said.

Earlier this week, Greene dropped off the public radar, his whereabouts unknown. He resurfaced on Wednesday to announce that he was taking a leave from PHA to get his personal and financial affairs in order.

The announcement came on the heels of news that Greene—who earns $306,370 a year—had fallen five months behind on mortgage payments and that his $615,000 condo was headed for foreclosure. He also owed roughly $52,000 in federal taxes and the IRS filed a tax lien, which Greene recently paid off.

On top of that, Greene now faces allegations that he sexually harassed a 29-year-old female employee and other female staff during his 12-year tenure at PHA.

Greene’s financial woes, combined with allegations of sexual harassment, set off a brush fire of speculation among city residents and politicians.

Did Greene have some sort of addiction?

“I’m worried about him. I really am,” PHA Commissioner Nellie Reynolds said on Tuesday. “Is it a problem that he’s having? Does he need support? . . . I want to ask him, ‘Do you have a problem that you’d like to share with the commissioners?’ ”

When asked last night whether Greene was wrestling with any addictions, former
Greene addresses mortgage mess & more

By CATHERINE LUCEY

One week after a media firestorm erupted over his delinquent mortgage payments and drove him underground, Philadelphia Housing Authority Executive Director Carl Greene poked his head up yesterday and spoke with reporters for the first time.

His message? There’s nothing to see here, folks.

Accusing the media of “throwing him under the bus” over the past week, Greene said he wanted to set the record straight.

Here’s what he had to say about:

- Not making mortgage payments: “There’s no logical reason for a person of my capabilities not to be on top of my personal affairs.... I can only tell you that a lot of things came in and stacked up.... I straightened it out with the bank. I’ve hired an accountant to go through all of my affairs.”

- Getting slapped with a federal tax lien for $52,480 on outside income: “Between 2000 and 2006, I did not earn enough outside income to generate that tax payment.” Greene said his accountant was looking into the issue. And he noted that settling that lien threw his personal finances into disarray. “It disrupted my system of record-keeping.”

- News that former PHA architect Elizabeth Helm and at least five other female staffers have filed complaints with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: “I’ve never at any time made unwanted advances toward [Helm].... I think I need my day in court.... In no case have I done anything inappropriate, and I don’t want to suggest PHA is a difficult place for young people to work or women to work.”

- Greene said he admitted no guilt in previous cases and said that sometimes cases are settled by an insurance carrier because it’s cheaper than litigation.

- Reports that senior employees were required to chip in hundreds of dollars annually for parties and to buy him gifts, like an oil painting of himself: “I don’t get any presents I keep. I think [PHA Chief of Police] Richard Zappile has that painting. What do I need paintings for? I live alone.... I need nothing, I keep nothing. I live a meager lifestyle. I don’t wear jewelry, I don’t drive expensive cars. I don’t need extravagant gifts..... I haven’t compelled anybody to do anything.”

PHA Director Carl Greene says he has hired an accountant to sort out his finances.

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission:

“Don’t get any presents I keep. I think [PHA Chief of Police] Richard Zappile has that painting. What do I need paintings for? I live alone.... I need nothing, I keep nothing. I live a meager lifestyle. I don’t wear jewelry, I don’t drive expensive cars. I don’t need extravagant gifts..... I haven’t compelled anybody to do anything.”

- Rumors that the FBI has raided his offices: Greene said the feds had been through PHA in 2004 during a city corruption investigation. “Our records were subpoenaed along with everybody else’s.... At the end of the day nobody found anything at PHA. They went through every contract record, interviewed every contracting officer and found nothing.”

- His vanishing act: “I didn’t go anywhere. The fact is I was embarrassed and humiliated. I needed time for reflection.”

CONEY

Continued from Preceding Page

Most public-housing advocates were incensed when they learned of Coney’s salary.

“It just galls me,” Wilks said. “No other resident leaders could really apply for the job.... No one but her could get it.”

Greene said the position became salaried to provide more structure and support.

“We wanted tenants to have a more professional setting for ensuring that they got social services,” Greene said.

Coney could not be reached for comment yesterday.

The TSSI office is in a house on Walnut Street near 56th. The locked glass door on the side is the public entrance, but a woman refused to open the door when a Daily News reporter knocked.

“You must be a reporter;” she muttered. She waved her hand as if to shoo the reporter away and walked out of view.

A woman then came to the open window on the second floor and yelled, “Asia’s not in.” She said she could not let the reporter inside. “We can’t answer any questions. You have to ask Asia,” she said, before walking away from the window.

Voter registration records list Coney’s residence as a PHA rowhouse on Diamond Street in Wynnewood, nestled in the middle of a quiet, middle-class tree-lined block with front lawns, flowers, hedges and outside furniture. The house has been owned by PHA since 1974. No one answered the door yesterday afternoon. When a reporter asked a man who trudged up the walkway to the front door when Asia Coney would be home, he said she didn’t live there.

TSSI itself remained somewhat of a mystery yesterday.

In tax filings, it lists its stated goal “to empower Philadelphia’s public housing residents toward self-sufficiency.”

The nonprofit reported assets of $1 million in fiscal year ending June 30, 2008. That same year, it listed $810,748 in contributions. But where that money comes from is not clear.

“They (TSSI) win grants on their own,” Greene said. “She doesn’t work for me. She reports to her own board.”

Greene, who was listed as chairman of the board in 2003, no longer serves in that capacity.

It’s also unclear how TSSI spends its money.

In the past, TSSI used money for things like a basketball court, a weekend dance, a workshop or field-trip money for children, Wilks said. “Now I don’t know what happens to it,” she said.

Greene defended Coney yesterday. “She provides good services for public housing. She fights for them,” he said. “TSSI is strictly there to promote social activities and services for residents.”

Mayor John Street said “no,” though he’s not surprised by all the speculation.

“If you are a public official in Philadelphia and if you have any kind of financial problems, people speculate that you have a gambling addiction,” said Street, who serves as chairman of the PHA Board of Commissioners. “I never heard that Carl Greene has a gambling problem and frankly speaking, I’d be surprised if he did.”

Street said Greene had told him that he’s planning on going someplace and getting some rest.

“He didn’t say anything to me about checking himself into anywhere to be rehabilitated,” Street said.

Dorn declined to provide the retreat’s name or location and said he didn’t know when Greene would arrive.

The PHA’s commissioners are scheduled to meet in executive session Thursday at 2 p.m., Street said. “I don’t know if he’s going to be there,” Street said. “I hope he will be there.”

For now, Greene says he’s taking things “day by day,” Dorn said.

“He knows he’s been asked to attend at a Board of Commissioners meeting and by saying, ‘It’s day by day,’ he’s saying, ‘If I’m still in town on Thursday, then I’ll be there.’”

RETREAT

Continued from Preceding Page

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As more harass data emerge, leave seems likely for Greene

By CATHERINE LUCEY, CHRIS BRENNAN & WENDY RUDERMAN

PHA CRUNCH TIME

T HE PHILADELPHIA Housing Authority board, provided with graphic details yesterday about claims of sexual harassment against Executive Director Carl R. Greene, is expected to vote today to put him on leave for 30 days while it investigates.

Documents included in a massive pile of information sent to the board spell out four sexual harassment claims filed against Greene, three of which have been settled for more than $648,000 combined. A fourth settlement is pending for more than $250,000.

According to the documents, one woman said Greene touched her in an inappropriate manner and called her names like “bitch” and “racist bitch.”

Another said Greene took her to his apartment after a work-related dinner, fondled her breast as they watched a movie and tried to kiss her until she ran out.

Sources tell the Daily News that three or four of the board’s five members are likely to vote today to place Greene on leave.

Greene, who makes $306,000 per year, took a personal leave after a scandal about his leadership of the agency became public last week.

Asked about Greene’s fate, former Mayor John Street, chairman of PHA’s Board of Commissioners, said Greene is “entitled to fairness” and has legal rights.

Street said he will not make a snap decision, referencing the case of Shirley Sherrod, a Georgia-based official with the U.S. Department of Agriculture who was wrongly fired by the agency for remarks about race, found to be taken out of context.

“We have to be responsible here,” Street said. “If we rush to judgment on [Greene] and we’re somehow wrong about it, this might cost [taxpayers] $10 million … he’s entitled to collect damages if we make a mistake and a judge rules in his favor.”

Greene, who wrote to Street on Monday to say he would return from a leave of absence on Sept. 13, is trying to delay the board action on his job.

According to documents acquired by the Daily News, an attorney for Greene wrote to Street on Tuesday to advise him that Greene is “undergoing medical diagnosis and treatment outside Pennsylvania.” That attorney, Clifford Haines, asked that the board take no action regarding Greene’s status until his return.

An after-hours call to Haines from the Daily News was not returned last night.

The delay sought by Greene seems unlikely. Board members were also provided with a detailed explanation of how Greene’s contract could be terminated.

Greene can be canned for “cause,” which could include “willful and intentional misconduct, recklessness, gross negligence and a failure to substantially perform his duties.”

But Greene’s contract appears to provide some cover in cases related to harass claims.

Greene has friends on board who will determine his fate

By WENDY RUDERMAN, BARBARA LAKER & CATHERINE LUCEY

Greene has friends on board who will determine his fate.

Blackwell’s stepson, Thomas Blackwell, ran his state legislative office out of a PHA home, with a pack of PHA maintenance workers at his beck and call.

Former mayor John Street’s son, Sharif, worked for the Center City law firm Wolf Block that billed PHA more than $8 million in legal fees in three years before the firm shut down in March 2009.

Not to mention that Reynolds, Jannie Blackwell and John Street all have PHA community centers or housing projects named for them or a relative.

The three sit on the five-member PHA Board of Commissioners, which today will decide the fate of PHA Executive Director Carl R. Greene — who has shored them and their relatives with perks and favors galore.

The three, along with the two other commissioners — Debra Brady and Patrick Eiding — have put Greene on a pedestal. Some board members hail Greene as perhaps the nation’s most successful housing director.

Now, some question whether these same people can objectively address allegations surrounding Greene and why they seemingly failed to police Greene and PHA.

Even Mayor Nutter, in a tersely worded letter to John Street, PHA board chair, zeroed in on the board’s lack of supervision.

“What’s needed is the bright light of public scrutiny on an authority which sadly may be suffering from a lack of appropriate oversight,” Nutter wrote.

The controversy started two weeks ago with news that the IRS had filed a lien against Greene for $52,000 in back taxes and that he was facing foreclosure on his $615,000 condo.

Greene took care of the lien and mortgage payments, but a firestorm ignited after news broke that four sexual-harassment cases have been filed against him.

Three have been settled for a combined $648,000, and PHA’s insurer agreed last week to a $250,000 payment in the fourth. Street said Greene and other top PHA officials kept the board in the dark about complaints and settlements.

“If there was some evidence that the board knew and did nothing, then that’s one thing,” Street said yesterday. “If there is evidence that the board didn’t know, then the question is, ‘Should the board have known and why didn’t it know?’”

“We don’t have all the answers,” Street said. The board apparently doesn’t know quite a bit.

For instance, Street said he was
unaware that the U.S. Department of Labor is investigating allegations by PHA construction and maintenance workers that Greene is violating federal wage laws.

“There is an open investigation being conducted by the department’s wage-and-hour division,” agency spokeswoman Joanna Hawkins confirmed.

Carpenters, for example, have complained that Greene is violating a federal “prevailing wage” law by paying them $24.50 an hour, instead of the mandated $35.01.

In an interview yesterday, Reynolds defended her record and characterized herself as an objective watchdog.

“Everything I’ve gotten, I’ve earned all the way,” Reynolds said. “It doesn’t cloud my vision whatsoever.”

She said her PHA driver, Sgt. Pauline Randolph, who makes about $64,000 a year, chauffeurs her to “meetings and developments.”

Reynolds, 81, said Randolph sometimes takes her to other places she needs to go. “I have to have help sometimes,” she said. She has lived in a PHA two-bedroom house in Johnson Homes for about three decades. In 2008, Greene cut the ribbon for the $21.2 million Nellie Reynolds Gardens, a 64-apartment building in North Philly for seniors.

Her son Steven is a PHA maintenance supervisor who makes roughly $60,000 a year, and used to live in Johnson Homes but has since moved. Her daughter Jackie McDowell used to make $100,000 a year as a PHA manager and still lives in a PHA-owned house in West Philly.

Reynolds said her family simply grew up in public housing, got jobs and moved up. “It’s part of the American dream,” Reynolds said.

“That’s what we fought for. That’s our motto.”

It was Jackie McDowell who hooked up Jannie Blackwell’s stepson — Thomas Blackwell — with a newly renovated PHA house to use as his legislative office, according to Thomas Blackwell.

Three PHA maintenance workers who requested anonymity told the Daily News that a PHA supervisor regularly ordered them to the house at 3148 W. Berks St. whenever something broke.

“You’re talking hundreds of thousands of dollars of PHA material and labor,” one worker said.

Thomas Blackwell, who lost his seat in 2008, said that the state paid rent to PHA for use of the house but that he couldn’t recall the amount. Kirk Dorn, who is paid $10,000 a month as a PHA spokesman, did not return phone calls or e-mails yesterday from the Daily News. Thomas Blackwell is now a constituent services aide for U.S. Rep. Bob Brady, D-Pa., making about $50,000 a year.

Brady’s wife, Debra, is a PHA commissioner. She reportedly missed 11 of 15 board meetings between February 2009 and June 2010. A spokesman for Brady said she missed meetings because her mother was ill.

Councilwoman Blackwell grew testy yesterday when a reporter asked about the $4 million that PHA kicked in for a $11.9 million community center named in honor of her late husband, U.S. Rep. Lucien Blackwell. PHA also has plans for “Jannie’s Place,” a 40-unit, $7 million transitional housing development.

“You people are fishing, fishing, fishing and it’s sad,” she said. PHA Commissioner Eiding, who heads the regional AFL-CIO, has not returned calls from the Daily News. He reportedly missed six of the 15 meetings between February 2009 and June of this year.

Jannie Blackwell and John Street (above), hugging in a 2007 ceremony, are close to Greene (right).

Staff writer Chris Brennan contributed to this report.

GREENE

Continued from Page 4

resulting from his “incapacity or illness.” Haines’ letter to Street could be the first maneuver in making such a point.

Greene can also be fired for criminal acts committed to garner “substantial gain or personal enrichment at PHA’s expense.”

Mayor Nutter yesterday said the board should fire Greene if the sexual-harassment claims are true.

The three sexual-harassment cases that were settled cost PHA’s insurers a combined $648,000, with $354,300 in damages, $75,000 in back pay and $218,700 in attorney fees.

PHA last week moved to settle a fourth claim filed by former PHA architect Elizabeth Helm, who said Greene took her to a restaurant after hours, dangled a promotion before her and then tried to kiss her. That complaint is expected to be settled for $250,000.

Details on the other three cases were unavailable until yesterday.

One woman accused Greene of a pattern of discrimination against “attractive young women,” reporting that she was given poor assignments and meagre resources and ultimately fired because she rejected his advances.

The second said Greene accused her of being racist and treating an African-American employee as her “slave.” A human relations manager told her she shouldn’t fret “because that’s just how things are at PHA.”

The third, who alleged that Greene groped her while watching a movie, said he threatened to provide her home address to a worker she had laid off.

Today board members also will consider a resolution to conduct sexual-harassment training while also reviewing and revising the sexual-harassment policy.

If Greene is put on leave, assistant Executive Director Shelley James will be appointed interim director. While Greene is out on leave he could have no contact with PHA.
**WHY CARL GREENE SHOULD RESIGN**

**CULTURE OF SECRECY, EVEN OVER DAMNING ALLEGATIONS**

TODAY, THE BOARD of the Philadelphia Housing Authority meets for the first time since the explosion of bad news over the agency’s CEO, Carl Greene.

That news started with an IRS tax lien and a bank foreclosing on his house, and continued with Greene going AWOL and the revelation that four claims of sexual harassment against him have been settled by PHA in the last five years.

It hasn’t ended yet. It’s unclear what action the board is likely to take. Most likely: putting Greene on leave so the board can investigate further. If the board fires Greene, it must be done without leaving PHA open to a large severance package or a lawsuit. Which means more weeks of instability and chaos at PHA.

That’s why Carl Greene should resign.

The most damning circumstances are the four cases of sexual harassment that were privately settled by PHA’s insurance company in the last five years. Somehow, “It was all just a big misunderstanding” might explain one case, but not four . . . or five, if you count the settled case in Detroit before Greene was hired in Philadelphia. Four cases suggests a pattern of behavior for which there should be zero tolerance in a workplace, particularly from its chief.

But there’s another pattern of behavior from Greene that has compromised his ability to run a public agency: his pattern of insulating himself from scrutiny. Even before he disappeared last week for five days, resurfacing only to hold a news conference to announce he was taking a leave, he successfully shielded the public and PHA’s board from seeing any of PHA’s operations that he didn’t want seen. He has settled harassment suits with an insurance company without notifying the board. He has created nonprofit organizations that solicit donations from PHA contractors, and he demanded payments from workers for funds with little oversight.

Meanwhile, he carefully built a positive image of a transformative housing chief so successful that few have questioned him. Even in the midst of the most disturbing allegations, Gov. Rendell sang Greene’s praises. He elicits cult-like loyalty from many powerful people — most recently, board member Jannie Blackwell, who said Tuesday she wanted to delay her vote on action on Greene until he returns from leave, explaining “we don’t have anyone who does what he does, and he’s the only one moving housing in the recession.”

So apparently, the ability to sell real estate trumps everything, even secret insurance settlements related to sexual harassment.

This philosophy — that we should be expected to tolerate anything in the cause of “good work” — is an unacceptable standard for a board member or a public official to be espousing. Especially when it involves our money.

It’s clear the board of PHA has been asleep at the switch; this can happen with a charismatic leader who is spinning success stories, but it’s clear that no one has really been in control of PHA for a long time. The set-up of the agency — funded by the feds, with a locally appointed board — means that real oversight can be kept at bay.

Greene suggested earlier that he is being thrown under the bus by the media and that people with bloody daggers wanted to do him in. Given the case against Greene, that’s a stunning admission that he is clueless about the seriousness of these allegations.

Carl Greene should do the right thing, and resign. ★
PARIAH AT PHA

SHE TOLD CARL GREENE SHE'D GOTTEN COMPLAINTS ABOUT HIM — THEN THINGS TURNED UGLY FOR HER

PAGE 3

Rosanna Grdinich, former equal-employment officer at the Philadelphia Housing Authority.
HEN ROSANNA Grdinich, the Philadelphia Housing Authority’s equal-employment officer, told her boss, Carl R. Greene, that she’d received sexual-harassment complaints about him, three things happened:

She was demoted; her pay was slashed nearly 25 percent; and she was exiled to possibly the worst job at PHA: evicting tenants.

It was late 2008 when PHA executive director Greene stopped Grdinich in the hallway and asked, “What kind of EEO jobs are you working on?”

“Coincidentally,” she said she told him, “I’ve received three anonymous calls about you regarding Moneke Thomas.”

Greene told her to handle it as she would any other case. He didn’t ask for details.

Perhaps he knew.

Thomas is one of four women who filed formal complaints of sexual harassment against Greene. A former senior management specialist, Thomas said that Greene took her to his apartment after a work-related dinner, fondled her breast and tried to kiss her until she ran out, according to PHA documents.

On Dec. 17, 2008, about a month after Grdinich told Greene about the Thomas case, she was ordered to pack all her files and was called into a meeting with Fred Pasour, PHA general counsel, and Shelley James, chief of staff.

“They told me I was no longer the EEO,” Grdinich told the Daily News. “I was devastated.”

Pasour, a loyal Greene foot soldier, told her that there were so few complaints, she wasn’t really needed.

“Fred emphatically said, from now on, he was the EEO point person,” Grdinich said.

“He told me I was to have no correspondence or conversations with outside agencies or attorneys,” she said. “He clearly wanted me out of the picture.”

“I don’t know if I knew too much or maybe they thought I knew more than I did,” she said.

With Grdinich out, Pasour was now, as EEO, in the position of receiving employee complaints and, as chief counsel, of representing PHA against such complaints.

He would later play a leading role in settlement negotiations with Moneke Thomas.

Pasour did not return two phone calls from the Daily News yesterday. James, through a PHA spokeswoman, declined to comment.

Greene has been unavailable since entering a medical facility for stress-related problems last month. He has denied sexually harassing any of his employees.

His lawyer, Clifford Haines, didn’t return calls or an e-mail.

Last month, the PHA Board of Commissioners suspended Greene, with pay, while it investigates allegations that Greene secretly settled three complaints, dating to 2004, for $648,000 without informing the board. A fourth claim against Greene is pending. Board chairman John F. Street has publicly accused Greene of orchestrating a coverup.

**Missing files**

Grdinich had been the EEO at PHA since 1999. It was a job she loved and knew well. She was a former Philadelphia cop and had held the same position at the Police Department for seven years.

*See PHA Next Page*
GRAIN was stunned at her demotion and assignment to the evictions unit of the PHA police.

"I was sent out without a gun, without a vest," she said. "The other officers had protection. I had nothing."

"It was really dangerous," said another longtime PHA employee who worked closely with her. "They were trying to get her to quit. Greene wanted to control the situation. What he couldn't control was Rosanna. She's honest and she was going to do the job and she wasn't afraid. He needed her out."

"They treated her like she was nothing," said a PHA police officer who worked with her and her requested anonymity. "She didn't play ball. She had the truth and they wanted her out of the equation."

Gardinich's EEO job wasn't all that went poof.

Half the files of EEO complaints disappeared, she said.

"I packed up about 10 to 12 boxes and labeled them," she said. "They were very organized."

Six weeks after her demotion, Pasour asked Gardinich to unpack the EEO boxes.

"I thought it was strange since I was no longer the EEO person," she said.

She did what she was told.

"But half of the boxes weren't there," she said. "There were only five or six boxes."

She said she told Pasour that she was concerned because half the boxes were gone.

"Don't worry about it," she said he told her.

Covering up?

Gardinich said that even before her demotion, PHA executives had made investigating EEO complaints difficult. In 2006, they took away her company car, she said.

"I was told there were no pool cars available," she said. "So there I was taking a bus to conduct investigations, carrying my files, sometimes in the rain."

Over the years, Gardinich received a few calls from women who told her that Greene had sexually harassed them. The women sounded distraught and cried on the phone, she said, but they never came in for an interview. They later left PHA.

"You'd have these girls who were upset," Gardinich said. "The next thing you know, they'd be gone. And there were so many rumors about it. How could they all be made up?"

Moneke Thomas filed a complaint against Greene with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on Jan. 4, 2008. Thomas refused to go out with Greene and rebuffed him when he continued to try to touch her inappropriately, she said in her complaint. She alleged that he then moved her to undesirable jobs.

Her case was settled for $350,000. Street is leading an investigation into why the board knew nothing about that settlement and two others.

PHA initially hired the law firm of Cozen O'Connor to investigate Thomas' complaint, but fired the firm shortly after it insisted that the PHA board be informed of the complaint, according to Thomas Decker, president and chief executive officer of Cozen.

Two other women, Melissa Shingles and Carolyn Griffith, had already settled complaints against Greene. Gardinich said that neither had lodged those complaints internally with her, and that PHA executives didn't tell her about them.

Typically, both the EEOC office and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission informed Gardinich of complaints made by PHA employees, she said.

"I never got those complaints," she said. She suspects that the PHA legal department intercepted them before they reached her.

"I believe Fred [Pasour] wanted to handle all EEO complaints, probably to protect Carl Greene," she said.

Meet the new boss

Gardinich said that one other thing bothered her about her transfer to the PHA police. Her new boss, Richard Zappile, PHA's public-safety director, had also been a target of complaints from women.

Gardinich said that several female staffers had called her to complain that Zappile had made "inappropriate comments" to them. But Zappile refused to respond to those complaints, she said.

"I tried to explain [to Pasour] that I couldn't work for [Zappile]," Gardinich said. "He wouldn't acknowledge any of my interviews that were set up [to discuss the harassment allegations]. He had a problem with me."

Her fears, she said, came to fruition.

"In the short period of time being assigned at the Police Department, Chief Zappile refused to speak to me, did not acknowledge my presence and co-workers informed me they were cautioned by Chief Zappile not to talk to me and not to trust me," she wrote in a Feb. 7, 2009, letter to Pasour. "The only possible conclusion I can draw from this, is that Chief Zappile is retaliating against me. I never thought I would find myself in this situation."

The PHA police officer who requested anonymity said that Zappile had tried to isolate Gardinich.

"If anybody would talk to her, the chief would get mad," he said.

Zappile declined to comment yesterday.

Not a quitter

In February 2009, while she was in evictions, Gardinich reached her breaking point.

"Every day I was walking on eggshells," she said.

Suffering from heart palpitations and hypertension, she called in sick and went to a doctor who recommended a stress-related medical leave. Pasour denied it.

Pasour wrote that she had to return to work May 13, 2009. If she failed to return, she would lose her job.

She returned to work and was placed in Section 8 housing, the assignment PHA employees call "the graveyard." There, she investigated complaints against tenants.

The next month, in June 2009, she was transferred to the summer food program. She had to order meals and make sure that all 22 housing sites were clean and that children had enough to eat.

Gardinich has since been transferred to yet another job, based in the Norris Apartments, a PHA high-rise/low-rise mix in the shadow of Temple University, in North Philadelphia. Her new assignment is to relocate tenants.

Some employees ask her why she stays at PHA.

"I need the job and I'm not a quitter," Gardinich said. "I thought things would get better. I knew I would survive this."

"In the end, I knew truth was on my side. It was only a matter of time. The truth would prevail."
DEAL OF THE DAY


PHILLY DAILY NEWS

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2010

CLINCH 4 SURE!
PHILLIES WIN 4TH-STRAIGHT NL EAST TITLE: PAGE 70

MADE OF STEAL
WORKERS TOOK HIGH-END APPLIANCES, HARDWOOD FLOORING & MORE, HOUSING AUTHORITY GOT THE BILLS

PAGE 6

SHE'S WITH 7
KIJAFA FRINK, VICK'S FIANCEE ARMSTRONG
PAGE 37

STREET-NUTTER SMACKDOWN
ELMER SMITH, PAGE 3

PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS
THE PEOPLE PAPER
AN EDITION OF The Philadelphia Inquirer

Daily News photo illustration
Ron Cortes / Staff photographer

LOCALLY OWNED & INDEPENDENT SINCE 2006

DEAL OF THE DAY

THE FBI is investigating a major theft ring in which Philadelphia Housing Authority workers allegedly stole millions of dollars worth of building materials, including hardwood oak floors and stainless-steel kitchen appliances, and either fenced them or installed them in private homes.

Federal investigators have spent more than two years combing through thousands of Home Depot invoices billed to PHA. They are examining whether the materials went into the homes of PHA employees or those connected to them, according to sources close to the investigation.

At least one PHA employee has been fired in connection with the case.

In one instance, FBI agents tracked truckloads of Home Depot merchandise to a West Oak Lane property owned by a cocaine dealer (see story next page).

In 2008, when the investigation was in its infancy, then-PHA executive director Carl R. Greene attempted to thwart the probe by trying to fire two PHA police officers, according to sources close to the investigation. The officers had alerted the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office and U.S. Attorney’s Office about the possible theft.

Yesterday, PHA spokeswoman Nichole Tillman declined to comment, as did Greene's attorney, Clifford Haines. FBI spokesman J.J. Klaver also declined to comment.

Greene was fired last week by the PHA board for failing to disclose settlements worth hundreds of thousands of dollars with women who filed sexual-harassment complaints against him.

Citing the open criminal investigation, Tillman said that PHA could not provide the Daily News with copies of subpoenas related to the probe.

Home Depot spokeswoman Jen King declined to comment. Haines also declined to comment.

Detective John Logan contacted PHA police, who began to check hundreds of Home Depot invoices and quickly suspected theft that had gone on for years.

Many of the invoices listed one of three people as authorizing the PHA purchases for curbside delivery: Richard A. Perri, a longtime PHA materials coordinator; and two PHA contractors, carpenters Michael Kinkade and Nicholas Cionci.

Kinkade and Perri declined to comment. Cionci did not return two phone calls from the Daily News.

Sources close to the investigation say that the feds are trying to determine whether the three ordered the materials or if other people used their names.

PHA fired Perri in late 2008, after investigators suspected that he had used PHA materials to renovate his Northeast ranchhouse. He had added a second floor with three large bedrooms and a master suite with vaulted ceilings, sources close to the investigation said.

He sold his house in June for $345,000.

The Daily News obtained several 2007 Home Depot invoices that list Perri as ordering the purchases. This small sampling of invoices are for thousands of dollars, charged to the agency’s account.
for PHA’s “scattered sites.” But most of the addresses were not PHA properties. The items include oak hardwood floors, suede cowhide gloves, flowers and pruning shears — items that would be unusual for a PHA property.

Investigators believe that in some cases the drop-off addresses were decoys, and that corrupt PHA workers called Home Depot at the last minute to reroute the materials to a different house, sources close to the investigation said.

FBI agents have questioned Perri about his home renovations and Kinkade about the Home Depot purchases.

Soon after PHA police started to investigate the Home Depot invoices, Greene ordered that the files be shipped to the Ballard Spahr law firm.

Greene hired Ballard Spahr attorney Kenya Mann Faulkner, a former federal prosecutor, to investigate the case.

PHA managers said they were summoned to Ballard Spahr to examine stacks of Home Depot invoices, most of which named Cionci and Kinkade. When they arrived at the law firm, Daniel Quimby, PHA general manager of maintenance, was there.

Quimby was the direct supervisor of Perri, Kinkade and Cionci. Quimby was in charge of authorizing PHA purchases from Home Depot. Quimby retired earlier this year and went to work for General Asphalt Paving Co., owned by the family of city GOP power broker Michael Meehan.

Quimby did not return calls to his homes in Philadelphia and the Poconos.

At the Ballard Spahr meeting, Quimby implicated PHA managers who were in charge of maintenance at scattered sites. The managers said they told Quimby that they knew nothing about the Home Depot orders and had not approved them, according to some of those present at the meeting.

The managers told Quimby that none of the materials, including a stainless-steel refrigerator and a microwave, had gone into any PHA homes.

In early 2009, when Mann Faulkner was deep into the investigation, Greene fired her and replaced her with Jim Eisenhower, of Schnader Harrison, according to a source familiar with the investigation.

Eisenhower declined to comment on what had become of the internal investigation.

By BARBARA LAKER & WENDY RUDERMAN
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The Rev. Harry Davis wondered why truckloads of high-end construction materials were delivered to the alley behind a rundown three-story building in West Oak Lane, rather than to the front door.

Davis, whose Holy Temple Baptist Church was three doors away, also found it odd that workers toiled night and day for nearly two weeks to renovate the building in summer 2008.

Davis’ son, Herman, said that some of the workers were PHA employees who seemed nervous about the job.

“I heard one of them say, ‘I don’t get paid enough at PHA,’ ” Herman Davis said. “I heard one guy say, ‘My cut should be more than that.’ Everything was done real sneaky.”

Local and federal authorities were suspicious, too. Especially because the building on Ogontz Avenue near 68th is owned by a convicted drug dealer, Mark Miller.

As PHA workers and PHA materials were being used to renovate his building, Miller, a/k/a “Sharkey,” was facing federal charges for possession of cocaine with intent to distribute.

He later pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 33 months in prison. He has since been released.

The work on Miller’s building is just one example of how millions of dollars of construction materials — bought at Home Depot by PHA — went into private homes, investigators believe.

The theft of PHA materials is the subject of an expanding FBI probe into the agency, which has been rocked by recent revelations of sexual-harassment suits against executive director Carl R. Greene, who was fired last week.

Melvia Miller, Miller’s 82-year-old mother, is listed in city records as the owner of the Ogontz Avenue property, but she told the Daily News that her son had bought it and recorded her as the buyer.

“He does all his properties like that,” she said. “He puts my name on it.”

Miller, 40, who purchased the property in September 2007, said that his mother “suffers from dementia,” but admitted that he owns the building on Ogontz.

He said that he doesn’t know how or why the PHA construction materials were delivered to his property. He declined to discuss the renovations in his building.

“They must have brought it to the wrong address,” Miller said. “We know nothing about it. We don’t know nothing.

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‘Everything was done real sneaky’: Back-door hauls to dealer’s property
“The feds already asked . . . and now I have a reporter calling me,” he said.

Miller has ties to a leader within PHA’s Tenant Support Services Inc., a nonprofit PHA subsidiary also under federal investigation.

When Miller was facing his drug charges, Gloria Redd, who was a TSSI board member in 2008, wrote to the court in support of his pretrial release.

“I’ve known Mr. Miller and his family since the time they were born,” wrote Redd, who described herself as PHA’s Tenant Council president of Whitehall Apartments in her Dec. 5, 2007, letter. “Mr. Miller has always presented himself as being very helpful and supportive within our community.

“He’s devoted to his family and always makes himself available to assist our community whenever asked,” she wrote.

Redd failed to respond to numerous messages from the Daily News asking for comment.

The Rev. Davis said that when two men and a woman came to buy the Ogontz Avenue property, about a year before the renovations began, they wanted to purchase more.

“I was surprised, the money they seemed to have,” Davis said. “They wanted to buy all the buildings on the block.”

Davis and his son said that Miller’s building had been gutted before the supplies arrived.

“We knew something wasn’t right, the way it was delivered out back,” the Rev. Davis said. “They had big trailers with wood. Nothing came in the front of the building.”

“The whole building was new inside,” Herman Davis said. “Everything was filled out. I would think there was at least $150,000 of materials . . . They were making it into a hair salon.”

Davis and his son wondered who was paying for all of it.

“How could someone move to the ‘hood and have all this stuff?” Herman Davis asked. “There’s no money like that around here.”

About seven workers framed the Ogontz property, the Davises said. New windows and a new roof were installed. His father said that a refrigerator was delivered.

The Davises said that after a couple of weeks, construction abruptly stopped and no one ever occupied the building. The hair salon never opened.

A few weeks later, PHA investigators came to ask the Davises questions about what they’d seen, they said. The investigators took numerous photos. Later, federal investigators stopped in and asked more questions, the Davises said.

Vandals have since smashed the front windows of the property, the Davises said. The first-floor windows and door are now sealed with plywood. ★
HOW PHA KILLED MILDRED BARENS

WHEN IT CAME TIME TO DEMOLISH HER FORMER HOME, SOMEBODY SHOULD HAVE MADE SURE SHE WASN’T INSIDE

PAGE 3
In HER signature pink bonnet and pink pants, Mildred Barnes was the lost soul of Abbottsford Homes. Barnes, who kept $25 for her favorite J&B scotch tucked in her black bra, suffered from dementia. She saw and spoke to people long ago dead.

Managers at this Philadelphia Housing Authority development knew that Barnes was delusional. They also knew that she was stubborn. She wanted to stay in her home of 39 years, one that was slated for demolition.

But crews failed to make sure her building was empty before the excavator’s metal claw tore it into rubble.

On July 14, 2005, Barnes died alone at the age of 65, buried under a mountain of steel, stone and rubble.

PHA workers didn’t realize their fatal error until the next morning, when they arrived with a backhoe to chop up the debris.

The family of Mildred Barnes filed suit against PHA, and on the eve of the trial, in July 2008, relatives settled with PHA for $115,000.

But PHA’s Board of Commissioners was never told of the settlement, though agency spokeswoman Nichole Tillman...
FROM THE BEGINNING, Mildred Barnes' life seemed ill-fated. She was one of 12 children born to parents in Philadelphia who struggled to feed and shelter them. At age 11, she and her siblings wound up in foster care, where she bounced from home to home. She dropped out of Simon Gratz High School in 11th grade and married an abusive husband, whom she later divorced.

But Barnes wasn’t the type to pity herself. Quite the opposite. “She laughed a lot — she was full of life,” said Barnes’ son, Tyrone, who described his mother as a free spirit who loved motorcycles and her 1962 Chevy convertible.

In 1966, at age 26, Barnes moved with Tyrone to Abottsford Homes, World War II-era public housing built on a hill in East Falls. She earned her GED, the equivalent of a high-school diploma, and got a job as a reading aide.

She was trying to better herself, Tyrone said recently, and wanted to teach him the value of an education. “My mother is the reason I drive hard,” said Tyrone, who joined the Army at 20.

Tyrone Barnes, Mildred Barnes’ son, after getting news of his mother’s death: “I was so shocked. I could barely move.”

Continued from Preceding Page

said PHA executives were not required to do so.

Mildred Barnes’ death, if widely known, would have put a blemish on PHA’s national success story of sprucing up public housing.

But former PHA Executive Director Carl R. Greene wanted nothing to taint his legacy. Secrets were easier, tidier. Between 2004 and 2008, Greene failed to disclose to the board a combined $648,000 in settlements with three former female employees who filed sexual-harassment complaints against him.

In September, the PHA board fired Greene, concluding that he orchestrated a coverup of the settlements.

In Barnes’ case, PHA hired the Center City law firm of Kolber & Freiman to fight the lawsuit, spending more than $100,000 in legal fees and expenses. PHA paid for three expert reports, two of which argued that Barnes didn’t experience fear or pain when she died.

“Her dementia and psychosis precluded her from fearing her obvious peril and imminent pending demise,” a forensic-pathology expert concluded in one report. “The rapid fall of heavy-building debris on her head precluded her from being conscious long enough to consciously perceive pain.”

David Kwass, the attorney who represented Barnes’ son and sister, called the report “the final indignity” suffered by Barnes. “They paid thousands of dollars for an expert to say that she probably was knocked out when the first brick came down and hit her in the head and she never would have felt any pain, which is the biggest load of crap that one could possibly imagine,” said Kwass, a partner at Saltz, Mongeluzzi, Barrett & Bendesky.

Failed precautions

PHA managers keep handwritten logs on each tenant. Most are mundane, about rent collection, complaints about leaky pipes or problems with other tenants.

The file on Mildred Barnes was different.

In February 2004, a tenant told an Abottsford manager that he believed that Barnes suffered from dementia. The manager asked PHA police to check on Barnes and also called Barnes’ brother, David Roane. Roane later reported that his sister had been placed in a mental ward, according to notations in Barnes’ file.

In 2005, as PHA prepared to demolish Barnes’ three-story East Falls apartment and 41 others rendered unsafe by severe termite damage, the Abottsford staff grew increasingly worried about her.

Managers asked PHA’s senior and social-services workers to help persuade her to relocate. A social worker said that Barnes refused help.

Finally, on April 14, 2005, they moved her to a new apartment around the corner from her old one.

PHA workers boarded up the row of homes where she’d lived and had them fenced off.

“They put the gates around, but what they did not do was close those gates tight enough,” her best friend, Abottsford tenant Michael Littlejohn, said in a deposition.

“A gorilla, King Kong, could have went between those fences,” Roane said in a deposition.

Vandals and scavengers ripped through the fence in search of aluminum to sell, Daniel Quimby, PHA’s former general manager of maintenance, who...
Clements, PHA’s longtime plumbing superintendent, was up for doing the job. Not only was he a whiz on the excavator, but he was specially trained to rescue people pinned by construction debris. He had served on the city’s Emergency Response Team and, a few years back, had received an award from the city Fire Department for rescuing a teenage boy who was buried in a trench collapse.

His job this day was to collapse the roof and smash out the walls of Barnes’ old apartment on McMichael Street. Clements quickly reduced the building to a heap of splintered wood and crumbled red bricks.

He had no idea that Barnes’ broken and battered body was buried in the rubble.

The apartment’s windows and doors were sealed tight with plywood — or so he thought. Before he began demolition, Clements walked around the building’s perimeter to make sure that no one had breached the boards, he said in a July 2007 deposition.

Under city and PHA regulations, demolition crews should “carefully inspect the entire site and structure” before work begins.

Clements acknowledged that he and his crew were required to look inside the apartment, but didn’t.

“We would have had to rip off the boards, and the building inside was unsafe,” Clements said.

The next morning, Shirleen White, who had worked for PHA since 1995, arrived at the site to clear debris.

Using an excavator with a claw, she lifted piles of mortar. About 10:15 a.m., she suddenly spotted what looked like a bloody arm in the excavator’s bucket.

“I thought it was a child,” she said in a July 2007 deposition. She jumped to the ground to find her supervisor. They couldn’t believe that a body was buried under the rubble. They called police.

A tenant told Littlejohn that he should go down the hill to McMichael Street. Something terrible had happened.

Littlejohn rushed down the street.

“I look up and the [excavator’s claw] was in the air like that and her pants were hanging there,” he recalled. “And I recognized her pants. They were pink, and the blood was coming.”

“I was just devastated. I mean, the

A grisly surprise

On the morning of July 14, 2005, PHA worker Paul Clements climbed atop the hulking excavator. He prepared to tear down the Abbotsford Apartments, the biggest demolition project ever undertaken by PHA workers rather than outside contractors.

Tenant Michael Littlejohn, on what he described as poor fencing around the buildings: “They put the gates around, but what they did not do was close those gates tight enough.”

and served in Korea and the Gulf War. “I got my feistiness and my drive from my mom.”

She helped teach kids at Thomas Mifflin, the elementary school attended by Abbotsford’s children.

One of those kids was Michael Littlejohn.

“Miss Barnes was a teacher who had my heart,” Littlejohn, now 49, said recently. “She’d always tease me: ‘Michael, don’t you fail recess.’”

Later in life, Littlejohn looked after Barnes. They often shared meals and beers together. He picked up her groceries. She’d give him $50 and tell him to keep $20 for his trouble. He liked to think of himself as her guardian angel.

He felt helpless when Barnes began to slip away, her mind lost to dementia — and booze.

Barnes first landed in the Eastern Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute in 1993. Police found her lying in a park with a broken arm. She had wandered away from her house, without keys or money.

She was hospitalized at least five times.

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See MILDRED Next Page

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2010
pain... I mean, somebody you love and care for, that pain... I would not inflict that pain on Satan himself.”

Horrifying news

Barnes' son, Tyrone Barnes, had two duffel bags packed, ready to head out for a mission with the National Guard. Before he walked out the door, he checked a message on his answering machine. It was from a police detective.

The message chilled Tyrone to the bone. "If you're Sgt. Barnes in the military," it said, "please come to the city's morgue to possibly identify your mother's remains."

"I was so shocked," he recalled, sitting on the front steps of his West Philadelphia house, his eyes misty behind thick glasses. "I could barely move."

He called Wendell Storey, a close family friend, the man he calls "Pop," to ask if he could drive him to the morgue. Storey arrived in 12 minutes.

An assistant medical examiner told Barnes that his mother had been crushed to death in her apartment. Raw flesh, broken limbs and distended organs were not foreign to Barnes; he'd seen his share as a combat medic. But photographs of his mother's remains were like nothing he'd ever seen. Her body had been brought to the morgue in two parts. She was unrecognizable — her spleen and left eye were missing, her heart and both lungs were thrust into her brain.

"She was like hamburger from the waist up and I could see her eye hanging out," he said. "It was like I was looking at someone from the 'X Files.'"

"I had to have her cremated. There was nothing for anyone to see."

Nobody from PHA ever came to him to apologize or explain, Barnes said. In fact, PHA's Quimby said in a 2007 deposition, "As bad as it sounds, she was a trespasser."

"I wouldn't have sued," Barnes said, "if someone had come to me, man-to-man, and told me what happened. Nobody said, I'm sorry for your loss."

"I'm hurt. I'm just really hurt that no one said they were sorry."

Barnes, now 53, said that he received about $40,000 from the $115,000 settlement and that he shared it with his relatives. Most of the money went to lawyers.

PHA Board Chairman John Street declined to comment about either the incident or the settlement. Tillman, the agency spokeswoman, said that under PHA policy, Greene didn't have to inform the board because the bulk of the Barnes settlement was paid by PHA's insurer. But when Street moved to fire Greene over the secret sexual-harassment payouts, he argued that Greene simply used the insurer as cover to deceive the board.

Greene could not be reached for comment. His attorney, Clifford Haines, did not respond to a request for comment.

Tyrone Barnes never drives by Abbotsford Homes. "To this day" he said, "I can't go up there. I just can't go."

But Littlejohn, who still lives at Abbotsford, can't escape McMichael Street or his pain. For him, the accident happened yesterday.

"It's hard. It's really, really hard," Littlejohn said last week, tears streaming. "You can hug somebody one day and then the next day they're gone. I don't want to lose anyone ever again." ★