



# Angelina “Angel” Colonnese

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT AND COMPTROLLER OF MANATEE COUNTY

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## Internal Audit Department

### Investigation Report

### Manatee County Government Employee Job Application Complaint

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August 17, 2018

Investigation No. 21720100



# Angelina "Angel" Colonnese

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT AND COMPTROLLER OF MANATEE COUNTY

1115 Manatee Avenue West, Bradenton, Florida 34205 - Phone (941) 749-1800 - Fax (941) 741-4082  
P.O. Box 25400, Bradenton, Florida 34206 - www.manateeclerk.com

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Ed Hunzeker, County Administrator

FROM: Angelina "Angel" Colonnese, Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller

DATE: August 17, 2018

RE: Investigation Report - Employee Job Application Complaint

Based on anonymous complaints received by the Internal Audit Department, we have completed an investigative review of allegations regarding the accuracy of information provided by a former Manatee County employee on her job application(s), and whether the employee was qualified for her positions in Animal Services. Attached is the final report summarizing the results of our investigation.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact me or Lori Stephens, Chief Audit Executive, at extension 4170.

Enclosures

cc: Robert Smith, Public Safety Department Director  
Rodney Barnes, Human Resources Department Director  
Mitchell Palmer, County Attorney  
Board of County Commissioners

"Pride in Service with a Vision to the Future"

Clerk of the Circuit Court - Clerk of Board of County Commissioners - County Comptroller - Auditor and Recorder

Manatee County Clerk of the Circuit Court  
Internal Audit Department

Investigation Report  
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction/Allegation .....	1
Summary of Findings.....	1
Results of Testing and Analysis .....	1-3
Recommendations .....	4

**Manatee County Clerk of the Circuit Court  
Internal Audit Department**

**Final Report  
Employee Job Application Complaint**

**Introduction/Allegation**

During May and June of 2017, the Internal Audit Department received several anonymous emails and telephone calls regarding an Animal Services Division employee. The complaints alleged the following:

- The employee provided false information on County job applications.
- The employee was not qualified for the positions held with Animal Services.
- The Human Resources Department did not adequately verify the information reported on the job applications.

**Summary of Findings**

The information obtained during the investigative review partially supports the allegations made in the complaint. Based on our review of documentation and interviews conducted with Human Resources (HR) and current and former Animal Services' staff, we conclude:

- *The employee did provide false information on the job applications.*
- *The employee was qualified for the positions held with Animal Services.*
- *The HR Department did not verify all of the information reported on the job applications; however, according to management, it is not their practice to obtain the information in question.*

Effective February 9, 2018, prior to the completion of this review, this individual is no longer employed with Manatee County.

**Results of Testing and Analysis**

In an effort to determine the validity of the allegations, auditors obtained and reviewed documentation, conducted interviews with Human Resources and Public Safety/Animal Services management and staff, and inquired with other local and government agencies regarding hiring practices. The results of our review are detailed in the following sections:

**Allegation #1 – False information provided on job applications.**

Animal Care Specialist I job application (5/22/2012)

- The work experience information reported by the employee included employment dates and positions which did not agree to what was confirmed by the Human Resources (HR) Department; the years of experience and job duties were overstated by the employee.

- The employee indicated that she had not been convicted of, or pled guilty or no contest to, a criminal charge within the past 10 years. She stated she had not received any traffic violations within the past 10 years, nor had her driver's license suspended. A criminal background check and driving record revealed that the employee did have traffic violations and criminal charges within the prior 10 years, as well as previous driver's license suspensions.
- The employee reported that she had received a GED; however, the date and school from which it was received was not reported correctly. This discrepancy was determined to be immaterial as the employee had received the GED more than 5 years before applying for the position.

Documentation found in the employee's personnel file indicated that the information obtained from the driving record was reviewed and approved by Public Safety/Animal Services management. Notations were made on the employment application to correct the prior employment dates. However, there was no documentation regarding what information was found in the criminal background check or the actions taken by management. Based on interviews with HR and prior Animal Services management, it appears that the discrepancies found were discussed with the applicant, and management chose to move forward with the hiring process.

Animal Services Veterinary Technician application (3/28/2013)

- The work experience information reported by the employee (dates and positions) still did not agree to what was confirmed by HR; the years of experience and job duties were overstated.
- The incorrect information provided in the previous application, regarding traffic violations, driver's license suspensions, and criminal charges, was corrected.
- Supplemental questions on the application included a statement from the employee that she was "currently enrolled in CVT classes at St. Pete College. Should be certified by 2015." Transcripts obtained from St. Petersburg College confirmed that while the employee had been enrolled in the college, and eventually completed several classes, she was not enrolled in the CVT (Certified Veterinary Technician) program nor was she enrolled in any CVT courses. The employee received a total of 10 credit hours in general education classes (reading, math, etc.) through St. Petersburg College during the time period 5/13/13 through 5/9/14.

***The employee provided false information on County job applications as it related to education/CVT program, prior work experience, driving record, and criminal background.***

**Allegation #2 – Employee was not qualified for the positions held with Animal Services.**

Animal Care Specialist I

Minimum Qualifications (per County job description):

- high school graduate/equivalent
- prior experience working in animal shelter or kennel desired
- Florida State Certification in Animal Euthanasia (must obtain within 6 months of hire)
- Valid Florida driver's license (within 30 days of hire)

The employee met all of these requirements and was qualified for this position.

### Animal Services Veterinary Technician

Minimum Qualifications (per County job description):

- Minimum 2 years experience in private veterinary or shelter medicine practice assisting in surgery, medical treatments, and performing diagnostic procedures
- Florida State Certification in Animal Euthanasia (obtain within 6 months of hire)
- Incinerator Operator Certification (obtain within 6 months of hire)
- Valid Florida driver's license (within 30 days of hire)
- Associate's degree in Veterinary Technology with valid certification as a veterinary technician desired.

The employee was qualified for the position at the time of hire, as she had the minimum required experience, the euthanasia certification, and a valid driver's license; however, the incinerator certification was not obtained within 6 months, as required. The certification was obtained in June 2014, more than a year after being hired into the position.

***The employee was qualified for the positions held with Animal Services.***

### **Allegation #3 – The Human Resources Department did not adequately verify the information reported on the job applications.**

#### High school graduate/equivalent

Documentation was not obtained to confirm that this minimum qualification was met. According to the HR Department, it is not their practice to obtain documentation to verify whether applicants have high school diplomas or GEDs as stated in their job applications. Verification is only done on college degrees. (A survey of 9 other local and nearby governmental entities found that 5 of the 9 also do not require verification of high school diplomas or GEDs.)

#### Florida State Certification in Animal Euthanasia (required within 6 months of hire for both positions)

The employee indicated on the application that certification was obtained in 2008 (prior to date of hire), and while the employee did have the certification, HR never obtained documentation to verify this during the hiring process. According to HR, it is the responsibility of the hiring departments to obtain and maintain proof of certifications. Public Safety/Animal Services had not maintained a copy of the certificate. The employee provided a copy of the certificate to HR, upon our request.

#### Certification of Incinerator Operations (required within 6 months of hire for the Vet Tech position)

The employee did not have this certification upon hire, and did not obtain the certification within the required 6 months. The employee did eventually obtain the certification; however, neither HR nor Public Safety/Animal Services had a copy on file. According to the HR Department, it is the responsibility of the hiring departments to obtain and maintain the proof of certifications. The employee provided a copy of the certificate to HR, upon our request.

***The HR Department did not verify all of the information reported by the employee on the job applications; however, according to management, it is not their practice to obtain the information in question (high school diploma/GED, proof of certifications).***

## Recommendations

Based on the results of this investigative review, the following recommendations are provided:

1. Information reported by job applicants which is used in determining qualifications for employment, including minimum and desired qualifications, should be verified. If documentation is not available (ex. high school diploma), consideration should be given to offering an alternate type of assessment to ensure employees have the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the positions.
2. Any discrepancies identified during an applicant's background verification (education, experience, criminal record, etc.) should be clearly noted and reviewed by the hiring department. Management should document its approval or denial to continue with the hiring process.
3. Human Resources should communicate with County departments to clarify their responsibilities with regards to the hiring and qualification of employees. This should include, but not be limited to, the departments' responsibility for obtaining and maintaining job-related certifications.
4. Departments should ensure follow-up on job qualifications which are to be obtained by employees after hire and submit documentation to HR to be maintained in the employees' personnel files.

We appreciate the efforts and timeliness by Public Safety/Animal Services and Human Resources in addressing the issues raised during this investigative review and look forward to improved monitoring controls and accountability.



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Lori Stephens, CPA, CFE  
Chief Audit Executive

### INVESTIGATIVE TEAM:

Bobbie Windham, CIA, CFE  
Assistant Chief Audit Executive

Glen Riley, CPA  
Senior Internal Auditor III