

Operation Life turns over \$133,000 to city

By Lisa Riley Roche
Review-Journal

Under the threat of a lawsuit, officials of Operation Life Community Development Corp. have turned over to the city of Las Vegas almost \$133,000 raised from the sale of homes built with a federal grant.

A check for the disputed amount was delivered to Mayor Bill Briare's office Friday by two representatives of the West Las Vegas organization.

Because the mayor was not available to receive the check, it was accepted by his executive aide, Pat Cyr.

The unpublicized exchange between Cyr and the representatives was in contrast to Operation Life President Ruby Duncan's attempt to give the check to the mayor on July 2.

On that day, Duncan arrived at Briare's office for a scheduled meeting followed by television cameras and reporters from other news media. She left about a half-hour later with the check after being told that the mayor was delayed at another meeting.

Before leaving, Duncan criticized the city for forcing her to give back the money, labeling city officials "racist" and "chauvinistic." She also charged them with "stealing" funds that she claimed were to be reinvested in the predominantly black community.

City leaders, angered by Duncan's sharp words, gave her until Wednesday to hand over the check. The Las Vegas City Council was scheduled Wednesday either to receive the check or vote on filing a lawsuit against the organization.

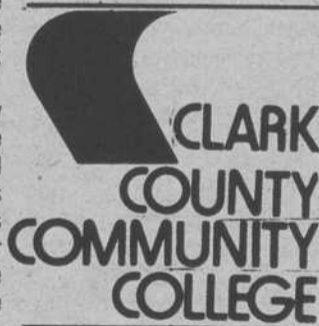
The suit would have been to recover the \$128,000 plus interest earned by Operation Life from the sale of three homes built with a \$150,000 federal grant administered by the city.

The housing program, which was started in 1981, originally called for the earnings to be used for the construction of new houses. But because it took four years for the first homes built under the program to sell, city officials decided several months ago to end it.

Although Operation Life officials have contended that the city is breaking a commitment made to reinvest the money in the housing program, the Department of Housing and Urban Development ruled earlier this year that the city was responsible for determining how funds should be spent.

The federal agency also ordered the organization's final payments on two other grants withheld. Those payments, for grants allocated by the city last year for separate housing programs, total about \$5,800.

That money, along with the \$132,910 from the discontinued housing program, will be made available to Operation Life and similar non-profit organizations by the city.



Rancho High principal disciplined on harassment charge

Rancho High School principal Richard E. Brown has been disciplined by the Clark County School District on charges of sexually harassing a former district employee between 1983 and 1985.

District Superintendent Robert E. Wentz confirmed that Brown had been disciplined but said he would be returning to Rancho High School as principal in the fall.

Wentz declined to say what measures were taken because the matter involves a district employee, and therefore the information is not available to the public.

Wentz did say the district's investigation had "essentially confirmed" the harassment allegations.

Brown could not be reached for comment.

One source said the principal was suspended for an unknown number of days and admonished.

This is the third investigation into the complaints by an unidentified employee who worked for Brown at Rancho High School and the first in which any disciplinary action has been taken.

The third investigation was initiated by the Clark County Classroom Teachers Association, which asked that the state Board of Education check into the incidents because of the poor job done by the district.

Eugene T. Paslov, state superintendent of public instruction, said his office determined that the district

had not checked out all the available information to determine if the allegations were true.

"We asked that they reopen a formal investigation based on the judgment of our staff that the district had not exhausted all avenues of information," Paslov said.

Specifically, the district had not interviewed the person making the complaint. In addition, other witnesses were found who could substantiate the allegations, Paslov said. The district agreed to reinvestigate and about a week ago imposed the disciplinary measures.

John Cummings, spokesman for the teachers' association, said the disciplinary action vindicates the employee who made the allegations and the union, which took the responsibility of asking for another investigation.

"This action will send notice to all administrators that this type of harassment will not be allowed in the school district," Cummings said.

He said it was unfortunate that the association had to take its request to the state board, when it is the school district's job to investigate thoroughly any allegations of harassment.

But after two "bungled" investigations in which the district did not even interview the person making the complaint, there was nowhere else to turn, Cummings said.

—By Sean Whale R.J.



PHILADELPHIA MAYOR PAYS TRIBUTE TO PEPSI-COLA — Frank Washington (l), Community Relations Manager of Pepsi-Cola, Philadelphia and Peter Swanson (r), Area Vice President, Pepsi-Cola Bottling Group, accept a special tribute from Philadelphia Mayor W. Wilson Goode during the awards banquet of the Third Annual UNCF Celebrity Golf Tournament which raised nearly \$60,000 for the United Negro College Fund.

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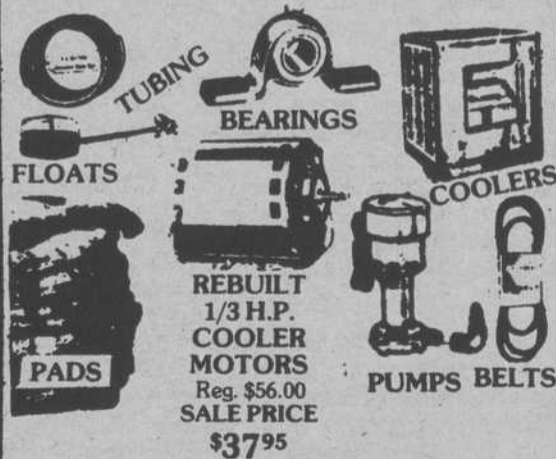
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