FAMU BOT addresses Financial Irregularities and Impropieties

By TyLisa C. Johnson  On October 22, 2015  Tweet

An emergency Board of Trustees meeting was called Wednesday in response to recent “Reported Financial Irregularities and/or Impropieties.” The meeting was set for 7:30-8:30 a.m. Thursday via teleconference in the President’s Conference Room.

Documents released Wednesday revealed Elmira Mangum, Florida A&M University president, failed to provide documents proving approval by the BOT for renovations to the president’s home and also that improper bonuses were given out.

According to a memo sent from Cheryl Buchanan, audit coordinator, on October 1, Mangum spent a total of $371,738 in “capital improvements and repairs to the President’s home and its grounds”. Buchanan said she was unable to find purchase orders that had been approved by the BOT, and couldn’t find documentation that the Board was notified of the renovation or garage construction.

“Paragraph 6.2 of the President’s contract states the President shall obtain prior approval from the Board (or its designee) for any capital improvements or repairs to the home or its grounds which have a project cost over $10,000,” Buchanan said.

Mangum sent a memorandum Wednesday evening to the BOT in response to the emergency
authorize any unpermitted or unlawful renovations or additions made to the house.” Mangum added that the purchase order for the renovations began prior to her term as president.

“At the time of the purchase order, there was no executed employment contract, and, as such, I could not have possibly violated a term of contract that did not then exist,” Mangum said.

She continues, “It is important to remember that the President’s residence is the University’s property, and any improvements made to it are not for my profit or gain, but the University’s.”

A memorandum from Richard Givens, vice president for audit and compliance, to Rufus Montgomery, the BOT chair, and three others BOT members, revealed a total of $55,000 in bonuses were paid to Dale Cassidy, vice president of finance and administration; Milton Overton, FAMU athletics director; and Marcella David, university provost and vice president for academic affairs. These bonuses, according to a notice sent on Oct. 19, were in direct violation of the Florida statutes.

“Payment of bonuses from E&G funds is in violation of Section 215.425, Florida Statutes,” Givens wrote.

In the response memorandum, Mangum notes that each payment was authorized in the offer of employment and the payment to David was the only improper payment.

“Except for the payment to Provost David, all of the payments were processed properly and charged to a lawfully appropriate funding source,” Mangum said.

Regarding the improper payment to David, Mangum said once the error was identified it was immediately corrected.

“This was an error -- and nothing more,” Mangum said. “I take matters of budgeting and financial operations serious and would obviously not purposely misuse funds,” she said.

Tensions have been rising in the relationship between Mangum and the BOT.

“I write this response as a last-ditch effort to truly reset and work with this Board on actually moving FAMU forward,” Mangum wrote.

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