

Hampshire Gazette - State Audit Cites Problems at Hadley Housing Authority 6/24/2009

HADLEY - A state audit of the Hadley Housing Authority finds the agency did not conduct housing inspections last year and needs to tighten up its payroll controls.

The report by State Auditor A. Joseph DeNucci found that the authority, which runs the 40-unit Golden Court housing complex, did not inspect housing units in 2008 or conduct inventory inspections.

Annual housing inspections are required by law to ensure that dwellings meet minimum standards for safe, decent and sanitary housing.

The audit covered the period of October 2006 to December 2008. It found record-keeping flaws in employee sick time accruals and unsupervised time sheet approvals for executive director Darlene Cohen, which were not being reviewed and approved by the authority's board of commissioners.

Joseph L. Fitzgibbon, chairman of the Hadley Housing Authority's board, declined to comment on the audit Tuesday.

The audit also cited questionable payments totaling \$2,824 to the director and a maintenance employee for work performed on authority's "modernization project" Auditors could not find documentation to support these employees' having worked extra hours beyond their regularly scheduled hours.

Without supporting documentation, "It appears that the maintenance worker was compensated twice for the same work hours," the audit states.

In response to the findings, housing authority officials cited increased demands on its maintenance budget, including snow removal, as the reason for not conducting housing inspections. The inspections are now under way, and the authority plans to conduct annual apartment inspections each December, according to the report.

The agency contends that the \$2,824 in questioned payments to the executive director and maintenance worker had earlier been approved by the state Department of Housing and Community Development.

But DeNucci's team says those payments should not have been approved, in part, because under state guidelines, executive directors of housing authorities cannot receive bonus money for working on modernization projects. The audit additionally recommends the state DHCD update its own guidelines.