



Cumberland County freeholder deputy director named in law firm ethics complaint

Cumb freeholder candidates Doug Long.jpg

Cumberland County Freeholder Deputy Director Douglas M. Long (*TBA*)

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TRENTON — The Woodbury law firm operated by Doug Long, who serves as deputy director of the Cumberland County freeholder board, and his law partner, has been accused of using nearly \$200,000 from client trust funds to pay for the firm's operating expenses, according to a complaint.

The disciplinary action complaint was filed by the New Jersey Supreme Court's Office of Attorney Ethics.

The transfer of funds was allegedly due to the failure of the principals of the firm to oversee the firm's bookkeeper, the complaint says.

Long and Albert K. Marmero, partners at Long Marmero and Associates, were accused by state ethics officials with "negligent misappropriation" of funds maintained in the law firm's accounts and failure to supervise a non-lawyer assistant, the complaint says.

Attorneys are commonly in charge of safeguarding client funds or property in a trust account for future use.

Accounting records for all accounts were maintained by office manager at the firm, Colleen Redman, using QuickBooks, according to the complaint. Long and Marmero delegated the firm's record keeping responsibilities to Redman, who is not an attorney.

According to the complaint filed on Feb. 19, the firm's "trust account funds were regularly invaded and utilized as a 'line of credit' to fund the firm's operating expenses."

The law firm answered the complaint in May and the matter remains pending before an ethics committee.

The complaint alleges that funds were transferred from the client trust accounts to the firm's business account to cover overdrafts and payroll taxes.

The complaint says clients' funds were used without their consent.

The complaint cites numerous transactions in which a total of \$199,255.42 was allegedly "borrowed" from client trust funds in order to cover the firm's payroll taxes, business checking account overdrafts and repayment of loans given to the firm by Long's brother, Jeff Long.

Redman responded to the complaint Wednesday and said, "I made some unintentional clerical errors, but the bar has since trained me in the correct process."

Long also responded to the allegations Wednesday.

"Colleen wasn't properly trained to utilize accounts correctly — and for that, I take full responsibility."

"It's important to note that neither myself, nor my partner are being accused of any wrongdoing ... Instead, this is an issue of negligent supervision of an employee."

The Office of Attorney Ethics conducted a random audit of the firm covering the period from April 1, 2009 to June 30, 2012.

The complaint says, "had either (Long or Marmero) inspected the firm's books and records during the relevant period, they would have known of Redman's regular and systematic invasion of trust account funds to pay the firm's operating expenses."

"Our firm is currently working with the Office of Attorney Ethics to resolve an issue that stems from several instances of bookkeeping in the past that did not meet technical requirements," Marmero said in a statement issued Wednesday.

A spokesperson for the state declined any further comment on the complaint.

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