



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release July 1, 2024

On June 28th, the Alabama Department of Examiners of Public Accounts released a Special Report on the Cottonwood Ambulance and Rescue Squad. This report identified \$847,539.91 in ineligible and/or undocumented purchases or cash withdrawals from the restricted funds of that Rescue Squad. Among the findings were undocumented cash withdrawals totaling \$139,523.64, and payments to various vendors without proper documentation, including payments to an online casino. Following the examination, the state's Chief Examiner determined that evidence had been provided to constitute just cause for relieving charges in the amount of \$692,531.81, leaving \$155,008.10 that must be repaid by the organization's President, Ricky Stokes, to the Cottonwood Rescue Squad.

The Houston County Commission has maintained a firm stance since the inception of this investigation that such instances of misuse of public finances have no place in our community. The misuse of taxpayer funds, intended to ensure the safety and well-being of our citizens, is wholly unacceptable and deeply concerning.

As part of the standard procedure, it is our understanding that the State Examiners have certified the report, and these findings will be forwarded to the Attorney General of Alabama. In the interim, the Houston County Commission will consult with its legal counsel and the EMS Association to determine the appropriate course of action moving forward.

D. Brandon Shoupe
Chairman

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