

AKA must give up records; Judge demands bookkeeping in probe of payment to past president

Publication: Chicago Sun-Times (IL)

Date: October 30, 2010

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Section: News

Edition: Final

Page: 10

Word Count: 406

A judge in Chicago has ordered **Alpha Kappa Alpha**, the nation's oldest historically black, college-based sorority, to provide a listing within 28 days of all of its bank and credit card accounts so they can be reviewed by auditors looking into allegations the organization's money has been misspent. The Chicago-headquartered national sorority previously provided some files to investigators for a review won by former sorority president Julia Purnell. But they were confusing and incomplete, according to Purnell's lawyer.

Purnell has fought to examine the sorority's financial documents in the wake of allegations that the organization's funds were improperly spent during the 2006-2010 term of Barbara A. McKinzie as its president. Purnell had hoped to present findings at the group's national meeting in St. Louis last July.

The sorority argued that the information wasn't available at that time because those who had it were preparing for the conference. As a result, the group was held in contempt of court.

A four-day initial review of one bank account, along with American Express records and expense forms, indicated that McKinzie -- who is a certified public accountant and former financial executive at the Chicago Housing Authority and the Cook County Forest Preserve District -- was paid about \$2 million over the four years that she held the office of president, which traditionally has been an unpaid post in the sorority.

That review found what Purnell's lawyer called questionable spending that included \$1.4 million in retirement pay and \$262,000 in tax payments on McKinzie's behalf. It also found that the organization had paid for purchases McKinzie made at Paris boutiques, as well as for groceries and fast-food purchased near her home.

Purnell's attorney said there were about 80 checks missing for amounts in excess of \$10,000, that half of the expenses on an American Express account lacked coding and that records for one account -- called the Profit Fund -- couldn't be found, though the auditors discovered checks for about \$350,000 written against it.

AKA also reimbursed McKinzie for 31 lost-luggage claims for a total of more than \$13,000, the review found.

McKinzie did not appear in court Friday. Carolyn House Stewart, the sorority's current president and executive director, and McKinzie ally Deborah Dangerfield attended the hearing.

"We have complied with all orders of the court," said House Stewart, who is also an attorney.

Photo: File / Former AKA sorority president Barbara A. McKinzie. left, next to a wax statue of her that has drawn scrutiny.

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