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County elections workers fired

Four terminated following investigation into misuse of warehouse

By **JASON ARMSTRONG**
Tribune-Herald staff writer

Hawaii County has fired four elections workers, including the program administrator, following an investigation into alcohol storage and private business activities allegedly conducted at a Hilo elections warehouse.

"They have received termination notices already," County

Council Chairman Dominic Yagong said of three letters dated Friday.

A separate notice had been sent earlier to another employee, whose termination appeal is now at the arbitration level, he said.

The infractions dealt with "violations of county policy," the Hamakua councilman said Wednesday.

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YAGONG

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and jeopardize the process," Yagong said when asked for specific reasons for the discharges.

Last July 7, Yagong and County Clerk Jamae Kawauchi visited the roughly 2,000-

square-foot warehouse the county rents at 201 Makaala St. Cor-

minate the employees) is made by the county clerk, but I was involved in the decision-making process," Yagong said.

Kawauchi confirmed four employees have "separated" from the county, but she couldn't divulge why.

However, she identified the employees as Pat Nakamoto, a

See **WORKERS** Page A6

EXHIBIT "5."

WORKERS

From front page

longtime elections program administrator; Glen Shikuma, warehouse manager; Shyla Ayau; and Elton Nakagawa.

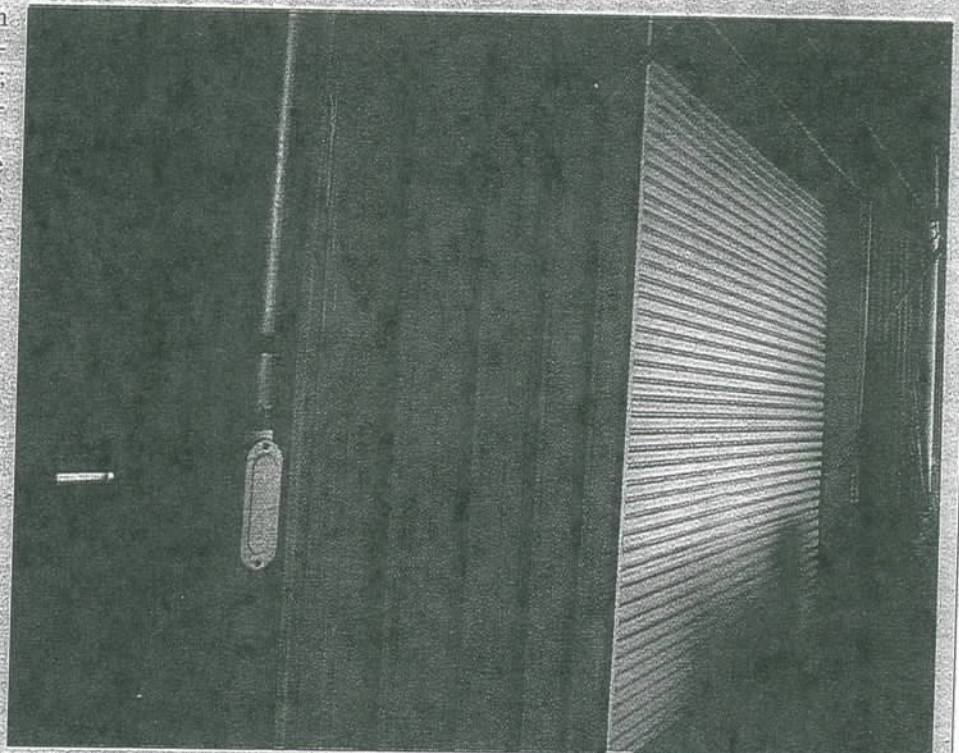
None is listed in the phone book. Other efforts to reach each for comment were unsuccessful Wednesday.

The investigation started with Shikuma, who is accused of running a sign-printing business out of the elections warehouse and also storing alcohol there.

In July, Shikuma denied any wrongdoing and said he had "no idea" what the investigation was about. An elections employee since 1999, he was later transferred to the main elections office in the Hawaii County Building.

County employees are barred from using government time, equipment or facilities for private business, according to county law. Also, the county has had a no-alcohol policy since 2005.

One source said he's seen Shikuma storing empty alcohol bottles in the warehouse and also attending a year-end party, complete with alcohol, held in the parking lot.



HOLLYN JOHNSON/Tribune-Herald

A Hilo elections warehouse is seen recently at 201 Makaala St.

One day after the Nov. 2, 2010, general election, Shikuma was arrested and charged with drunken driving. He was later convicted and sentenced for the DUI violation.

According to the county's budget, 22 people, including 10 temporary employees, work for the

county's Elections Division, which is "responsible for all elections activities in the county." The four terminated employees collectively represent one-third of the permanent staff.

The council has already paid Corporate Specialized Intelligence & Investigations LLC \$1,000 and

agreed to pay up to another \$1,000 for its investigation into the matter. Kawauchi said in November.

On Wednesday, she said the cost hasn't risen, but couldn't immediately identify the total taxpayer expense.

Email Jason Armstrong at jarmstrong@hawaiitribune-herald.com.

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County fires four workers over election scandal

BY JASON ARMSTRONG
STEPHENS MEDIA

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"They have received termination notices already," County Council Chairman Dominic Yagong said of three letters dated Friday.

A separate notice had been sent earlier to another employee, whose termination appeal is now at the arbitra-

tion level, he said.

The infractions dealt with "violations of county policy," the Hamakua councilman said Wednesday.

"I don't want to go into details and jeopardize the process," Yagong said when asked for specific reasons for the discharges.

Last July 7, Yagong and County Clerk Jamae Kawauchi visited the roughly 2,000-square-foot warehouse the county rents at 210 Makaala Street. Concerned with what he saw, Yagong ordered the locks changed that night and that an independent investigation be conducted.

"The warehouse remains closed as the Police Department is continuing its investigation," Yagong said Wednesday.

However, it's still being used as a storage facility for election ballot boxes, he said.

"The final decision (to terminate the employees) is made by the county clerk, but I was involved in the decision-making process," Yagong said.

Kawauchi confirmed four employees have "separated" from the county, but couldn't divulge why.

However, she identified the employees as: Pat Nakamoto, elections program adminis-

trator; Glen Shikuma, warehouse manager; Shyla Ayau; and Elton Nakagawa.

None is listed in the phone book. Other efforts to reach each for comment were unsuccessful Wednesday.

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