

NITRO TREASURER DEFENDS EXPENSE STAND REFUSES TO PAY \$60 LONDON SOUVENIR PURCHASE BY POLICE OFFICER ON OFFICIAL VISIT

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Nitro Treasurer John Young is refusing to pay the expenses of a city police officer who traveled to England and bought souvenirs with a state-issued credit card.

Last month, **Nitro** Officer Don Scurlock and a Charleston police officer flew to England, carrying evidence for a new forensic test prosecutors hope will help solve a pair of slayings.

Kanawha County prosecutor Mark Plants said the officers also carried evidence from several cold cases.

Young said the city gave Scurlock a state-issued purchasing card for the trip. Travel expenses of about \$1,500 were paid with a purchasing card issued to the police department.

Young said Scurlock charged about \$500 for meals and hotel rooms on the card, but also bought about \$60 worth of souvenirs when his own credit card was declined.

"You're not allowed to use the card for personal expenses," Young said. "Period."

Nitro Mayor Rusty Casto said Scurlock offered to reimburse the town for the souvenirs, but Young said that isn't the point.

"He made a personal purchase on the card, which is a super no-no," Young said.

Scurlock then asked town officials to pay him a daily allowance, and asked the city to let him pay the state back for the bills, Young said. He said the arrangement would have given the officer \$720, more than the amount of the expenses.

"We've already paid the expenses," Young said. "It's really not a lot of money. It's the principle of the thing."

Young said he won't pay the bill unless ordered to do so by the City Council.

"I refused to pay it," he said. "The mayor is angry with me and the police chief is angry with me because I wouldn't pay it."

Several **Nitro** residents were outraged over the attention Scurlock has received for using the city-issued credit card.

According to Young, Scurlock submitted an expense report after he returned, with the intention of paying for all the expenses on the credit card.

"I don't want to pay him per diem, because the city already paid his expenses," Young said.

Tempers flared at Tuesday's meeting over the issue and several residents complained.

"I thought the matter was taken care of," said Casto, surprised the issue was so prominent at the meeting.

Young and other council members were quick to vouch for Scurlock's integrity as an officer after he purchased the \$60 in souvenirs.

"This is certainly not on Scurlock," Councilman Dave Casebolt said. "It was an honest mistake."

In other business, council members allowed Young to deposit \$300,000 into an account through the state Board of Treasury Investments with a 2 percent floating interest rate. According to Young, this will allow the city's surplus to gain interest unavailable through the current account at Huntington Bank.

Councilman Bill Javins told council members the city's street repairs had been completed under budget. According to Javins, \$85,414 has been spent on paving projects including portions of Ivy Street and Rockledge Drive.

Council members also agreed to use the remaining \$14,117 in the paving fund on new concrete to repair sinkholes on Ash Street and Walker Street.

Also Tuesday night, Executive Assistant Sandy Saunders asked **Nitro** council members to pay Terradon Communications for the costs of a website for the city.

According to Saunders, the communication firm has already built a skeleton site and provided city officials with e-mail accounts for free.

Saunders said that the city could get the service at a greatly discounted price, around \$2,000. Normally a website would cost over \$15,000, she said.

Council members insisted that Saunders obtain other bids from several companies before making a final decision.

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