

Personnel Action  
Officer Joshua Speed

**Introduction:**

Integrity in the public service, especially for police officers and persons who hold positions of authority in a civil society is not subject to a sliding scale. Whether it is one individual act or the accumulation of multiple incidents, the effect is not subject to different measurement.

There is a well articulated four-prong behavior standard for employees of the City of Decatur that it is not acceptable to lie, cheat, steal or purposely hurt another person. For the Decatur Police Department, Chief Booker has publically repeatedly at numerous public, City and department events that those who “lie, cheat or steal” will not be tolerated.

Officer Speed participated in the City’s grievance process, including a hearing before an independent hearing officer. The hearing officer’s reports provide an extensive recitation of the details and an exceptional analysis of the legal issues involved that will not be repeated here.

**Discussion:**

The facts are clearly established in the hearing officer’s report. Officer Speed found \$7.00 under the driver’s seat of a City of Decatur patrol car. The found money was divided between Officer Speed (\$5.00) and Lt. Jackson (\$2.00). The money did not belong to either Officer Speed or Lt. Jackson. A third officer refused any money. Officer Speed completed his assigned shift without reporting it or attempting to find the owner. Officer Speed was off the following day, and had not attempted to return his portion of the money prior to being contacted as part of the Department’s internal investigation process (at which time he surrendered the money to the Department).

However, approximately six to eight hours after the money was found, Lt. Jackson added \$5.00 to his \$2.00, posted the total of \$7.00 on the department bulletin board and sent an email announcing the found money.<sup>1</sup> There is no record that Lt. Jackson attempted to contact Officer Speed to encourage him to participate in returning the money. However, Officer Speed testified that it was his intent to clear the matter up when he returned to duty, but he was not able to do so in light of Lt. Jackson’s intervening corrective action.<sup>2</sup> In light of the conflict between Officer Speed’s actions at the time the money was found and his stated intent to take corrective action on his next shift, I do not concur with the hearing officer’s finding that the violation of the department’s General Order, Conformance to Laws is sustained<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> After receiving a text from the third officer urging him to post the money and report it.

<sup>2</sup> See page 4 of Hearing Officer’s Report “In the matter of Joshua Speed.”

<sup>3</sup> See page 6 of Hearing Officer’s Report “In the matter of Joshua Speed.”

I concur with the hearing officer's conclusion that Officer Speed violated the department's General Orders in regards to Unbecoming conduct<sup>4</sup> and Property and evidence<sup>5</sup>. Taken together, do these policy violations qualify as terminating events; or, is some lesser disciplinary action warranted that recognizes his record as that of an outstanding officer for the City of Decatur Police Department.

**Decision:**

Upon review, I do not concur that termination is the appropriate action but that the following be instituted:

1. Officer Speed will be reinstated retroactive to his termination date, but demoted from the job classification of Master Police Officer to Police Officer with a three-step reduction in pay, from \$51,750 to \$48,048 and he will be placed on a one-year probation with the department.
2. The period from October 21, 2016 – November 17, 2016 will be recorded as a four week suspension without pay.
3. Officer Speed will provide both an oral and written apology to Chief Booker.
4. Officer Speed will complete a course in Law Enforcement Ethics and Integrity or a substantially similar course selected by the Department within one year.



Peggy Merriss  
City Manager

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<sup>4</sup> See page 6 of Hearing Officer's Report "In the matter of Joshua Speed."

<sup>5</sup> See page 6-7 of Hearing Officer's Report "In the matter of Joshua Speed."