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## Ex-employee sues ousted Detroit airport CEO Turkia Mullin, Wayne County over his firing

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Taylor Segue III said he still isn't sure why Turkia Awada Mullin, his former boss at Wayne County's economic development agency, was so aggressive in demanding that he transfer more than \$175,000 from a federally funded program to a nonprofit corporation run by her.

But he said Monday that he's certain his refusal to do so cost him his \$110,000-a-year job as a senior project manager.

Segue told the Free Press he believed it would be illegal to transfer the money because those funds were supposed to be used for the federally financed New Market Tax Credit Program.

"And I don't do illegal for you or anybody else," he said he told Mullin, who left her county position to become CEO at Metro Airport. She was fired Monday.

Airport spokesman Scott Wintner called Segue a "disgruntled employee" who was taking advantage of the growing controversy stemming from the \$200,000 severance Mullin received when she stepped down as head of the county's economic development effort for the \$250,000-a-year job running the airport.

"Not only did she never ask this individual to transfer money, she doesn't have the authorization to do that anyway," Wintner said.

But Segue kept a Nov. 23, 2010, e-mail from Mullin, which reads: "I need you to take the appropriate action to make sure the \$170 k in funds are transferred."

The e-mail does not say where the money was to be sent, but Segue said Mullin had been pressuring him for weeks to send it to a nonprofit fund, associated with the county, that was set up to aid economic development efforts.

Segue said he insisted on informing the fund's board about the situation and leaving the decision up to them.

He prepared a briefing on the matter for the board, but days before it went before the board, Segue said, Mullin's top deputy and a county lawyer fired him April 4.

"They couldn't even give me a reason why," Segue said Monday. "All I got was a box ... no \$200,000."

Segue sued the county and Mullin on Monday in Wayne County Circuit Court, claiming wrongful termination. He and attorney Michael Pitt said they had discussed litigation since his firing. Pitt said he wanted to sue while Mullin was still a public employee.

Segue's lawsuit has been assigned to Circuit Judge John Murphy. He hasn't asked for specific damages except for "the amount he is found to be entitled to."

Segue said the \$175,000 came from money found in several local banks used by developers who received federal tax credits for projects designed to rehabilitate neighborhoods and create job opportunities for low-income residents.

Those credits generated fees for the county, which were administered by a nonprofit agency created by the county called the Community Development Entity (CDE).

Segue advised Mullin that the best use of the money would be to transfer it into the main CDE account, so it could be used to administer the tax credit program.

The U.S. Department of Treasury awarded Wayne County the authority to issue \$25 million worth of tax credits in 2004 and another \$50 million in tax credits in 2009.

"She got really aggressive with me about moving the money to the foundation," Segue said, referring to the Wayne County Business Development Corp., a nonprofit foundation headed up by Mullin and a board of directors who had business dealings with the county. "She was really hell-bent."

The corporation paid Mullin \$75,000 on top of the \$200,000 salary she made as chief economic development officer for the county.

Segue noted he was fired three days before the CDE board was to consider a resolution to transfer the money to the foundation.

"I'm sure I was removed to keep me away from that board meeting," he said.