

Auditor says school lacks bid process

Payments made to vendors without competitive quotes

JUSTIN MURPHY

@CITIZENMURPHY

Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School has no written procurement process and has not sought bids for a number of services since it opened in 2011, according to an audit from state Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli.

State audits often nitpick municipalities' bookkeeping processes — failure to get a second signature on a check, or to make deposits on time. The RCMCS audit is unusual in its scope and simplicity.

“The board has not established adequate written policies or procedures for procuring services and has not provided adequate oversight of the procurement process,” the auditors wrote. “As a result, school officials did not use competitive methods when procuring goods or services.”

The auditors found \$1.3 million worth of payments to 21 vendors that had been chosen without seeking competitive quotes. They included \$310,000 for student support services, including a large contract with Hillside Work-Scholarship Program; \$99,000 for security; and \$84,000 for contractors. The school does require board approval for purchases exceeding \$20,000, but it failed to follow that policy when it paid \$62,000 for 150 laptops and \$49,000 of audio and video equipment. The audit noted the school could have saved \$4,500 on the laptops by using a statewide bid contract.

Board of Trustees President Kevin McCormick said the school was “pleased” with the audit and planned to enact its recommendations. RCMCS is a high school located off St. Paul Street; it served about 200 students in 2015-16. Its five-year charter expires this year and will require reauthorization by the Board of Regents to remain open. In December, a former administrator sued the school and founder Dennis Francione, alleging Francione had sexually harassed her at work.

JMURPHY7@ [Gannett.com](mailto:JMURPHY7@Gannett.com)



New York state Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli cites Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School's lack of bids since 2011.

THE JOURNAL NEWS

Wednesday, 01/25/2017 Pag.A04

Copyright © 2017 Democrat and Chronicle 1/25/2017