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3800 Municipal Way  
Hilliard, Ohio 43026  
(P) 614.876.7361  
[www.hilliardohio.gov](http://www.hilliardohio.gov)

**Don Schonhardt**  
Mayor

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**City of Hilliard Media Contact**

Anna Subler  
614-334-2470  
[asubler@hilliardohio.gov](mailto:asubler@hilliardohio.gov)

**Former City Employee Pleads Guilty to Theft in Office**

Hilliard (OH) – Heather Ernst, former Deputy Director of Recreation and Parks, pled guilty today to felony charges including theft in office, a felony of the third degree, and attempted tampering with records, a felony of the fourth degree. These charges resulted from an investigation by the Hilliard Division of Police that determined Ernst had stolen more than \$540,000 in cash from the City’s two aquatic centers over a five-year period.

Ernst pled guilty this morning before Judge Cain of the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas. Judge Cain will hold a sentencing hearing on November 16<sup>th</sup> in Courtroom 7F.

According to the City’s Law Director, Tracy Bradford, Ernst faces up to four-and-a-half years in prison and fines up to \$15,000. “We will be requesting that restitution by Ernst to the City be included as part of the Court’s sentencing.”

“With the plea of guilty on these felony charges, it is an admission by her that she violated the public trust. Ms. Ernst manipulated the City’s financial controls for her own personal gain and I am pleased that she is ready to accept the consequences of her actions,” said Mayor Don Schonhardt.

Ernst resigned from the City on November 1, 2017 shortly after a criminal theft investigation was initiated by the Hilliard Division of Police. In March of this year, Ernst was indicted on one count of theft, a third-degree felony; one count of theft in office, a third-degree felony; two counts of tampering with evidence, a third-degree felony; and four counts of filing incomplete, false and fraudulent tax records, a fifth-degree felony.

Questions in regard to prosecution of this case are referred to the Franklin County Prosecutor’s Office by contacting Christy McCreary, Public Information Officer, at 614-525-6396 or to her at [cmccreary@franklincountyohio.gov](mailto:cmccreary@franklincountyohio.gov).

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