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**Don Schonhardt**  
Mayor

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**Former City Employee Sentenced for Theft in Office**

Hilliard (OH) – Heather Ernst, former Deputy Director of Recreation and Parks, was sentenced this morning to one year in prison followed by three years of community control for theft in office and attempted tampering with records charges. Franklin County Court of Common Pleas Judge David Cain also ordered Ernst to pay \$271,898 in restitution to the City.

“I first want to thank our Hilliard Division of Police and the Franklin County Prosecutor’s Office for all of the hard work they put into obtaining the seven felony indictments against Ms. Ernst, and for the resulting guilty pleas from her on two of those counts. While she is sentenced today for her deliberate, criminal acts and for violating the public trust, I don’t think there is any sentence that could be imposed that would make up for all of the harm and destruction she has caused to so many due to her selfish, criminal acts,” said Mayor Donald J. Schonhardt.

“While the criminal case has concluded, the City will continue with its civil case against Ms. Ernst to discover and retrieve every dollar that she stole and used for her own personal gain,” said the Mayor.

On Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> of this year, Heather Ernst pleaded guilty to two felony charges stemming from an investigation by the Hilliard Division of Police, which determined that more than \$540,000 in cash was missing from daily pool admission fees over a five-year period, and that Ernst had made large cash deposits into her personal account during that same time period.

Ernst resigned from the City on Nov. 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.

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