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Fire Dept No Longer under IRS Investigation

The IRS has completed its investigations on the Volunteer Fire Co. of Halfway, Maryland, according to its president, James Kimble. The investigations were on alleged missing gaming money. Kimble said the investigation that started last year has been detrimental to fund raising efforts by the Fire Co. This included the annual fund raising events and bingo attendances.

The Fire department has two annual fund raising events – one for fire services and another for ambulance services. In August last year, Kimble contacted Washington County Director of Gaming, Jim Hovis about the apparent disappearance of tip jar and bingo money. Hovis then investigated the issue before alerting the Maryland State Police Department in November. This resulted in investigations by the police and the IRS.

Trooper 1st class, Scott Bare a criminal investigator for the police department and IRS investigators in their criminal and civil divisions investigated the case. The IRS investigators looked into 3 months of financial records from 2009 but nothing was found to be amiss. The investigators then turned the case over to the civil division of the IRS for a more thorough audit in July.

Bare said that he interviewed people at the Halfway fire company together with the IRS investigators. After their investigations, they submitted all the information gleaned to the Washington State Attorney's office for review

about two weeks ago and are awaiting a reply. Bare said he is also waiting for any possible further information from the IRS.

The civil division would not confirm if they had accepted the case and were conducting the audit. The IRS regional office also could not confirm if an investigation is ongoing as it is against the law to do so. Similarly, the Washington County Deputy State attorney Joseph Michael said in a voice mail message that the state would not confirm if any matter is under investigation and if it was, then the office will not comment until after charges are made.

Hovis said he was not conducting anymore investigations on the Halfway fire company while awaiting reports of the state police and IRS investigations.

In a written statement, Kimble claimed that the IRS has not found anything to pursue in this matter. In the same letter, Kimble also mentioned that the US government is declining to prosecute and has closed the case, referring to the US Attorney's Office.

At the same time, Kimble said during this incident, Halfway fire company has taken steps to improve its bookkeeping, accountability and reporting of Bingo activities.