

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Arlington residents object to hauler's temp laborers

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BY MARTIN ROZENMAN

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Upper Arlington residents opposed to the city's switch to a private trash hauler have added safety concerns to their complaints about poor service.

Residents and some officials are concerned that background checks promised by city officials aren't being provided by Texas-based Inland Service Corp. Inland took over collection in early April.

James Clevenger, who was born Dec. 18, 1977, was a trash collector riding on an Inland truck on May 16 when it was involved in an accident on Northwest Boulevard, according to a Columbus police report.

In April 2006, James J. Clevenger, with the same birth date, pleaded guilty to theft, a fifth-degree felony, in Franklin County Common Pleas Court for stealing \$646 from a Speedway SuperAmerica in Hilliard on Feb. 4, 2005, court records show.

Efforts to contact Clevenger were unsuccessful.

City spokeswoman Emma Speight said the city attorney's office had looked into Clevenger's case and confirmed it was a minor charge in 2005.

Joe Valentino, Upper Arlington's assistant city manager, said Inland officials told him that Clevenger has "been with them since Day One. He's giving 150 percent, and they're pleased with his effort."

Monty Davison, Inland's director of market development, said Clevenger is not an Inland employee, but rather was hired through a temp agency.

Inland checked the backgrounds of its 10 employees working in Upper Arlington, Davison said, but not for the six to eight temporary workers.

"They are laborers on the back of trucks," he said. "There is no way we can run background checks on them. We have to rely on temporary services."

Davison said he does not know of temporary agencies that check the backgrounds of their workers.

"These are temporary laborers who are not operating vehicles or collecting trash at the door," Davison said. "Inland employees collect at the door and have passed background checks."

The city does not do background checks on its contractors' employees, City Attorney Jeanine Hummer said.

Councilman Wade Steen, who pushed for background checks before the contract was signed, is concerned.

"I thought there would be background checks on all employees," he said.

Michael Schadek, a resident leading an initiative petition drive against the privatization of trash pickup, said city officials let residents down.

"We were assured by city officials there would be thorough checks on all employees," he said.

As for the quality of service, Valentino said Inland is now up to speed with what the disbanded Solid Waste Division provided.

With city employees providing the service, the city got about 15 to 25 complaints per day, he said. Inland brought more complaints at first, but they've tapered off to match the city's service, he said.

But residents who wanted the city to continue to provide trash collection say service has suffered.

"Seventy-five percent of the residents I talk with are unhappy with some quality of the service," Steen said. "It's not at the same level we were receiving."

Schadek said opponents have almost 600 more signatures than they need to place the issue on the November ballot. But city officials say their effort is futile because state law prohibits reversal of the contract.

mrozenman@dispatch.com