

Adams Confidant, Timothy Pearson, Leaves Casino Company

Written by Administrator
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A retired Police Department inspector and confidant of Mayor Eric Adams has left his job as an executive at New York City's only casino, the company said Sunday, four days after The New York Times reported that he was collecting salaries from both the casino and the Adams administration.

The mayor hired the retired inspector, Timothy Pearson, without fanfare earlier this year under an unusual arrangement that allowed Mr. Pearson to keep both his job at the casino, Resorts World New York City, where he was a vice president overseeing security, and collect his police pension. Officials have declined to say how much he is earning from the city-paid position.

Mr. Pearson's hiring as a senior adviser for public safety and Covid recovery came as the casino, owned by a Malaysian gambling conglomerate, is seeking to expand its operations in New York City. Watchdogs said that his position presented an apparent conflict of interest because City Hall support for that effort could prove critical.

Brought on by the New York City Economic Development Corporation, a nonprofit controlled by the mayor, in May, Mr. Pearson was collecting salaries from the city and Resorts World in addition to his police pension for the past few months.

Good government advocates had also criticized Mr. Pearson's roles as public safety adviser to the mayor and casino security executive as a separate conflict of interest because the city position created the potential for him to provide more police resources to Resorts World.

A spokesman for the mayor, Fabien Levy, had said he did not see Mr. Pearson's dual role as a conflict.

On Sunday, a statement issued by Resorts World said that he had left the casino job.

"Tim is a distinguished hero who served the city for many years as a leader at N.Y.P.D. Tim used those same skills to keep our facility and community safe for over a decade," the

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statement said. “We support his decision to lend his expertise to the city in its pursuit of making our streets safer, and we wish him well.”

Resorts World declined to say how much Mr. Pearson was earning in the executive role.

Mr. Levy on Sunday defended the hiring of Mr. Pearson, saying New Yorkers were lucky “that he has now chosen to focus all his efforts solely on our city’s public safety and Covid recovery efforts.”

Mr. Levy added that the move was unrelated to recent reporting that Mr. Pearson held two jobs.

Mr. Pearson declined to comment.

After the reports of Mr. Pearson’s hiring, Mr. Adams said it was the right decision.

“Well darn it, I want someone that I’ve known over 30 years, that has the experience to deal with public safety,” he said on NY1. “This is a great hire.”

He did not address the ethical concerns raised by Mr. Pearson’s collecting a public and private salary at the same time, but said that the city was acting within the law.

John Kaehny, executive director of Reinvent Albany, a government ethics watchdog, described Mr. Pearson’s exit from the casino job as a good development.

“It reduces the conflict of interest that he had,” said Mr. Kaehny, who described the prior arrangement as an “impossible situation,” because, at City Hall, Mr. Pearson might be privy to information that could undercut other casino bidders.

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Mr. Pearson, 62, had also been able to keep collecting his \$124,000 annual police pension because his government salary is paid through the Economic Development Corporation.

Officials working for traditional city agencies are not permitted by state law to simultaneously collect a city pension.

Earlier this week, the Economic Development Corporation's president, Andrew Kimball, declined to answer questions about the arrangement under which his organization was paying Mr. Pearson.

Mr. Levy said earlier this week that Mr. Pearson's municipal job responsibilities had no overlap with casino policy, and instead included working with law enforcement to help improve public safety, the centerpiece of Mr. Adams's mayoral agenda.

Mr. Levy also said Mr. Pearson would have recused himself should any interaction between the casino and the development corporation have arisen.

In addition to advising Mr. Adams on public safety and Covid recovery, Mr. Pearson is responsible for coming up with and executing a plan to keep city schools open and interacting with the business community, Mr. Levy said.

His hiring came as casino companies have been scrambling to position themselves to take advantage of recent changes in state gambling law. In April, New York State approved three new licenses for full-scale casinos. Resorts World, which right now only offers electronic games, is considered a front-runner to receive one of the licenses. Having one would allow the casino to also offer table games like poker.

The convoluted licensing regime will require several layers of approval, including the support of four of six members on a community advisory committee. The mayor has one vote on that board. But he is expected to wield outsize influence.

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