

DA: County controller under investigation for wiretapping

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Controller Walter L. Griffith Jr.

Luzerne County Controller Walter L. Griffith Jr. is under criminal investigation for illegally recording dozens of conversations over the last two years, District Attorney Stefanie Salavantis told *The Citizens' Voice*, a Times-Shamrock newspaper.

Griffith recorded telephone and face-to-face conversations with numerous people, including attorneys and the chairman of the organization that owns the condemned Hotel Sterling, Salavantis said.

Griffith never obtained permission for the recordings from the people he spoke with, a violation of a state wiretapping law, Salavantis said.

The Luzerne County District Attorney's office began investigating Griffith in July 2012 after he provided the recordings to a federal grand jury investigating the Sterling organization, CityVest.

Salavantis, citing her office's frequent dealings with Griffith and his office, forwarded the investigation to the state Attorney General's office. The incoming Attorney General, Kathleen Kane, will decide if and when Griffith will be charged.

Each violation of the wiretap law is punishable by up to seven years in prison, First Assistant District Attorney Sam Sanguedolce said.

Salavantis disclosed the details of the investigation after CityVest board chairman Y. Judd Shoval sued Griffith today in county court, accusing the controller of violating the state wiretapping law and invading his privacy.

Griffith did not immediately return a message seeking comment.