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Detroit seeks \$10 million back from cop monitor with ties to Kilpatrick

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Former police monitor Sheryl Robinson Wood and the firms who employed her need to repay Detroit for the \$10 million she collected while overseeing federally-mandated reforms because she was carrying on a secret relationship with Kwame Kilpatrick, the City of Detroit says in motion filed in federal court today.

The motion says Wood violated her promise to be a “truly independent and unbiased” monitor by having “a secret, personal relationship” with Kilpatrick while he was mayor.

“The citizens of Detroit deserve better,” the motion says.

Wood’s lawyer, David Schertler of Washington, D.C., said: “The City of Detroit knows full well that the reason they had to pay \$10 million was because of their admitted abject failure to achieve compliance with two consent judgments one of which should have ended in 2005 and the other in 2008.

“Their chronic failures are well documented and indisputable, yet they want to use Sheryl Robinson Wood as a scapegoat in order to get the monitoring fees and expenses back for work that was fully completed even though no communications or meetings she may have had Kwame Kilpatrick had any substantive effect on the monitorship,” Schertler added.

The relationship was uncovered in July 2009 by federal officials going through Kilpatrick’s text messages. U.S. District Judge Julian Abele Cook, who oversees the police reforms, said the Kilpatrick-Wood relationship “included inappropriate discussions” about enforcing the consent decrees the city signed promising to correct police department problems and abuses.

Many of the problems were uncovered by a Free Press investigation of police shootings and improper homicide investigative practices.

Wood acted as monitor from 2003 until her resignation and collected \$10 million in fees while the department reached fewer than half of the goals despite deadline extensions.

The motion also names the three firms — Kroll Inc. and two law offices, Saul Ewing LLP and Venable LLP — where Wood worked while acting as Detroit’s police monitor.

It asks that with Wood’s reported conflict, Cook should use his authority “to sanction improper conduct and order the immediate disgorgement” of the \$10 million paid to Cook and her former employers.

Kroll issued a statement saying the claims were without merit.

“Kroll stands behind its work and the efforts of its team members, who worked diligently to monitor DPD’s progress,” it said. “Kroll will vigorously defend itself in this matter.”

Detroit Law Department director Krystal Crittendon declined to comment on the motion.

Dykema Gossett PLLC and King & Murray PLLC are representing the city in the motion.