

[Click to Print](#)

August 24th, 2015 1:14 pm | by [BETH SLOVIC](#) News | Posted In: City Hall

Park Rangers Supervisor on Paid Leave After Ombudsman Opens Investigation

Questions concern a contract awarded to the employee's private company.



Holladay Park - City of Portland

The supervisor of **Portland park rangers** is on **paid administrative leave** after the city ombudsman opened an investigation into a possible conflict of interest, *WW* has learned.

Hasan Artharee, 37, has led the city's park rangers since 2012. But he also owns **Safeguard Security Enforcement**, a Northeast Portland company that inked a contract in May to provide nighttime security to a Portland park that park rangers patrolled

during the day.

His leave started Friday, a deputy city attorney says. *The Portland Mercury* [first reported on the existence of the contract](#) Aug. 5.

Earlier this month, in response to questions from *WW* and *The Mercury* about the unusual security contract, officials with **Portland Parks & Recreation** defended it, saying the city played no role in awarding the contract to Artharee's side business.

Instead, a private company that works with [Portland officials to provide activities at Holladay Park](#) near **Lloyd Center mall** issued the contract, city officials said. Biederman Redevelopment Ventures, the New York-based company, helped bring foosball and pingpong, among other activities, to Holladay Park to improve visitors' sense of safety.

"Mr. Artharee was not involved and continues to be uninvolved in the implementation of the contract, both in his capacity as a parks supervisor and as owner of Safeguard Security," a spokesman for the Parks Bureau, Mark Ross, wrote in an Aug. 3 email to *WW*. "Furthermore, the contract is limited to night security and protection of assets. Safeguard does not provide enforcement of park rules."

City code [prohibits purchasing goods, including services, from city employees](#).

But the city attorney's office told parks officials the contract didn't present a conflict of interest, according to documents released by the Parks Bureau earlier this month.

A representative of the private company that issued the contract says there's no conflict because the city didn't directly issue the contract.

"They gave us the OK to proceed, and we did," says Rodrigo Rodarte of **Biederman Redevelopment Ventures**.

After learning about the contract, city officials asked Artharee to sign a document pledging not to blur his public and private roles.

Meanwhile, an anonymous tipster informed the city's ombudsman, **Margie Sollinger**, about the contract.

In 2012, after the Portland Water Bureau awarded a subcontract to a Water Bureau employee, Sollinger recommended to the city's contracting department that it prohibit the awarding of subcontracts to city employees.

Three years later, that hasn't happened. "We don't have any control over what our prime contractor picks up as a subcontractor," Jen Clodius, a spokeswoman for the city's contracting department, tells *WW*.

Sollinger, the ombudsman, referred questions to Heidi Brown, deputy city attorney. Sollinger tells *WW* that she received an anonymous tip about the contract, opened an investigation and last week provided preliminary observations to city officials about the arrangement. Brown declined to comment.

Parks & Rec spokesman **Mark Ross** confirms Artharee is on paid administrative leave. "It's a personnel matter," he said. "We can't comment."

Artharee has not returned calls from *WW*.

In response to inquiries from *WW* earlier this month, a seasonal park ranger who also worked for Safeguard Security disclosed to city officials his work for the private company. Such work is allowed, so long as employees tell the city about it in advance to avoid even the appearance of a conflict.

Artharee's father, **Baruti Artharee**, operates the company as general manager.

Baruti Artharee previously worked for Mayor Charlie Hales as his adviser on police issues **until**

coming under fire in 2013 for sexually inappropriate remarks he made toward Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith.



Willamette Week
Like Page 53k likes

Follow @wweek