

HOUSING CHIEF RECENTLY FINED AND BARRED



The former Chief of the Medford Housing Authority, Robert Covelle, has received a fine for a total of \$5,000. Aside from being fined, he has also been barred from public employment for over five years due to the fact that he violated purchasing laws that had been set in the state. The information on Covelle being fined and barred was made public by the Attorney General, Martha Coakley. In the meantime, prosecutors made the announcement that they had actually reached an agreement with Covelle. Their investigation was ongoing for over a year but they finally decided they would not press criminal charges against Covelle because there was simply a lack of evidence. They could not find evidence as to whether or not Covelle was profiting from any of the violations. Coakley said, "Procurement laws help maintain the integrity of public projects by requiring a strong, transparent bidding process." She also said, "Covelle violated the trust placed in him to protect taxpayer dollars and ensure that all businesses were competing fairly for projects at the Medford Housing Authority." Covelle is 59 years old and resigned several months ago, back in May, due to allegations that were being made against him. Some of the allegations made included favoritism when it came down to the type of people that were hired and contracted. Covelle had also failed to follow laws of bidding when it came down to contracting work for some of the Medford Housing Authority developments. Covelle made the decision to have Capitol Contraction do the renovations for the basement walls of the homes without actually putting the job out there for different contractors to bid on the project. Once he hired the company, he made up a list of bidders, along with a contract and invoices to make it look as though he did follow the correct procedures when he clearly did not. It is believed that he chose Capitol to do the work because the company is owned by a friend of the former director of operations for Covelle. The director of operations has since been terminated from his position as well. Covelle was also guilty of hiring a separate company, the Alliance Detective and Security Service, without putting the job out for a bid. Covelle has since left his position, a position in which he earned \$126,000 per year. When the allegations were first made against him, he repeatedly stated that he would not quit his job but it is obvious that he has changed his mind. In the meantime, the lawyer for Covelle, Thomas Drechsler, has said that Covelle did make contracting mistakes but that he never benefited from them.