

Former chief building official was unlicensed, so he's now on probation [2009-07-06]

by Akilah Johnson - Sun-Sentinel

The Broward School District's former chief building official has been sentenced to one year's probation and 25 hours of community service for signing three school construction permits even though his license had expired.

Ron Morgan, now the assistant chief building official over inspections, pleaded no contest to the misdemeanor charge of falsely holding himself out as a licensed Building Code Administrator. His attorney, Michael Weinstein, called it a paperwork oversight.

"The very candid answer is that he had a license that lapsed," Weinstein said. "The funny part is he had already gotten his license back by the time the state brought its investigation forward."

Morgan's license expired March 31, 2008 and was renewed Jan. 29, according to court documents.

In addition to the criminal case, the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation in June fined Morgan \$1,500, placed him on probation for a year and ordered him to take continuing education classes.

The State Attorney's Office filed charges in May, three days after Morgan, 48, was reassigned because he hadn't gotten the bachelor's degree he needed to keep his department head position with the school district.

Morgan, a 17-year employee of the district, had a valid license in 2005 when he was appointed on an interim basis to oversee the district's \$2.75 billion in construction projects.

Two new elementary schools were built under his watch — schools A and Z, which will open in the fall as Discovery Elementary in Sunrise and Heron Heights Elementary in Parkland.

According to court documents, Morgan signed two building permits for Elementary School A in May and July 2008, and one for Elementary School Z in July 2008. Both schools have since been rechecked by inspectors with valid licenses.

Approving such permits "requires the signature of a licensed building code administrator...of which Ronald Morgan was not during the times of occurrence," the documents read.

Once Morgan completes his sentence, the conviction will not appear on his record, Weinstein said.