

# **Comptroller Response**

Case # 20-0019-I

COMPTROLLER

JOAN M. PRATT, CPA  
Room 204, City Hall  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202-3461



OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

Department of Audits  
Department of Real Estate  
Municipal Post Office  
Municipal Telephone Exchange  
Harbor Master

December 7, 2020

Ms. Isabel Mercedes Cumming  
Inspector General  
City of Baltimore  
Office of the Inspector General  
City Hall, Room 635  
100 North Holliday Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202

Re: OIG Case # 20-0019-1

Dear Ms. Cumming,

Thank you for the final report of the investigation relating to allegations of irregular billing practices by the Department of Communications Services, Municipal Telephone Exchange.

The alleged irregular billing practices that were referenced occurred during the three-year major conversion of an outdated, and costly telephone system from an independent local exchange carrier (Verizon) to a City-owned asset. The overall implementation involved upgrading complex legacy systems and processes. Occasionally, these conversions may experience inadvertent technical issues. The billing errors that were found during the implementation and brought to our attention have since been corrected.

We agree with your conclusion that the OIG could not substantiate any claims of fraud or waste by the MTE to charging higher rates for phone services. As you rightly stated, the MTE is on track to pay off the telephone debt in less than five years instead of ten years and save taxpayers interest of \$415,651.21. With a projected telephone savings of \$2.5M in FY-21, the MTE will completely pay off the debt and lower telephone rates for City agencies starting July 1, 2021.

To increase transparency, ensure proper accountability and timely communication to the agencies, the MTE is establishing the following additional corrective measures:

- a) A new fiscal officer has since been hired to provide oversight.
- b) The manual process of submitting telephone trouble tickets and work orders has been replaced with an automated system (Tiger Paw). The various City telephone coordinators will soon begin utilizing the system to track work orders, maintain and track telephone assets.
- c) Agency telephone bills will henceforth be randomly audited on a monthly basis by MTE.
- d) The MTE billing team and supervisor will undergo additional training on VoIP billing analysis and optimization.

December 7, 2020

Page 2

Once again, we appreciate the time working with your office to address these important matters on providing effective oversight, and transparency to improve City government telecommunication services.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joan M. Pratt, CPA". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "JMP" being particularly prominent.

Joan M. Pratt CPA  
Comptroller