

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL CITY OF BALTIMORE



Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Inspector General

Investigative Report Synopsis

OIG Case # 20-0022-I

Issued: May 6, 2020



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General
City Hall, Suite 635
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, MD 21202



May 6, 2020

Dear Citizens of Baltimore City,

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) received a complaint alleging that an employee (Employee 1) from the Office of Compliance and Laboratories¹ (OCAL) within the Department of Public Works (DPW) neglected to deposit thousands of dollars in checks collected for the review of engineering plans and projects.

In May 2019, twelve checks totaling \$48,478 were found in a box on the desk of Employee 1.² Upon discovery of the checks it was found that several checks were more than five years old. Employee 1 informed the OIG he learned the checks were expired after the checks were provided to the OCAL Office Support Specialist III (Support Specialist) to be processed for payment.

The OIG interviewed the Support Specialist, who stated she immediately notified the Chief of OCAL (Chief), after she received the checks. The Support Specialist was directed by the Chief to write a memorandum including pertinent information³ on the checks. The OIG was informed that several expired checks ranging from \$500 to \$3,000 were included in the box. Additionally, a single expired check in the amount of \$38,000 was found. The \$38,000 check was the largest check written among the twelve expired checks. Employee 1 informed the OIG that after the expired checks were discovered, the Chief told Employee 1 she would take care of the checks. Employee 1 told the OIG he was not aware of any further actions taken by the Chief once the expired checks were in her possession.

The Chief informed the OIG that the expired checks had not been reissued and the City of Baltimore never attempted to collect the \$48,478. The OIG's investigation revealed checks from multiple companies had expired and were no longer in business, including the company that submitted the \$38,000 check payment. As a result, the City cannot collect the outstanding funds. The Chief told the OIG that after she evaluated the situation, she decided to give Employee 1 verbal counseling because he was "negligent but not malicious." The Chief had prior knowledge of Employee 1's organizational issues before the expired checks were discovered, but it was never properly documented. The Chief chose not to inform DPW's upper management about the \$48,478 lost. The Chief told the OIG the \$48,000 "was not a make or break" amount of money compared to the average revenue OCAL generated monthly.

¹ The OCAL is a regulatory wing within the Department of Public Works responsible for ensuring developers are compliant with the City's environmental codes.

² Employee 1 had just been promoted and his office was being cleaned out when the checks were discovered.

³ The memorandum included the name of the developer that issued the check, the check date, the fee amount, and account number OCAL assigned to the developer.

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The OIG found at the time of this investigation OCAL did not have a policy to govern the submission of checks received from project reviews. The OIG determined Employee 1's mishandling of the twelve checks discovered at his desk resulted in a \$48,478 loss to the City. The OIG determined the Chief's decision to not inform DPW executives of the mismanagement of checks, and loss of over \$48,000, put the City of Baltimore at a disadvantage for funds to be recouped. The OIG referred these findings to the Baltimore City Law Department for further action.

Sincerely,



Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General
Office of the Inspector General

Cc: Hon. Bernard C. "Jack" Young, Mayor of Baltimore City
Hon. Brandon Scott, President, City Council
Hon. Joan M. Pratt, Baltimore City Comptroller
Honorable Members of the Baltimore City Council
Dana P. Moore, Acting City Solicitor

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