OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
CITY OF BALTIMORE

Isabel Mercedes Cumming

Inspector General

Investigative Report Synopsis

OIG Case # 20-0008-I

Issued: September 17, 2019

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

September 17, 2019

Dear Citizens of Baltimore City,

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) received a complaint of wasteful spending on out-of-town travel by Tonya Miller (Miller), Executive Director of Cable and Communications for the Office of the Mayor. The complaint specifically referred to an article published online by the Baltimore Brew on July 24, 2019. The article outlined a trip that Miller and Cortney Weinstock (Weinstock), Special Events and Permits Division Chief for the Department of Recreation and Parks, took to Austin, Texas for the South by Southwest Conference (SXSW). The article referenced a retroactive travel reimbursement request for $1,805.74 presented to the Board of Estimates (BOE) on July 24, 2019.

The mission of the OIG is to promote accountability, efficiency, and integrity in City government, as well as to investigate complaints of fraud, financial waste, and abuse. The OIG found that the purpose of the SXSW trip was to recruit potential sponsors and scout musical talent for future AFRAM Festivals. Both Miller and Weinstock's departments provided approval for the trip and in January and February of 2019, the BOE approved $4,075.20 for Miller, and $4,309.12 for Weinstock, for travel to SXSW from March 8, 2019 to March 14, 2019. A month prior to the conference, Miller found that the music festival portion did not begin until March 11th. With approval from the Deputy Comptroller, Miller changed the flight and hotel dates to March 11th to March 17th, at no additional cost. It was alleged that the employees spent a total of 10 days, including two weekends, at SXSW. The OIG determined that Miller and Weinstock's flight into Austin landed at 11:15 a.m. Monday, March 11th and their departing flight left at 5:30 a.m. Sunday, March 17th.

Miller and Weinstock told the OIG that hotels within downtown Austin were well out of the City's budget, so they booked the Lakeway Resort and Spa (Lakeway), located over 20 miles from downtown Austin. They reserved two separate rooms at Lakeway, but it became apparent to them that the location was not ideal. The commute required driving more than an hour to and from SXSW. Miller reported safety concerns regarding the remote location of Lakeway. Weinstock added that interactions with members of the hotel staff made her uneasy. Additionally, both employees reported that it was not effective for them to stay at Lakeway because they had to leave SXSW before events concluded, missing opportunities to meet with potential sponsors and representatives for musical acts.

On March 13th, with four nights remaining on the trip, Miller and Weinstock cancelled their rooms at Lakeway. Instead, they split one room at the Marriott hotel in downtown Austin, where prices significantly dropped. Prior to making the change, Miller again contacted the Deputy Comptroller, who approved the move. The Deputy Comptroller told Miller that to get reimbursed, the travel modifications would have to be submitted to the BOE upon their return. Miller also contacted the former Mayor's chief of staff, who approved the hotel change, and told Miller she would be reimbursed. On July 24, 2019, the travel modifications, and reimbursement to Miller, were approved by the BOE.

It was alleged that Miller's reimbursement request for the Marriott was in excess of the $4,075.20 budgeted by the BOE. The OIG found that the reimbursement was not in excess of the BOE amounts and that the City paid just $865.91 of the over $3,000 cost of the hotels. Miller personally paid over $400 for Lakeway and over $1,800 for the Marriott. The OIG also found that Weinstock paid $334.16 out-of-pocket for costs associated with their rental car. Upon their decision to move to the Marriott, the car was turned in to avoid additional charges.

The OIG reviewed invoices, P-card statements and personal credit card statements to determine the actual cost of the trip was $7,459.60, of which the City paid for $4,906.65. Miller and Weinstock's out-of-pocket expenses were $2,218.79 and $334.16, respectively. Because the employees shouldered some of the costs, the City saved $3,477.67 on the trip. If the two employees are reimbursed (no reimbursement was paid as of the release of the OIG report to Management on August 22, 2019), the City would still save $924.72. An overview of the budget and costs associated with the trip are attached to this letter as Exhibit 1.

The OIG's review determined that Miller and Weinstock's trip to SXSW was approved by their respective departments and the BOE. Ultimately, the change in hotels and the subsequent request for reimbursement by Miller, did not exceed the approved spending amounts. Regardless of whether reimbursement for out-of-pocket costs are disbursed or not, the City did save money over what was allocated by the BOE. Management's responses to the OIG report are attached.

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
Hon. Andre M. Davis, City Solicitor

Exhibit 1

Case #20-0008-I

AMOUNTS APPROVED BY BOARD OF ESTIMATES (BOE)

	MILLER	WEINSTOCK	TOTALS
Airfare	$492.96	$492.96	$985.92
Parking	$60.00	$0.00	$60.00
Rental Car	$0.00	$293.91	$293.91
Hotel & Hotel Taxes	$2,032.24	$2,032.25	$4,064.49
Registration Fee	$1,250.00	$1,250.00	$2,500.00
Per Diem	$240.00	$240.00	$480.00
TOTALS	**$4,075.20**	**$4,309.12**	**$8,384.32**

OUT OF POCKET PAYMENTS

	MILLER	WEINSTOCK	TOTALS
Airfare	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Parking	$0.00	$19.00	$19.00
Rental Car	$0.00	$315.16	$315.16
Hotel & Hotel Taxes	$2,218.79	$0.00	$2,218.79
Registration Fee	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Per Diem	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
TOTALS	**$2,218.79**	**$334.16**	**$2,552.95**

AMOUNTS PAID BY CITY

	MILLER	WEINSTOCK	TOTALS
Airfare	$492.96	$567.78	$1,060.74
Parking	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Rental Car	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Hotel & Hotel Taxes	$525.68	$340.23	$865.91
Registration Fee	$1,250.00	$1,250.00	$2,500.00
Per Diem	$240.00	$240.00	$480.00
TOTALS	**$2,508.64**	**$2,398.01**	**$4,906.65**

AMOUNTS OVER (RED) OR UNDER (BLACK) BOE AMOUNTS

	MILLER	WEINSTOCK	TOTALS
Airfare	$0.00	($74.82)	($74.82)
Parking	$60.00	($19.00)	$41.00
Rental Car	$0.00	($21.25)	($21.25)
Hotel & Hotel Taxes	($712.23)	$1,692.02	$979.79
Registration Fee	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Per Diem	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
TOTALS	**($652.23)**	**$1,576.95**	**$924.72**

TOTAL AMOUNT UNDER BOE APPROVAL WITH REIMBURSEMENT TO MILLER & WEINSTOCK	**$924.72**
TOTAL AMOUNT UNDER BOE APPROVAL WITHOUT REIMBURSEMENT TO MILLER & WEINSTOCK	**$3,477.67**

TOTAL OUT OF POCKET PAYMENTS BY TONYA MILLER	**$2,218.79**
TOTAL OUT OF POCKET PAYMENTS BY CORTNEY WEINSTOCK	**$334.16**

CITY OF BALTIMORE

BERNARD C. "JACK" YOUNG,
MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS

REGINALD MOORE, *Executive Director*
Dr. Ralph W. E. Jones, Jr. Building
3001 East Drive - Druid Hill Park
Baltimore, Maryland 21217
410-396-7900

Thursday, September 12, 2019

Attn: Isabel Mercedes Cumming, *Inspector General*
Office of the Inspector General (OIG)
100 North Holliday Street, Suite# 635
Baltimore, MD 21202

RE: OIG Management Alert Case #20-0008-I (C. Weinstock/South by Southwest Music Festival)

Dear Inspector General Cumming,

The City of Baltimore, Department of Recreation and Parks (BCRP) has received and reviewed the August 22, 2019 memo and related documentation pertaining to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) Management Alert Case #20-0008-I. Cortney Weinstock, Chief of the Special Events and Permits for BCRP will be reimbursed for her personal travel expenditures associated with travel to the South by Southwest Music Festival. Please note that Mrs. Weinstock's reimbursement has been submitted and will be processed. Refer to the attached/enclosed documentation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Reginald Moore
Executive Director
City of Baltimore, Department of Recreation & Parks (BCRP)

CITY OF BALTIMORE

BERNARD C. "JACK" YOUNG

Mayor

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

100 Holliday Street, Rm 250
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

September 13, 2019

Ms. Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General
Office of the Inspector General
100 North Holliday Street, Suite 640
Baltimore, MD 21202

Case #: 20-0008-I

Dear Inspector General Cumming:

I have received your report for investigation (Case #20-0008-I) that references a complaint about Tonya Miller, Executive Director of Cable and Communications for the Office of the Mayor regarding out-of-town travel. I appreciate the thorough investigation done by the Office of the Inspector (OIG). As a result of your investigation, I have since discussed with her the actions of her trip and the perils associated with re-negotiating cost after the Board of Estimate (BOE) approval. I am pleased that she was able to save costs for the City. As of today, I have ensured she is aware and has been informed of the current process for approval going forward. Thank you again for your thorough report, and should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Kimberly R. Morton
Chief of Staff
Office of the Mayor