



Richmond Office of the City Auditor

Office of the Inspector General

Fighting government waste, fraud and abuse

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Richmond City Auditor/Inspector General

February 4, 2015

Mr. Mark Olinger, Director
Department of Planning and Development Review

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has completed an investigation in the Office of Planning and Development Review. This report presents the results of the investigation.

Complaint:

The OIG received a complaint alleging a City of Richmond vehicle was parked at the Kroger supermarket located in Chesterfield County. The vehicle was identified by the City's seal on the door.

Legal Requirements:

In accordance with the Code of Virginia, §15.2-2511.2, the City Auditor is required to investigate all allegations of fraud, waste and abuse. Also, City Code section 2-231 requires the Office of the Inspector General to conduct investigations of alleged wrongdoing.

Background:

The Planning and Development Review Department hired an Operations Manager on May 12, 2014. The offer letter for the position included a provision for the Operations Manager to take a City vehicle to his home located in Fredericksburg, Virginia, which is approximately 50 miles away from City Hall. According to the offer letter, the Operations Manager had to relocate to the City of Richmond within 12 months of employment. However, within this period, the Operations Manager relocated to Chesterfield County.

Findings:

The Operations Manager stopped by the Kroger supermarket on his way home when his vehicle was observed parked at that location. The investigator interviewed the subject employee who admitted to taking the vehicle to the Kroger supermarket in Chesterfield County. The employee stated that it was acceptable to management if he made a quick stop as long as it was en route to home.

The investigator's research of the City policies (A.R. 6.2) identified the following:

- “No personal use of City-owned vehicles is allowed.
- Individuals assigned a “Take Home” vehicle are authorized to drive directly to and from work provided they live within the corporate limits of the City of Richmond....
- Individuals living outside the corporate limits of the City of Richmond are required to park his/her assigned vehicle at a designated location within the City's corporate limits.”

The only exception to the above provisions applicable in this situation is that a City owned vehicle can be used by individuals performing special and mandated activities for a designated period of time. However, “special and mandated activities” have not been defined.

Subsequent discussion with the Director of Human Resources indicated that the Director of Planning and Development Review did not have the authority to offer taking a City vehicle to Fredericksburg. Current City practice requires employees, living outside the City limits with a necessity to take City vehicles home, to park the vehicle at a designated location within the City limits.

The Operations Manager stated during an interview that he needs the City vehicle to respond to emergencies involving structures within the City. Upon inquiry, he indicated that Code Enforcement Inspectors and/or their supervisors are also required to respond to the same emergency when on-call. The investigator was informed that the Operations Manager had to respond to two emergencies within eight months of his employment.

Conclusion:

The OIG finds the allegation to be substantiated. Since the City is attempting to control vehicle costs, it is a good idea to evaluate cost effectiveness of taking vehicle home in this case. The City needs to clarify exceptions related to performing special and mandated activities.

If you have any questions, please contact me at extension 5640.

Sincerely,

Umesh Dalal

Umesh Dalal, CPA, CIA, CIG
City Auditor/Inspector General

cc: Christopher Beschler, Interim Chief Administrative Officer
Lee Downey, Interim DCAO Economic & Community Development