



BROWARD OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

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OIG Closes Investigation of Tamarac's Local Travel Allowance, Sees Potential for Fraud, Waste, and Abuse

Broward Inspector General John W. Scott announced today that the Broward Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has [concluded its investigation](#) into allegations that City of Tamarac commission members engaged in misconduct and abuse and that the city commission passed legislation that violated Florida statutes regulating government travel.

In February 2021, the city commission passed an ordinance to amend its code. That change would permit each of the five commission members to opt into receiving an annual \$15,000 fixed travel expense account for local travel, in lieu of having to submit proof of expenditures and receive staff approval for reimbursement. The state law permits municipalities to exempt themselves from the state's standards for government travel costs, and the city has not yet budgeted for the local travel allowance. Thus, the OIG did not substantiate the allegations.

However, the OIG did observe the potential for fraud, waste, and abuse if the city were to apply the ordinance in the future. Without the need for receipts or any documentation to show how much money commission members spend and what they spend it on, the city and the public would have no idea whether taxpayer funds were spent to fulfill commission members' public duties or for any public purpose. Therefore, the OIG observed, \$75,000 of taxpayer money could be used for purposes other than travel.

Although the commission voted to remove the money in the budget for the local travel allowance for fiscal year 2021 and fiscal year 2022, there is nothing in place that would prevent it from funding this line item in the future, either by budget amendment or by the budget process for an upcoming fiscal year.

In order to mitigate the risk for fraud, waste, and abuse in the future, the OIG outlined several preventative measures the city could take. For instance, it could develop and train staff and officials on a more clear, objective, and comprehensive travel reimbursement policy and amend city code section 2-425(3) to require staff and officials to follow that travel policy. It could either amend section 2-425(3) to require receipts and proof of travel from any commission member who opts in, or repeal subsection (3) altogether. Alternatively, the commission could repeal or amend code section 2-425 to require the city to follow the standard reimbursement rates, procedures, and limitations for government agencies found in state law.