

FISCAL AUDIT

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
BUREAU OF POLICE**

WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM IMPREST FUND (WPPIF)

Report by the
Office of City Controller

**MICHAEL E. LAMB
CITY CONTROLLER**

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January, 2015



MICHAEL E. LAMB

CITY CONTROLLER

First Floor City-County Building • 414 Grant Street • Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219

January 12, 2015

To the Honorables: Mayor William Peduto and
Members of Pittsburgh City Council:

The Office of the City Controller is pleased to present this fiscal review of the **Witness Protection Program Imprest Fund**, conducted pursuant to the Controller's powers under Section 404(b) of the Pittsburgh Home Rule Charter.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Witness Protection Program Imprest Fund (WPPIF) was established in 2001 via resolution # 12 (amended via resolution #160 in 2010) to make funds available, on an imprest basis to the Department of Public Safety, Police Bureau for the purchase of services, supplies and equipment for the Witness Protection Program. The fund's balance set at \$20,000 is accounted for in a separate checking account that is routinely replenished from the general fund after supporting documentation for all expenditures charged to the fund are reviewed by the Controller's Office. The Witness Protection Program was established to provide temporary security to material witnesses willing to testify on behalf of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in prosecuting violent criminal cases.

We performed certain procedures to determine whether policies, procedures and internal controls relating to the administration of the imprest fund are adequate and that payments made through the fund are allowable and properly supported. Information included on this report is limited due to the sensitivity and confidential nature of the Witness Protection Program. Recommendations to enhance the funds' internal controls are noted in the Result section of this report.

We appreciate the cooperation of those involved with the administration of the fund.

Sincerely,


Michael E. Lamb
City Controller

INTRODUCTION

This fiscal review of the **Witness Protection Program Imprest Fund** was conducted pursuant to the Controller's powers under Section 404(b) of the Pittsburgh Home Rule Charter.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Our procedures were conducted pursuant to Article IV, Section 404(b) of the City of Pittsburgh Home Rule Charter and covered the period January 1, 2012 through December 31, 2013.

We performed procedures to gain an understanding of internal controls related to the operation of the Witness Protection Program. Specifically we:

- Interviewed Witness Protection Unit personnel to gain an understanding of the processes and related internal controls over management of the fund.
- Examined supporting documentations to determine compliance with the Fund's established operating policies and procedures.
- Evaluated adequacy of documentation related to expenses charged to the fund.
- Summarized all expenditures by type.
- Performed variance/trend analysis on expenditure types for plausible relationships.

BACKGROUND

The Witness Protection Program Imprest Fund (WPPIF) was established in 2001 via resolution # 12 (amended via resolution #160 in 2010) to make funds available, on an imprest basis to the Department of Public Safety Police Bureau for the purchase of services, supplies and equipment for the Witness Protection Program. The fund's balance set at \$20,000 is accounted for in a separate checking account that is routinely replenished from the general fund after supporting documentation for all expenditures charged to the fund are reviewed by the Controller's Office. The Witness Protection Program (the Program) was established to provide security and protection to victims or witnesses involved in a pending prosecution of a criminal case that may be threatened, harassed or intimidated. To ensure the safety of participants and confidentiality requirements of the Program, activities are confidential and identity of witnesses protected. Eligibility requirements must be met prior to acceptance into the program and each witness is required to sign a "*Memorandum of Understanding*". Participation is voluntary and referrals for placement may come from any member of the Pittsburgh Police Bureau, the Allegheny County District Attorney's Office or other Police Agencies. The Imprest Fund is reimbursed for expenses incurred on behalf of these agencies.

The Program, administered by the Witness Protection Program Unit is staffed by four detectives and supervised by a sergeant. Detectives are responsible for the day to day operation of the unit including reviewing and making recommendations on witnesses referred to the program, conducting field interviews, preparing for witness relocation, preparing expense vouchers, maintaining witness case files and other related financial records. The Sergeant is responsible for overseeing the operations of the unit and for ensuring compliance with the programs' procedures and protocols. Disbursements for all expenses charged to the fund are documented on an expense voucher that requires the Sergeant's approval. An excel spreadsheet is also used to record all expenses charged to the fund for each witness. To maintain confidentiality, witnesses enrolled in the program are assigned identification numbers that are used to record/track all expenses incurred on their behalf. Eligible expenses under the program include all expenses related to the relocation of the witness. Witnesses in temporary housing are also provided with weekly cash assistance (*Weekly Necessities*) in the form of gift cards to offset expected increase in food costs. Amounts provided vary depending on whether the witness is an individual, a couple or family. All financial resources of the witness are taken into consideration in determining the amount of assistance provided. Other incidental/minor expenses related to the Program may be paid from the fund subject to approval by the supervisor.

There were a total of 15 replenishments processed during the review period, January 1, 2012 through December 31, 2013. The average replenishment amount during this period was \$15,799. A total of \$368,720 in expenses was charged to the WPPIF during the same period.

RESULT

Finding #1: Resolution establishing fund

The language in the resolution establishing the fund and governing its operation does not adequately reflect actual expenses charged to the fund. Most of the imprest fund monies are actually used to pay expenses related to witness relocation activities; 91% in 2012 and 95% in 2013. The resolution states "*Imprest fund monies are to be used for the purchases of services, supplies, and equipment for the WPP*". The use of the language; "*purchase of services*" does not accurately reflect usage of the fund. The Resolution establishing the imprest fund should clearly state type of expenses to be paid from the fund.

Recommendation

Propose City Council modify resolution to accurately reflect actual usage.

Finding #2: Expense Vouchers not Pre-numbered

Vouchers used to document expenses charged to the imprest fund are currently not pre-numbered. All vouchers should be pre-numbered to establish proper accounting and to provide complete recording of transactions. Controlling expenses via pre-numbered vouchers that are issued sequentially is an effective internal control that helps prevent duplication, and provide assurance that all expenses charged to the fund are recorded and properly supported. This also minimizes the risk that errors, irregularities and/or any misappropriation will occur and not be detected timely.

Recommendation

Develop and use pre-numbered vouchers to record/account for all expenses charged to the fund.

Finding #3: Vouchers for Weekly Necessities not always signed

Vouchers used to document disbursements made from the imprest fund to provide food assistance (weekly necessities) are not always signed by the witnesses to confirm actual receipt. All disbursements made from the fund should be adequately documented to ensure proper usage of the fund and to also minimize any potential for misappropriation. Although supporting documentations are attached to the voucher, the practice of having witnesses sign the vouchers provides more effective internal control over management of the fund.

Recommendation

Ensure all vouchers used to document disbursements made from the imprest fund for the provision of food assistance are signed by the recipient. In situations where such is not possible; the reason for the lack of the signature on the voucher should be noted.

City of Pittsburgh



Bureau of Police Investigations Branch

"...accountability, integrity and respect"

*Cameron S. McLay
Chief of Police*

*Maurita Bryant
Assistant Chief*

December 30, 2014

Michael Lamb
City Controller
414 City County Building
414 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15219

Dear Mr. Lamb,

The Pittsburgh Bureau of Police is in receipt of the Fiscal Audit covering the period of January 1, 2012 through December 31, 2013 and will address the results to the audit.

- **Finding #1:** Resolution establishing fund – the wording “Imprest fund monies are to be used for the purchases of services, supplies and equipment for the WPP” should be changed to the following: “Imprest fund monies are to be used for the purchase of services including but not limited to movers, airline and bus transportation, utility companies, obtaining official records, in addition to supplies, equipment and case specific services pertaining to the care, safety and wellbeing of witnesses in WPP. A new Resolution will be presented to Council reflecting the actual usage and presented to Council by Assistant Chief of Administration Thomas Stangrecki.
- **Finding #2:** Expense Vouchers not Pre-numbered - It was recommended that the current voucher system be changed to a pre-numbered system that will establish proper accounting and to provide complete recording of transactions. WPP met with Sylvia Harris of CIS and it was determined that a program can and will be developed to put us in compliance with the City Controller’s recommendations. This program will allow us to create a numeric expense voucher and that information will export into a spread sheet

which will enable WPP to conduct expense reports on each witness. This program will be created in Access and housed on the I-Drive in the Witness Protection folder and only accessed by the members of WPP and maintained by CIS. Mr. Harris stated that due to the urgency to have this program in place by January 1, 2015 the job will be expedited.

- **Finding #3:** Vouchers for Weekly Necessities not always signed-Vouchers used to document disbursements made to provide food assistance (weekly necessities) are not always signed by the witnesses to confirm actual receipt. In cases where this is not possible, the reason for the lack of signature needs to be stated on the voucher. Even though, as stated, with the lack of signature the proper documentation was provided, effective immediately, the vouchers WILL NOW state the reason the witness is not able to sign.

In closing, these Findings were all well received and will be adhered to and past practices of 20 years will be voided.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maurita Bryant, A/Chief". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Maurita Bryant, Assistant Chief
Investigations Branch