



CLOSING MEMORANDUM UPDATE

TO: Honorable Michelle J. Gomez, Mayor,
and Members, City of Tamarac Commission

FROM: Inspector General Carol J. Breece

DATE: August 22, 2024

SUBJECT: UPDATE to OIG Closing Memorandum Re: *City of Tamarac's Federal Lobbyist Paid for City Officials' Dinner, Ref. OIG 23-029-M*

The Broward Office of the Inspector General ("OIG") issues this update to apprise the public of information it received after it concluded the investigation in the above-captioned matter.

On August 15, 2024, the OIG issued a closing memorandum in which it observed that, on March 29, 2023, members of the City of Tamarac ("City") Commission who attended a dinner at Clyde's of Gallery Place restaurant in Washington, D.C., had received a gift from the City's Federal Lobbyist, which would have been a gift acceptance violation of the Broward Code of Ethics for Elected Officials. However, the OIG did not find misconduct, because it could not conclusively determine that the Commission members knew that the City's Federal Lobbyist paid for the dinner.

As the closing memorandum reported, the investigation established that the City's Federal Lobbyist paid \$594.46 for the dinner and that, following the OIG's initial inquiries into the matter, the lobbyist's firm ("Firm") sought reimbursement for the dinner by invoicing the City \$594.46 on February 23, 2024. The OIG reported that, according to the City Manager, as of August 14, 2024, the City had not received the necessary documentation to reimburse the City's Federal Lobbyist's firm ("Firm") for any of that cost. During his interview in February 2024, the City Manager explained that, although the Firm had recently invoiced the City for the dinner, the City would not be paying the invoice without the receipt, which had not been provided.

On August 13, 2024, an OIG Special Agent spoke with the City Manager over the phone and asked him whether the City had reimbursed the Firm. He said he would research the issue and provide an update. On August 14, 2024, the City Manager left a voicemail stating that the City had not received anything from the Firm and that the City had reached out to the restaurant and the restaurant was trying to locate a copy of the receipt for the City.

On August 20, 2024, five days after the OIG provided its closing memorandum to the City, the City Manager emailed the OIG stating that he "wanted to correct the record. . . ." In the email, the City Manager wrote that the City paid the Firm's invoice for the March 29, 2023, dinner on April 26, 2024. Attached to his email were the payment notice to the Firm, the February 23, 2024 invoice from the Firm, and a page from the City's Federal Lobbyist's credit card statement



that appears to be the same document as OIG Exhibit 2 of the OIG's closing memorandum. (Exhibit 1) On August 21, 2024, the City Manager sent another email with the payment notice to the Firm and a page from the City's bank register as proof of the City's payment of the Firm's invoice. (Exhibit 2)

The OIG issues this update in accord with its commitment to ensure its reporting is fair and accurate at all times. To be clear, this update does not negate either the OIG's determination that the March 29, 2023, dinner constituted gifts or the reminder to Broward County's elected officials that they should always be mindful of the source of gifts and other things of value that they receive.

The OIG appreciates the City's recognition of the spirit of the County's gift prohibition by way of its reimbursement to the Firm.

cc: Levent Sucuoglu, City Manager
Hans Ottinot, City Attorney

OIG 23-029-M

EXHIBIT 1

From: [Levent Sucuoglu](#)
To: [Ariola, Jeanmarie](#)
Cc: [Hans Ottinot \(Ottinot Law\)](#); [Maxine Calloway](#)
Subject: OIG Closing Memorandum - Correction
Date: Tuesday, August 20, 2024 3:11:17 PM
Attachments: [4_26_2024 FERGUSON GROUP LLC.pdf](#)

External Email Warning

This email originated from outside the Broward County email system. Do not reply, click links, or open attachments unless you recognize the sender's email address (not just the name) as legitimate and know the content is safe. Report any suspicious emails to ETS Security by selecting the Report Suspicious or Report Phish button.

[Report Suspicious](#)

Good afternoon Jeanmarie –

I wanted to correct the record that this invoice was paid on April 26, 2024. Attached document contains the payment details.

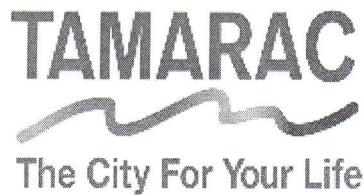
Thank you,

Levent Sucuoglu City Manager, [City of Tamarac](#)

7525 NW 88th Avenue, Tamarac, Florida 33321 Tel: 954 597 3510 Fax: 954 597 3520

The City of Tamarac is a public entity subject to Chapter 119 of the Florida Statutes concerning public records. Email messages are covered under Chapter 119 and are thus subject to public records disclosure. All email messages sent and received are captured by our server and retained as public records.

FINANCIAL SERVICES



Christine Cajuste DIRECTOR of FINANCIAL SERVICES

April 25, 2024

FERGUSON GROUP LLC
1901 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W.
SUITE 700

WASHINGTON DC 20006

Email Address: Ldoan@tfgnet

Payment Number: 0036527

Payment Date: Apr 26, 2024 **Payment Amount:** 594.46

The total amount noted above will be processed by the bank electronically. Please ensure your account is credited with this payment.

Invoice Information	Invoice Amount	Retainage Amount	Discount Amount	PO Number	Project Number
INV0878	594.46	0.00	0.00	F63012	

"Committed to Excellence...Always."

7525 N.W. 88th Avenue | Tamarac, Florida 33321-2401 | P: 954.597.3550 | F: 954.597.3560

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

TAMARAC.ORG



INVOICE

Invoice: INV0878
Invoice Date: 02/23/2024
Due Date: 02/23/2024
Project: P0419: City of Tamarac

The Ferguson Group, LLC
1901 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Suite 700
Washington, DC 20006
Ph:
Fax:



Bill To:
City of Tamarac
7525 NW 88th Ave., Room 202
Tamarac, FL 33321

Ship To:
City of Tamarac
7525 NW 88th Ave., Room 202
Tamarac, FL 33321

Reference #: Val Gelnovatch March 2023 trip Terms:

Due on Receipt

Item	Description	Unit	Quantity	Unit Price	Amount
ITEM002	3/30/23: Briefing Dinner Meeting with Val Galnovatch and City Delegation	Each	1	\$258.00	\$258.00
ITEM002	3/30/23: Briefing Dinner with Val Galnovatch and City Delegation	Each	1	\$336.46	\$336.46
			Subtotal		\$594.46
			Total		\$594.46

*****NEW REMITTANCE ADDRESS*****

Effective Immediately we have a new remittance address to receive payments sent via traditional checks sent through the mail or overnight courier. Please remit any traditional checks to the address below to ensure timely application of your payment. We also encourage you to send your payments via ACH and are happy to provide our banking information. Please send an email to jsmith@tfgnet.com with your request and we will provide the necessary banking information. Thank you for your assistance and let us know if you have any questions!

USPS Mailing Address: The Ferguson Group LLC PO Box 646072

Pittsburgh, PA 15264

Overnight Courier Address:

PNC Bank C/O The Ferguson Group LLC Lockbox Number 646072

500 1st Ave

Pittsburgh, PA 15219

VALERIE L GELNOVATCH
WISE ADVICE INC

Standard Purchases, Cont'd

NAME: _____
PICKUP: 00/00/00
RETURN: 00/00/00
AGREEMENT NUMBER: _____
03/28 [REDACTED] Digital account number ending in 4553 [REDACTED]
03/29 [REDACTED] Digital account number ending in 4553 [REDACTED]
03/29 03/29 [REDACTED]
PHONE NUMBER: _____
NAME: _____
PICKUP: 00/00/00
RETURN: 00/00/00
AGREEMENT NUMBER: _____
03/30 03/30 [REDACTED]
PHONE NUMBER: _____
NAME: _____
PICKUP: 00/00/00
RETURN: 00/00/00
AGREEMENT NUMBER: _____
03/30 [REDACTED] Digital account number ending in 4553 [REDACTED]
03/30 [REDACTED] Digital account number ending in 4553 [REDACTED]
PHONE NUMBER: _____
NAME: RIDEREQUEST
PICKUP: 00/00/00
RETURN: GJ5RE753 00/00/00
AGREEMENT NUMBER: _____
03/30 03/30 CLYDE'S GALLERY PLACE WASHINGTON DC \$258.00
03/30 03/30 CLYDE'S GALLERY PLACE WASHINGTON DC \$336.46
03/30 03/30 [REDACTED]
03/30 03/30 [REDACTED]
03/31 [REDACTED] Digital account number ending in 4553 [REDACTED]
03/31 [REDACTED] Digital account number ending in 4553 [REDACTED]
03/31 [REDACTED] Digital account number ending in 4553 [REDACTED]
03/31 03/31 [REDACTED] Digital account number ending in 4553 [REDACTED]
03/31 [REDACTED] Digital account number ending in 4553 [REDACTED]
03/31 [REDACTED] Digital account number ending in 4553 [REDACTED]
04/01 [REDACTED] Digital account number ending in 4553 [REDACTED]
04/01 [REDACTED] Digital account number ending in 4553 [REDACTED]
04/01 [REDACTED] Digital account number ending in 4553 [REDACTED]
04/01 [REDACTED] Digital account number ending in 4553 [REDACTED]
04/02 [REDACTED] Digital account number ending in 4553 [REDACTED]

OIG 23-029-M

EXHIBIT 2

From: [Levent Sucuoglu](#)
To: [Ariola, Jeanmarie](#)
Cc: [Hans Ottinot \(Ottinot Law\)](#); [Maxine Calloway](#)
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: OIG Closing Memorandum - Correction
Date: Wednesday, August 21, 2024 12:19:10 PM
Attachments: [Ferguson Group Proof of Payment.pdf](#)

External Email Warning

This email originated from outside the Broward County email system. Do not reply, click links, or open attachments unless you recognize the sender's email address (not just the name) as legitimate and know the content is safe. Report any suspicious emails to ETS Security by selecting the Report Suspicious or Report Phish button.

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Good afternoon Jeanmarie –

As requested, the attached is the record of payment to TFG for their invoice.

The first page is a copy of the email they would have received to the shown email address on the page with the payment information and the second page shows a bank register from our systems for the wire transfer.

I hope this helps.

Thank you,

Levent Sucuoglu City Manager, [City of Tamarac](#)

7525 NW 88th Avenue, Tamarac, Florida 33321 Tel: 954 597 3510 Fax: 954 597 3520

From: Ariola, Jeanmarie <JARIOLA@broward.org>

Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2024 3:14 PM

To: Levent Sucuoglu <Levent.Sucuoglu@tamarac.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: OIG Closing Memorandum - Correction

This message has originated from an **External Source**. Please use proper judgment and caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Good afternoon Levent,

Thank you for that information.

From: Levent Sucuoglu <Levent.Sucuoglu@tamarac.org>

Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2024 3:10 PM

To: Ariola, Jeanmarie <JARIOLA@broward.org>

Cc: Hans Ottinot (Ottinot Law) <Hans@ottinotlawpa.com>; Maxine Calloway <Maxine.Calloway@tamarac.org>

Subject: OIG Closing Memorandum - Correction

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Thank you,

Levent Sucuoglu City Manager, [City of Tamarac](#)

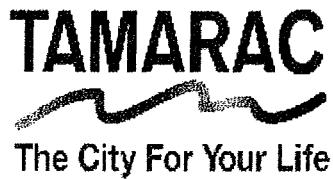
7525 NW 88th Avenue, Tamarac, Florida 33321 Tel: 954 597 3510 Fax: 954 597 3520

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Under Florida law, most e-mail messages to or from Broward County employees or officials are public records, available to any person upon request, absent an exemption. Therefore, any e-mail message to or from the County, inclusive of e-mail addresses contained therein, may be subject to public disclosure.

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FINANCIAL SERVICES



Christine Cajuste
DIRECTOR of FINANCIAL SERVICES

April 25, 2024

FERGUSON GROUP LLC
1901 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W.
SUITE 700

WASHINGTON DC 20006

Email Address: Ldoan@tfgnet

Vendor Number: 0006688 Payment Number: 0036527

Payment Date: Apr 26, 2024 Payment Amount: 594.46

The total amount noted above will be processed by the bank electronically.
Please ensure your account is credited with this payment.

Invoice Information	Invoice Amount	Retainage Amount	Discount Amount	PO Number	Project Number
INV0878	594.46	0.00	0.00	F63012	

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PREPARED 04/25/2024, 14:41:51
PROGRAM GM348BID2

BANK: 00 ID BANK NA - B/P

PAYOUT #

AMOUNT

RETAINAGE

DISCOUNT

NET AMT INVOICE #

PAGE 3

CITY OF TAMARAC
EFT PRELIMINARY REGISTER

EFT BATCH #: 1

VENDOR: FERGUSON GROUP LLC
36527
EFT TOTAL:
594.46
594.46

6688 PAYMENT DATE: 04/26/2024 TRACE #: 003120130000023
594.46 INV0878
594.46