

# Culver City News



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# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Culver City government fritters away taxpayers' money

Culver City government enjoys spending other people's money in a culture of unaccountability. Unfortunately, the "other people" are us — Culver City taxpayers.

Last year, I served a Public Records Act (PRA) request on Culver City to learn whether employees were abusing their privilege of using City-issued credit cards. The results were horrifying. I reported it to the City Council. (4/11/19, Letters to the Editor, Culver City News, "There Is A New Sheriff in Town") Unfortunately, the misbehavior and unaccountability continue.

Culver City's response to a recent PRA request (concern-

ing only a few employees) reveals many credit-card charges worthy of investigation:

A) During the past few months, John Nachbar, City Manager, has charged \$14,194.56 at the Rodeway Inn Culver City for "temporary housing for homeless individual(s)."

B) Serena Wright, Assistant City Manager, continues her spendthrift ways, e.g., "Employee Ice Cream Social" at Coolhaus - \$3,008.49; "Farewell Celebration for Civil Service Commissioner" at Kay and Dave's - \$228.53; "Breakfast-Creative Economy Connect Shareholders meeting" at Akasha - \$2,076.98; "Raters

Appreciation Gift 'Swag Bag'" - \$3,351.19; "Lunch-Special Meeting-Yoga in the Courtyard Event" at Panera Bread - \$310.88; "Office Supplies-Laptop" - \$1,488.45; "Holiday Party" at Ugo Café - \$621.15; "All City Staff Holiday Party" at Boston Market - \$3,848.14. Ms. Wright has probably never heard of potluck luncheons.

C) Scott Bixby, Chief of Police, continues his \$100 per month payments to "The Toll Roads of [Orange County]" for "toll road transponder fees." He spends to improve the comforts at the Police Department, e.g., "Guest chairs for Chief and Captain's Office" - \$1,986.18; "Guest chairs for Assistant Chief and Captain's Office" - \$1,134.84; "Refrigerator for Department Employee Break Room" - \$571.10; "Television and Mount for Department Break Room" - \$490.98; monthly "Dept. Satellite TV" - \$232.97 to DirectTV. Then, there is "Lodging for Records and Property Supervisor" at \$230.31 per night at the Blue Lantern Inn in Dana Point — "Coastal Elegance with Spectacular Views," with 4.5 stars TripAdvisor rating. Also, he spent taxpayer funds to keep tract of his staff, i.e., "Customized magnets for org chart board" - \$792.15. Now, he keeps tract of mail, e.g., "1st Floor Mail Sorter" - \$1,324.20 and "Mail sorter" -

\$1,324.20. (A mailer sorter is an array of pigeon-hole boxes, which Office Depot sells for about \$300.) Does this kind of spending make you feel safer?

Culver City continues to spend thousands of dollars on symposia, conferences, conventions, seminars and training sessions. Last year, we learned that attendance at those events and associated travel and lodging expenses did not generate even one documented idea for the improvement of Culver City. (7/25/19, CCN, "Culver City Needs Ideas")

Who is watching the store for us? Should I report these apparent shortcomings using the new Culver City Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Hotline? However, the FWA Hotline is managed by the alleged abusers or those who report to them. (12/5/19, CCN, "How Culver City threw cold water on its hotline")

Then, there are expenses associated with Culver City's Municipal Fiber Network. (5/23/19, CCN, "Does Culver City Have a \$14 million Information Highway to Nowhere?") The June 30, 2019 Proprietary Funds statements show Capital Asset of \$11,593,313 with Total Liabilities of \$15,511,950, i.e., the MFN is now worth \$3,918,637 less than what we paid for it. Nevertheless, there is better news. Last year, Customers and Users paid \$35,655

to use the MFN. However, against that amount, there were Payments to Suppliers of \$1,161,621—leaving negative funds flow of \$1,125,966 for the one-year period. The Culver City's PRA response states, "the City Manager reports that the City is months away from finalizing several agreements with various companies that will generate a positive cash flow for the Municipal Fiber Network Fund." Six months? Sixty months? Will the purported "positive cash flow" ever overcome Culver City's \$15 million outlay?

Did I mention that a senior official owes Culver City \$1,033,346.36 on the person's residential loans?

Others have written about taxpayer funds frittered away on coyote-fecal studies, etc.

Now, Culver City has the audacity to ask residents to raise taxes to cover its current and future spending sprees. It's time to say, "Enough is enough."

We cannot shame these government officials to be efficient or competent, but we can restrict their access to our money. Respond to Culver City's proposed tax hike by voting "No" in March (Measure CC) and in November. Help the government to become fiscally responsible and accountable.

— Les Greenberg, *Esquire*