



Board of Park Commissioners

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5-time winner

August 18, 2023

Office of the President of Council
Juanita Gowdy, President
CITY OF EAST CLEVELAND
14340 Euclid Avenue
East Cleveland, Ohio 44112

Re: August 17, 2023 Letter

Dear Council President Gowdy:

I am in receipt of your August 17, 2023 correspondence and the attachment which has been identified as the “East Cleveland Finance Department’s check sign-out sheet.” After carefully reviewing that document, it appears to be an internal log sheet that is signed by both East Cleveland employees and vendors. Specifically, Maxine Eberhart who is the Executive Assistant for the City of East Cleveland, according to her LinkedIn account, signed for Check No. 120168. Also, this document illustrates that the same person signed for multiple checks issued to various vendors from lines 12 - 21 and lines 23 – 25. In this instance, East Cleveland permitted one person, either an employee or a vendor or another third party, to pick-up thirteen checks for thirteen different companies. Nowhere does the log indicate the signor’s relationship to the vendor.

This confusing document does not evidence that a Cleveland Metroparks employee signed for Check No. 120159. That signature is illegible and indecipherable, as you acknowledge, and the sign-out sheet has no indication that the signor has *any* relationship to Cleveland Metroparks, let alone an employment relationship. Moreover, check No. 120159 remains in the possession of East Cleveland.

The August 14, 2023 letter was titled a “demand” for the return of \$2 million in ARPA funds, and contained multiple unfounded, serious accusations, hardly a mere “request for clarity” as the August 17th letter now attempts to re-write. Cleveland Metroparks has never taken possession of Check No. 120159, and we are open to a third-party audit of our records to confirm that fact.

Respectfully,

Brian M. Zimmerman
Chief Executive Officer

Copy: East Cleveland City Council
Brandon King, East Cleveland Mayor
Keith Faber, Ohio Auditor of State
Gregory Nelsen, FBI Special Agent in Charge
Michael O’Malley, Cuyahoga County Prosecuting Attorney
Barbara Mattei-Smith, Financial Planning & Supervision Commission
Board of Park Commissioners of the Cleveland Metropolitan Park District
Rose Fini, Chief Legal & Ethics Officer, Cleveland Metroparks
Wade Steen, Chief Financial Officer Cleveland Metroparks
Dr. Gordon Hay, East Cleveland Parks Association