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Grand Rapids City Comptroller Communication

Frantz, Max <mfrantz@grand-rapids.mi.us>

Sun, Dec 15, 2024 at 1:05 PM

Good Afternoon All –

Grand Rapids residents and leaders have requested information, and context from me regarding Mark Washington's Dec. 17th proposal to defund **81%** of the personnel resources in the Grand Rapids City Comptroller department. This plan is being presented to the GR City Commission and includes Mark Washington placing himself in control of City accounting functions and other duties prescribed to the Comptroller in the City Charter. Specifically, 13 of our 16 FTEs/employees who primarily perform accounting work in the Comptroller department will be permanently removed from the department leaving just 3 employees in our office. I do not support nor was I as City Comptroller or any Comptroller dept. personnel at the City of Grand Rapids involved in Mark Washington's plan – I learned of this proposal on Friday Dec. 13th and that Mark Washington had put this on the City's agenda for next Tuesday the 17th. Please see below for additional context and answers to questions that have been requested from me by various community stakeholders.

- **What the City Charter states:** The duties and responsibilities Mark Washington is seeking to remove from the City Comptroller include **all of our accounting personnel** and all of our employees that issue checks and payments for the City in the Comptroller department.
 - The authority for the Comptroller to perform **all** accounting of city funds for the City is stated in **Title VI: Section 90 City Comptroller** (see attachment)
 - The authority to issue and sign **all** payments of money from the city treasury is stated in **Title VI: Section 90 City Comptroller** (see attachment)
 - The Charter prescribes these duties to a City Comptroller and not a City Manager or a new department that the City Manager has created to report to him (and further does not exist in the Charter). Mark Washington's plan to direct the Comptroller's duties, responsibilities and team into his own department reporting up to him will make it unfeasible for any City Comptroller to perform and complete their charter prescribed work that Grand Rapids voters elect them to perform.
- **Voters already weighed in:** As recently as November 2012 the Grand Rapids public voted and voiced their clear opposition to a ballot proposal that would allow the City Manager to appoint and oversee the City Comptroller and it's functions. The Grand Rapids public overwhelmingly voted this down - **All 77 Grand Rapids voting precincts** rejected this proposal with **64%** of the Grand Rapids public voting against it. Mark Washington's plans disregard the direction given to the City of GR by the majority of Grand Rapids voters. Defunding the City Comptroller dept. is not just an attack on our City's financial oversight but a blatant disregard of our democracy and election results made clear by Grand Rapids voters. If our residents rejected the City Manager appointing the Comptroller, they will certainly be opposed to the City Manager directly taking over the Comptroller's accounting and payment responsibilities and functions.
- **Questions around oversight of the City Comptroller Dept:** The City Comptroller department is subject to and undergoes the same annual audit conducted by an independent licensed auditing firm similar to all city departments and public entities. Myself and my team members are interviewed by 3rd party external auditors and our dept. controls, accounting and activities are open to independent auditors to review each year in the same manner as any City department during the annual audit. **Plante Moran, the city's current licensed independent auditor has not issued any audit finding pertaining to Comptroller dept. personnel, duties or our internal controls.** Plant Moran has also not issued any findings in previous years indicating that the City Comptroller's responsibilities, duties and structure in the Charter are presenting "risk" to the City – contrary to Mark Washington's assertion in his proposal.

Well-intentioned plans in local government begin with transparency and adequate time for community input and feedback from a diverse array of stakeholders. There has been no public engagement, awareness or community feedback on this matter. Equally concerning is that Mark Washington and his team have *already* instructed City employees on Dec. 14th that these changes will be made and the Comptroller dept. will be largely dismantled despite the fact that his proposal has not been brought before and voted on by the public body for approval. I do not believe these plans demonstrate transparency or represent the type of community ethics, values and collaboration that have made West Michigan the great place it is today. I ask that you please consider bringing awareness of this pending issue to your colleagues and constituents for the benefit of public transparency.

If you oppose this proposal as I do, I ask and encourage you to please contact City Commissioners and express this before it is voted on next Tuesday at 8:30AM in the City's Fiscal Committee followed by the 2:00PM City Commission Meeting. While this is being presented to the public as a routine budget item, it is anything but that. I have served as your City Comptroller for nearly 5 years now and never anticipated I would need to inform the public of something of this magnitude so urgently. This is an unusual and unprecedented move to drastically impair financial oversight and diminish the ability of myself as your Comptroller, our talented team members and all future officers elected to this role to perform the duties the GR public entrusts and expects of us. I am fully committed to upholding this level of trust and expectations that the people of Grand Rapids voted for and that our City Charter requires of me.

For those that have expressed the desire to help counter this proposal - Please consider contacting your [City Commissioners](#) and the 3 Fiscal Committee commissioners noted below that will be voting on this at 8:30AM on Tuesday, Dec, 17th and ask for this City Agenda item to be voted against (please see agenda item attached).

- Jon O'Connor joconnor@grcity.us
- Kelsey Perdue mysasi@grcity.us
- Milinda Ysasi kperdue@grcity.us

Thank you for your giving this information consideration before next Tuesday and please enjoy the rest of your weekend.

Regards,

Max Frantz

City Comptroller

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<https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Elected-Officials/City-Comptroller-Max-Frantz>

2 attachments

 **GR City Charter - Comptroller.pdf**
105K

 **City Fiscal Committee Agenda Item #8 12.17.24.pdf**
627K