

Comptroller's Response

Case # 21-0002-I



Office of the Comptroller Bill Henry

Department of Audits | Department of Real Estate
Municipal Post Office | Municipal Telephone Exchange

December 23, 2020

Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Office of the Inspector General
100 Holliday Street, Suite 635
Baltimore, MD 21202

Re: OIG Case #21-0002-1

Dear Inspector General,

On December 11th, my office received a copy of your Report of Investigation on the above referenced case. I concur with the Inspector General's finding that the Department of Real Estate (DOR) was in its power to sell the Langston Hughes Elementary School (LHES) building FOR \$1. However, your report outlines some weaknesses in our property disposal process that must be addressed.

In your report you reference a letter (Exhibit 2) sent in August 2017 from Mayor Catherine Pugh to the CEO from of Youth Educational Services, Inc (YES). The letter lists eleven areas of concern raised by the inter-agency Surplus School Task Force (the Task Force) established by Baltimore City about YES using the LHES. There is no record of a response to this letter from the CEO and no indication that CEO providing supporting documentation. Of the most concern, the applicant listed various commitments and co-tenants, including the City of Baltimore, without providing any agreements. Despite the lack of documentation, the Department of Real Estate (DOR) issued a Right of Entry (ROE) to the tenant.

To address this serious oversight, DOR will collect all necessary financials, commitment letters, and relevant documents requested by the Task Force. Only complete agreements with the requested documentation will receive consideration for use, lease or sale. All proposals for surplus school space must be approved by the Board of Estimates. This update will be reflected in the Baltimore City Administrative Manual.

Thank you for bringing this issue to my attention. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

Bill Henry

CC: Mayor Brandon Scott
Erika McClammy, Deputy Comptroller
Walter Horton, Real Estate Agent