

# CITY OF BALTIMORE

BERNARD C. "JACK" YOUNG, Mayor



# DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

RUDOLPH S. CHOW, P.E., Director  
200 N. Holliday Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202

July 23, 2019

Ms. Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General  
Office of the Inspector General  
100 North Holliday Street, Suite 640  
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Inspector General Cumming:

On June 24, 2019, I received a Management Alert regarding OIG Case 19-0047, Bureau of Solid Waste's Task Work Evaluation and Safety Concerns. I thank you and your team for the thorough report and have reviewed the findings with my Executive Leadership Team. I offer the following comments in response.

Your report evaluates the "task work system" utilized in the Bureau of Solid waste wherein employees are assigned one route per day for their 10-hour shift. This system has been utilized for many years and is incorporated in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 44, which represents Baltimore City's solid waste workers. Your report notes instances when solid waste routes were completed in considerably less time than ten hours, yet workers were paid for a full day's work. You also note that workers are paid overtime for additional tasks performed after completing their initial task even if the additional tasks are performed within the 10-hour shift.

I agree that solid waste routes should not be completed too quickly as that can indicate the routes are not mapped properly or that crews were not diligent while performing their work. Solid Waste managers are constantly examining routes to try and optimize efficiency. I have instructed Solid Waste Bureau Head John Chalmers to procure routing software that can optimize daily routes. I believe this software will address many of the issues in the timeliness of route completions.

As for the overall appropriateness of the task work system, I must defer to the City's Labor Commissioner and the City Solicitor. The City is currently negotiating a new MOU with AFSCME Local 44. The Labor Commissioner and the City Solicitor will be able to explain the history of the task work system from a labor perspective as well as any potential implications resulting from changing the City's interpretation.

Ms. Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General  
Page Two

Your report also raises serious concerns about the state of the solid waste facility located at 6101 Bowley's Lane. The report specifically notes urinals, sinks, and a water fountain are inoperable and gas tanks have not been tested or inspected. The safety of the public and our employees is my top priority. We have received estimates from contractors for the repairs and are working with the Department of General Services to schedule and identify the funding to pay for the repairs.

Again, thank you for bringing these matters to my attention. Should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rudolph S. Chow".

Rudolph S. Chow, P.E.  
Director

Department of Public Works