


# CITY COMMISSION POLICY

 <b>GRAND RAPIDS</b>  <b>MICHIGAN</b>	<b>NUMBER:</b> 100-02	<b>HISTORY</b>	
		<b>FILE #</b>	<b>DATE</b>
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		57442	03/15/93
		88661	04/09/19

**SUBJECT: USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS BY ELECTED OFFICIALS FOR TRAVEL AND OTHER EXPENSES**

**PURPOSE:** To formalize the standard procedures for attendance of elected officials at conventions, conferences, regional meetings, training programs, and other official travel in which the cost is borne by the City. This policy also establishes guidelines for payment of local business expenses and use of City-owned vehicles.

**POLICY:**

A. **Definitions.**

1. Applicable Published Rates. The published rate schedule shall be determined by the Comptroller's office in accordance with IRS guidelines and published on the Comptroller's intranet site for reference.
2. Official Work Station. The official work station of an elected official shall be the address of that office.
3. Per Diem. A flat rate paid in lieu of travel reimbursements for people on overnight stays only.
4. Reasonable period of time. Actions that take place within the times specified in the following list will be treated as taking place within a reasonable period of time. (a) You receive an advance within 30 days of the time you have an expense. (b) You adequately account for expenses within 30 days after they were paid or incurred.

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5. Travel status. The elected official must travel “away from home” in the pursuit of City business on a temporary basis. “Away from home” requires travel overnight, or long enough to require substantial “sleep or rest.”

## B. Standards of Travel

1. Elected officials are encouraged to attend and participate in national, state, regional, and local meetings of organizations representing local government, appropriate to the office, including participation in the policy and program committees, e.g. National League of Cities, Michigan Municipal League, U.S. Conference of Mayors, and Government Finance Officers Association. The Mayor and each City Commissioner will normally attend only one national convention/conference a year. Additional travel to conventions/conferences will be considered by the City Commission based on a written request submitted by the elected official. Such request will specify the date(s), location, estimated cost to be incurred, and an explanation of the benefits to be derived by the City of Grand Rapids.
2. Authorization to attend any such conferences or meetings shall be formally requested by and granted to a specific elected official by motion at any meeting of the Committee of the Whole some reasonable time prior to the date of the meeting.
3. No elected official is authorized to attend, at City expense, any conventions/conferences occurring subsequent to an election which certifies a person other than the incumbent. Exceptions to this rule will only be granted by resolution of the City Commission acting on a written request of the elected official.
4. Conduct of Delegates. The conduct of elected officials attending conferences, training programs, etc., or conducting official business out-of-town is a reflection of the standard of City government in Grand Rapids. The fact that the City is bearing a major portion of the expense is recognition of the principle that the benefits accrue to the City as well as to the individual. Therefore, elected officials will obtain a maximum amount of beneficial training and information and at all times exhibit conduct that reflects positively on the City.
5. All elected officials are required to provide a report on knowledge acquired or information obtained within thirty (30) days of the trip. The report may be delivered orally or in writing at any City Commission or Committee of the Whole meeting.

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## C. Advances, Expenses, and Reimbursements for Official Travel:

1. Advances. In the use of City funds, elected officials are expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business. Elected officials may receive an advance from the City for estimated out-of-pocket expenses on an exception basis if requested within a reasonable period of time. Unexpended advances must be promptly reported to the City Comptroller and deposited with the City Treasurer within ten (10) working days after the return of the official. If reports are not filed and funds are not promptly deposited, the City Comptroller shall notify the official. If reports are not filed and funds are not deposited within an additional ten (10) working days, the City Comptroller shall notify the City Commission (Fiscal Committee – “Comptroller Report”). Failure to comply within the time specified may result in the denial of travel advance privileges in the future.
2. Transportation Expenses. The expense of traveling by public carrier will be allowed on the basis of actual cost. However, transportation expense in excess of the cost of tourist or coach airfare (round trip), will not be allowed unless justification is given in writing and the approval of the City Commission is obtained before leaving on the trip. Transportation to conferences/conventions shall be arranged such that no more than three members of the City Commission travel as a group on a public conveyance. If travel is by private automobile, to a point less than 500 miles, the official shall be paid at the mileage rate authorized in the general City employee bargaining unit contract. For distances in excess of 500 miles, the official shall be paid the equivalent of tourist or coach airfare (round trip). City funds shall not be used and officials will not be reimbursed for lodging and meals for the extra travel time required when driving out of state. Parking and local transportation expenses shall also be allowed on the basis of actual cost.
3. Hotel Expenses. Only hotel or motel expenses in the convention or conference city metropolitan area will be allowed. The maximum expense for lodging will be the single occupancy standard room rate per day. Officials shall seek a cash advance or submit a bill for reimbursement to cover hotel expense. Elected officials choosing lodging based on personal preference are responsible for paying any additional costs incurred. Reimbursement will not be made for personal items such as non-business-related long-distance telephone calls, valet service, laundry, entertainment, etc.
4. Registration Fees. Registration fees will be on the basis of actual registration charge. When preregistration is required, the fee may be charged to the City providing that approval has been obtained for the trip.

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5. Per Diem and Reimbursable travel expenses. The per diem allowance may be authorized by the Commission when an elected official is on travel status. The per diem allowance will be held to include all charges for meals and incidental expenses. It may be established when it is to the mutual benefit of the elected official and the City. The applicable published rate represents the maximum approved reimbursement rates for authorized travel. Personal expenses, including alcoholic beverages, are not reimbursable. An elected official is not eligible for reimbursement of meal or lodging costs that are:

- Purchased within the official work station.
- Purchased within the elected official's city of residence.
- Furnished without charge.
- Included in the conference registration fee.
- Purchased for guests, unless incurred as a Local Business Expense by the Mayor as hereinafter provided.

All receipts supporting reimbursable travel expenses must have the following elements clearly printed to be acceptable:

- Date expense incurred
- Amounts
- Vendor name and city
- Itemized purchases (credit card receipt is not enough)
- General description of the items.

Meals. Reimbursement for the actual cost of meals cannot exceed the applicable maximum published per diem rate, including tax and gratuities, except for Conference attendance when supported by program literature and a receipt.

When the duration of travel includes a partial day, the following schedule determines eligibility for meal per diem:

<u>Reimbursable Meal</u>	<u>Travel begins before</u>	<u>Travel extends past</u>
Breakfast	6:00 a.m.	8:30 a.m.
Lunch	11:30 a.m.	2:00 p.m.
Dinner	5:30 p.m.	7:00 p.m.

If an elected official is eligible for reimbursement of more than one meal in a day, the amount expended for particular meals in the day is left to the elected official's discretion. Reimbursement is limited to the combined total of the applicable published meal rates of the eligible meals.

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6. Statement and Evidence of Travel Expense. All travel expenses shall be submitted on a form prescribed by the Comptroller's office within a reasonable time. This form will be filled out completely and submitted to the City Comptroller's Office for processing. All expense account forms shall be filed on an individual basis only.

Receipts for the hotel bill, registration fee and transportation expense shall also accompany the original of the expense account form and forwarded to the City Comptroller for auditing and payment within a reasonable time. Receipts and per diems not provided or requested within a reasonable period of time may not be reimbursed or may be denied.

7. Comptroller's Report. Each month, the Comptroller shall file a report with the City Commission, showing the total amount of expenditure for each elected official for the previous month.
8. Exceptions. If warranted by unusual circumstances or conditions, exceptions to the foregoing standards and rules may be allowed upon the approval of a majority of the City Commission.

## D. Local Business Expense

1. The Mayor is authorized to incur any legitimate business-related expenses including the expenses of appropriate guests. Expenses requiring reimbursement shall be reported on a regular travel expense account form, together with a notation of the names of persons. The purpose involved, and the appropriate receipts. The completed expense account form must be received by the Comptroller's Office no later than ten working days after the meeting or activity.

## E. Use of City-Owned Cars

1. The Mayor may for business and personal use be permanently assigned a medium-priced automobile. Other elected officials may use City automobiles only for official travel.
2. Other elected officials may use City vehicles for in-state conventions, conferences, seminars, training programs, and other City-related business trips.