

SPECIAL DISTRICTS BULLETIN

AND UNIFORM COMPLIANCE GUIDELINES ISSUED BY STATE BOARD OF ACCOUNTS

MARCH 2018

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REPORT OF MISAPPROPRIATION

Indiana Code 5-11-1-27(l) requires a public officer who has actual knowledge or reasonable cause to believe that there has been a misappropriation of public funds or assets to immediately send a written notice to the State Board of Accounts and the prosecuting attorney.

Indiana Code 5-11-1-27(l) states:

(l) A public officer who has actual knowledge of or reasonable cause to believe that there has been a misappropriation of public funds or assets of the public office, including:

- (1) information obtained as a result of a police report;
- (2) an internal audit finding; or
- (3) another source indicating that a misappropriation has occurred;

shall immediately send written notice of the misappropriation to the state board of accounts and the prosecuting attorney serving in the area governed by the political subdivision.

The State Examiner Directive 2015-6 also addresses this statute.

The policy must also consider Ind. Code § 5-11-1-27(l), which requires public officials who have actual knowledge of or reasonable cause to believe that there has been a misappropriation of public funds to immediately send written notice of the misappropriation to the State Board of Accounts and the prosecuting attorney. There is no materiality threshold applicable to Ind. Code § 5-11-1-27(l). Thus, whenever a political subdivision has actual knowledge or is reasonably certain that a misappropriation of public funds has occurred (regardless of the dollar amount), the political subdivision must send written notice of the misappropriation to the State Board of Accounts and the local prosecuting attorney. Misappropriation occurs when an employee or in-house contractor of the political subdivision wrongly takes or embezzles public funds. When there is a known misappropriation or embezzlement of public funds by an internal actor, materiality is irrelevant. Indiana law requires the political subdivision to report the activity to the State Board of Accounts and the local prosecutor. Ind. Code § 5-11-1-27(l).

We are finding that the requirements of this statute are not being followed consistently. If a public official fails to report the misappropriation of funds or assets in a timely manner, this will result in a finding in the audit report. This may also result in additional audit costs. Also, be aware that reporting the misappropriation to a law enforcement agency does not fulfill the requirements of the statute. Even when you have notified law enforcement officials, you must still notify the State Board of Accounts and the prosecutor. If there are any concerns on the response the board of accounts will take after a report is received or how they will liaison with the law enforcement investigation, you can contact our Director of Special Investigations, Mark Mahon at (317) 232-2513 or mmahon@soba.in.gov.

MATERIALITY THRESHOLD

The following are excerpts from the Amended State Examiner Directive 2015-6 regarding a Materiality Threshold for reporting irregular material variances, losses, shortages, and thefts under IC 5-11-1-27(j). Note that this materiality threshold does not apply to a Report of Misappropriation under IC 5-11-1-27(l) as discussed in the previous article.

“Indiana Code § 5-11-1-27(j) states: All erroneous or irregular material variances, losses, shortages, or thefts of political subdivision funds or property shall be reported immediately to the state board of accounts...

In general, each political subdivision must develop their own policy on materiality because the causes of irregular variances, losses, shortages, and thefts are as broad and varied as the political subdivisions in which the incidents occur. For example, a \$500 variance in Fort Wayne is not necessarily as concerning as a \$500 variance in Pershing Township, Jackson County. On the other hand, a \$100 variance in Fort Wayne that occurs every Friday may be material. Moreover, each political subdivision is the best determiner of the qualitative and quantitative factors unique to the unit in arriving at materiality.

Political subdivisions must recognize that variances, losses, shortages, and thefts may occur. If an incident occurs, it is imperative that the political subdivision have a policy in place that outlines the steps to be taken. Such a policy must include a materiality threshold at which point the political subdivision reports incidents to the State Board of Accounts.

The policy must be detailed, and it is essential that materiality thresholds distinguish between incidents involving cash and other types of assets. The policy needs to address maintenance of documentation and resolution of incidents that do not meet the materiality threshold...

If a political subdivision does not develop a policy on materiality, then the threshold is \$0.00 and the political subdivision is required to report all irregular variances, losses, shortages, and thefts to the State Board of Accounts...

When an irregular variance, loss, shortage, or theft is determined material pursuant to a political subdivision’s policy on materiality (or, if no policy on materiality is developed, whenever there is any incident of irregular variance, loss, shortage, or theft), the subdivision must report the incident to the State Board of Accounts. On the State Board of Accounts’ website there is a notification link, which allows public officials to report via e-mail material irregular variances, losses, shortages, or thefts. Telephone and in-person reporting is also acceptable. Reports will be followed up with a return e-mail or call to gather additional information as necessary...”

Please review the entire contents of the Amended State Examiner Directive 2015-6 on our website at www.in.gov/sboa on the Special Districts page.

OVERDRAWN FUNDS AND APPROPRIATIONS

The overdraft of a fund or appropriation is prohibited by law. Expenditures are limited to the balance in the particular fund and, in the case of budgeted funds, to the balance of the appropriation therefore. Please see IC 6-1.1-18-4. The following Uniform Compliance Guideline is in the Accounting and Uniform Compliance Guidelines for Special Districts, Chapter 1:

“The cash balance of any fund may not be reduced below zero. Routinely overdrawn funds could be an indicator of serious financial problems which should be investigated by the unit.

In an instance in which a unit receives a reimbursement grant, the unit must be claiming reimbursement in a timely manner. In this case, it would be possible for a fund to be overdrawn for a short period of time.”

TEMPORARY TRANSFERS TO DEPLETED FUNDS

Indiana Code 36-1-8-4 states:

“(a) The fiscal body of a political subdivision may, by ordinance or resolution, permit the transfer of a prescribed amount, for a prescribed period, to a fund in need of money for cash flow purposes from another fund of the political subdivision if all these conditions are met:

- (1) It must be necessary to borrow money to enhance the fund that is in need of money for cash flow purposes.
- (2) There must be sufficient money on deposit to the credit of the other fund that can be temporarily transferred.
- (3) Except as provided in subsection (b), the prescribed period must end during the budget year of the year in which the transfer occurs.
- (4) The amount transferred must be returned to the other fund at the end of the prescribed period.
- (5) Only revenues derived from the levying and collection of property taxes or special taxes or from operation of the political subdivision may be included in the amount transferred.

(b) If the fiscal body of a political subdivision determines that an emergency exists that requires an extension of the prescribed period of a transfer under this section, the prescribed period may be extended for not more than six (6) months beyond the budget year of the year in which the transfer occurs if the fiscal body does the following:

- (1) Passes an ordinance or a resolution that contains the following:
 - (A) A statement that the fiscal body has determined that an emergency exists.
 - (B) A brief description of the grounds for the emergency.
 - (C) The date the loan will be repaid that is not more than six (6) months beyond the budget year in which the transfer occurs.
- (2) Immediately forwards the ordinance or resolution to the state board of accounts and the department of local government finance.”

TEMPORARY TRANSFERS TO DEPLETED FUNDS - Continued

Funds advanced shall be derived from taxes on property, special taxes, or any other revenue received from any operation of the municipal corporation.

Such temporary transfers should be affected by issuing a warrant and receipt for the amount of the transfer. The warrant should be endorsed and deposited in the depository account designated for the depleted fund. No appropriation is required either for the transfer or the repayment. Also, no interest should be charged on any such temporary transfer.

TRAVEL EXPENSE

The following sets forth the audit position of the State Board of Accounts with regard to reimbursements made by local governmental units to their officers and employees for travel and meal expenses.

A local unit may reimburse such persons for actual miles traveled in their own motor vehicles on official business of the local unit at a reasonable rate per mile as fixed by an ordinance or resolution of the unit's legislative body. The mileage rate should be fixed by the board or commission having authority to approve claims for travel expenses. No particular mileage rate has been set by the State of Indiana for local units of government and, consequently, the mileage rate lies within the discretion of legislative body, board or commission, unless otherwise provided by statute. The body setting the mileage rate should also determine whether parking fees and toll charges are included in the rate or, on the other hand, whether such expenses are to be reimbursed separately based on the submission of receipts.

Reimbursed mileage should not include travel to and from the officer's or employee's home and regular place of employment. If more than one person rides in the same vehicle, only one mileage reimbursement is allowable. General Form 101 (or an approved substitute) should be used for claiming mileage. The odometer reading columns on this form are to be used only when the distance between points cannot be determined by fixed mileage or official highway maps.

When traveling outside the local unit's boundaries on official business, officers and employees may also be reimbursed for meals, lodging, and incidental expenses as defined in the travel policy. The claim for reimbursement should be supported by itemized receipts from hotels, restaurants, and taxi cabs used by the officer or employee while traveling on official business.

It is permissible for the legislative body of the local unit or the board or commission having the authority to approve claims to adopt an ordinance or resolution establishing a reasonable per diem rate intended to cover travel expenses other than hotel and mileage costs and the officer or employee may be reimbursed on the basis of such a per diem rate in lieu of submitting receipts. If a fixed per diem rate is established by policy, the policy should clearly indicate which type of expenses, in addition to meals, are included in the rate and which related expenses are to be reimbursed on the basis of actual receipts being submitted by the officer or employee. The policy should also define the local unit's boundaries for purposes of reimbursing travel; i.e. outside a 50-mile radius of the office, outside of the county, etc. The policy should cover a proportionate reduction in the per diem rate when meals are provided by an outside party.

When state statutes govern the amounts of allowable travel reimbursements, those statutes supersede local policy. Also, when determining the reasonableness of a mileage rate or per diem rate, consideration should be given to rates established by the State of Indiana and the Federal government. The local unit should, however, consider the income tax implications of setting its rates higher than the current Federal rates.

In all cases, an officer or employee requesting reimbursement for overnight travel is required to submit a receipt from the hotel or other meeting place where such accommodations were provided.