



- OFFICE OF THE MAYOR -
Chasity Wells-Armstrong
City of Kankakee

February 12, 2019

The Daily Journal
Attn: David Giuliani
8 Dearborn Square
Kankakee, Illinois 60901

Dear Mr. Giuliani:

I am responding to your correspondence wherein you indicated you were working on a story regarding my expenditures.

First of all, I appreciate the additional time you have in which you have agreed to allow a full overview. As you know, I am a part-time Mayor per City of Kankakee ordinance, but a full-time Mayor in my commitment to promoting and advancing the growth and development of the City of Kankakee. Since I have been Mayor, I have attended many conferences which have resulted in the expansion of nationwide networks, the introduction of vendors to the City and additional grant revenues. A brief synopsis of the conferences I have attended is summarized below.

Please note, the City budget has funds allocated to line items that cover my expenses to attend Training/Conferences on behalf of the City. Specifically, the budget includes account no. 01.02.548 with an allocation of \$3,500.00 and account no. 01.02.549 with an allocation of \$2,000.00 for travel. I am pleased to report I have remained under budget on these items this fiscal year.

Please note a few conferences I attended were at no cost to the City.

2017

As you know I was elected Mayor during April 2017 and was sworn in on May 1, 2017. During that summer, I chose to have the City of Kankakee become a member of the National League of Cities (NLC). The NLC is dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. The mission of the National League of Cities is to strengthen and promote cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance. It is an organization that advocates at the federal level to address issues impacting municipalities across the nation.

During the month of November, the NLC hosts an annual conference called a *City Summit* which is held in selected cities across the country. This conference provides education, training, seminars, policy agenda setting sessions, committee work, and opportunities for networking.

During the month of March, the NLC hosts its annual Congressional Cities Conference in Washington, DC. This conference is the annual legislative conference which provides training, strategic focus on policy initiatives, education, committee work, networking and the opportunities to lobby Members of Congress regarding the NLC's policy agenda and pressing issues as identified by each municipality.

During the month of June, the NLC hosts an annual Leadership Conference which is usually held in the city of the current NLC President. This conference provides leadership training, committee work, and networking opportunities.

I attended the November 2017 annual conference held in Charlotte, North Carolina. Major topics discussed included: Resiliency in Local Leaders – reimagining your city, Innovative Funding Sources for Financing, Resilient Cities Inclusive Outreach, and Engagement Collaboration – Public/Private Partnerships.

At this conference, I met representatives from the Utility Service Partners (USP) which provides an *optional* warranty coverage program for residents' sewer, water and underground lines. Often times, residents call the City regarding their lines only to end up frustrated when they find they are responsible for the lines under their home. The City has enrolled in this program which will provide education and coverage for the water, sewer, and underground lines. Currently, marketing plans are underway to start contacting residents. Letters with the City of Kankakee logo have been drafted and USP is working with the city's ESU to compile addresses for the first mailer.

At the conference I was selected to serve on the Public Safety & Crime Prevention Committee. This committee addresses crime, the opioid crisis, trauma and support for first responders, and policy related to the aforementioned issues and more. In addition, I was selected as one of five (1/5) mayors in the country to serve on the Mayors Leader Lab Cohort. The focus of the cohort was to address diversity in our respective cities.

2018

During January 2018, I attended the IEDC Conference which focused on a number of topics, including: the Scope of Economic Development, Business Recruitment & Retention, Marketing Your City, Identifying Attributes/Unique Characteristics of Your City, and Incentives for Developers/Investment Business Expansion.

I am pleased to inform you this conference was paid by a grant under the Community Development Agency (CDA) and there were no costs to taxpayers. At the time, the City of Kankakee did not have an Economic Development Director and I believed my attendance was important to help me learn about issues and bring solutions that impact economic and business development in the City of Kankakee. The grant funds covered all of my expenses.

During March 2018, I attended the Congressional Cities Summit in Washington, DC. Major topics of this conference included: Sharing Best Practices in Governance, National Municipal Policy (municipal bonds), Community Development Block Grants and committee work. At the conference, I met with Members of Congress and administrative leaders from a variety of federal agencies. Also, I met with Carolyn Sawyer, a communications expert, who later provided a strategic planning session/staff retreat for City of Kankakee department heads during April 2018.

At this conference, I learned about Cities United which is a national coalition of mayors working to reduce gun violence in half among African-American males by year 2025. As a result, I lobbied Cities United's Executive Director, Anthony Smith, and asked him to accept the City of Kankakee as one of forty (1/40) cities he was seeking to put through a week-long Roadmap Academy. The City of Kankakee was accepted and a team attended the Roadmap Academy in Louisville for training. *This was a sponsored training resulting with no costs to taxpayers.* Also, the City of

Kankakee was selected as one of three (1/3) cities for a national fundraising campaign called, "All in for Peace." That campaign is currently underway with the Garden of Prayer being the featured agency to benefit from the funds raised.

During this time, I lobbied for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds and the City of Kankakee was awarded \$63,000 more than it was awarded the previous year.

During June 2018, I attended the annual Leadership Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas. Topics included: Effective Communications Strategies, Leading Through Disruption, and Building Community. Additionally, I met with leaders with various areas of expertise. Furthermore, I expressed an interest in participating in an upcoming trip for Mayors to address Business & Entrepreneurship.

During July 2018, I was selected to attend the Mayors Conference on Entrepreneurship and Business in Kansas City, Missouri. This conference focused on the following: Learning about the Needs of Entrepreneurs, Access to Capital, Business Growth Trends, and Creating Ecosystems. *The Mayors' Conference on Entrepreneurship & Business was sponsored by the Kauffman Foundation. As a result, there were no costs to taxpayers for my attendance at this conference.*

During August 2018, I attended the Cities United annual conference in Knoxville, Tennessee. This conference focused on addressing gun violence and I met with many city leaders and youth fellows who work on the initiative. I also met with representatives from My Brothers' Keeper (MBK – President Obama's Initiative), Male Black Achievement, and organizations. I met Madeline Rogero, Mayor of Knoxville and toured various sites including the Change Center. Also, I facilitated a panel discussion with families who have lost loved ones to gun violence. *This trip was sponsored by Cities United for various Roadmap Academy participants; therefore, there were no costs to taxpayers for my attendance at this conference.*

November 2018, I attended the annual conference in Los Angeles, California. During this conference, I met with Los Angeles Mayor, Eric Garcetti, along with entrepreneur and business leader Elon Musk. Many topics were discussed including: Universal Basic Income, Veteran and Senior Housing, Innovation Ecosystems, Preparing for the 2020 Census, and I requested information pertaining to the Gig Economy.

I made a presentation to the NLC Executive Board to serve a two-year term. There has been no representation on the board from the state of Illinois in 40+ years. Of the 39 candidates that presented to the Executive Board, only 11 were selected. The Executive Board helps shape public policy for municipalities and it is very important for smaller, rural, diverse, communities to have a voice and share perspectives. After making my presentation, I was selected to serve on the Executive Board representing The City of Kankakee.


The City of Kankakee was one of three (1/3) cities selected to partner with the NLC and Samaschool to address the Gig Economy in the City. A webinar was held to discuss the unique dynamics/attributes of the City of Kankakee. A conference call has been scheduled during the month of February 2019 with community partners to assess needs, identify strategies, and implement a plan.

In closing, the charges on my city credit card for conferences are for **business** related expenses in my role as CEO of the City of Kankakee representing the City as a listener, learner and leader. Being elected does not exempt my husband and me from paying taxes. I am very mindful of

are more expensive than others. I review the hotels that have been blocked for the respective conference and select from the list. Often times, I skip meals or eat at events that provide complimentary food. Therefore, I am often not spending my allotted per diem. I am committed to professional development, building networks, and learning about strategies and resources I can implement in the City of Kankakee.

As a part-time Mayor, I work a minimum of 60 hours per week. During travel, I am accessible by email. I plan my personal travel around city council meetings and have never missed a council meeting. Every personal trip I have taken I have called the City's leadership team to monitor the City's matters with key department heads. I conduct the department head/staff meetings on my personal/vacation time to set the agendas in order to ensure the agendas are publicized in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. I believe all of the aforementioned conferences have greatly benefitted the City of Kankakee and its residents.

Sincerely,


Chasity Wells-Armstrong
Mayor

CWA/ns