



GOOD GOVERNMENT

Committed to Honesty and Integrity in City Government

Kasha Graves - Editor-in-Chief

Winter 2025

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From the Desk of the Inspector General "A Few Good IGs"

In November, I attended the Association of Inspectors General (AIG) 2024 Training Conference in New Orleans, LA along with a couple of my staff. I first attended this conference with former Inspector General James Heath 10 years ago on behalf of the Office, shortly after the 2012 Charter created the OIG. We learned so much as a newly minted Office of Inspector General. We were new to the work of "IGing", and it was amazing how large and robust this community was then and remains so today. Detroit's OIG has participated nearly every year since, including hosting the conference in 2015.

I know you are thinking what a fun place to attend a conference, but the days were long, beginning at 8:00 a.m. and ending after 5:30 p.m., leaving little time or energy for too much more than rest. Most of our time there was spent learning from, and exchanging ideas with, the over 400 attendees at the event representing various OIG's at the federal, state, military and local level. There were several sessions under the conference's theme of the "Art of Oversight". Each session gave practical or nuanced information on how to improve how we carry out our oversight role.

Some sessions gave practical examples of the real-world challenges Offices of Inspector General are facing, including an informative panel of IG's from the City of Baltimore, Baltimore County, the City of Dallas, and the City of Atlanta. Though all the presentations were compelling, the report from Atlanta's Inspector General

Shannon Manigault stood out because it was intense, current, and unresolved. IG Manigault has faced unfair and disturbing actions since releasing a report critical of someone with connections to elected officials in the Atlanta City Government. IG Manigault simply did her job in presenting a thorough and well-reasoned report. Almost immediately following the release of that report, she and her office were subjected to a rushed process that culminated in recommendations to the Atlanta City Council that would strip the office of the very powers that make it an Office of Inspector General.

Please forgive the adaptation of one of my favorite movies, as I am shamelessly appropriating the villain Col. Nathan Jessup's (played by Jack Nicholson) words after proclaiming Lt. Dan Kaffee (played by Tom Cruise) can't handle the truth. He goes on to talk about walls needing to be guarded by men with guns and everyone needing, and wanting, Col. Jessup on that wall. My corny adaption goes like this... Deep down in places you may or may not talk about at parties...you need IG's like Shannon Manigault standing up on walls for honesty, integrity, accountability, and standing against government fraud, abuse, waste, and corruption. These are the words that we use to guide our ways as we do a very difficult job for the citizens we serve.

I believe the citizens of Atlanta appreciate having an OIG, particularly after dealing with the corruption and scandal that comes with its most recent history. However, there are those who chose to operate in the very manner that led to that corruption. I believe that "Good Government" is not achievable without vigilant oversight and accountability. Atlanta's City Council will decide in January what happens with the recommendations that would either neuter their "watchdog" or support the government's oversight that the Citizens of Atlanta needs. Please know that I, along with my office, stand with IG Manigault and the Atlanta Office of Inspector General.



Atlanta's Inspector General
Shannon Manigault
Detroit's Inspector General
Kamau Marable



DONT BE A VICTIM COMMON FRAUD SCAMS

By Jennifer Bentley

DONT GET TAKEN...

Give me some credit, I won't fall victim to
Consumer Fraud Debt and Credit Schemes

Consumer fraud occurs when a person experiences financial or personal loss as a result of deceptive, unfair, or misleading business practices. Scammers typically target those considered to be the most vulnerable or naïve but all consumers, even those that consider themselves savvy, are at risk. A common type of consumer fraud offers to help people with debt and/or to repair their credit. Below are some schemes that everyone should be on the lookout for.

Debt Consolidation Scheme-

This scam targets consumers with significant debt. The debt relief service falsely promises to negotiate a lower monthly payment that is spread over a longer period with a creditor. The debt relief service then collects the money but fails to forward it to the creditor.

Credit Repair Scheme-

Scammers use solicitations to offer to repair a consumer's credit. However, this is not possible because valid negative credit information cannot be removed from a credit report for 7 to 10 years.

Credit Card Debt Elimination Scheme-

People burdened with credit card debt are targeted in this scheme. Debt elimination scams offer to eliminate people's debt for an upfront fee. Some scammers even convince people that it is illegal to collect on credit card debt by citing non-existent statutes. Once someone pays, the scammer disappears.

Credit Analysis Scheme-

Scammers offer to do a confidential analysis of a consumer's credit history to help them repair their credit. The consumer is required to provide their bank account number to pay an advance fee. The scammer then takes money from the person's bank account and never provides any assistance.

Here are some red flags to look out for so you don't fall victim to debt and credit fraud.

Unsolicited offers: Very few reputable debt settlement companies cold-call potential clients.

Upfront fees: Anyone initiating contact offering to take care of your debt for an upfront fee should immediately raise your suspicions. This tactic is prohibited by the Trade Commission.

Guaranteed promises: If a company makes promises that are too good to be true they probably are. Promised results, such as reducing your debt by a certain percentage, is a big warning sign.

Requests to cease contact with your creditors: If a debt relief company instructs you to cut off all contact with your creditors, it's best to stay away from them.

Mentions of legal loopholes and government programs: Be wary of companies that advertise little-known legal loopholes or new "government programs" that can get you out of debt.

Enrollment without reviewing your documents: A legitimate debt settlement company will closely look at your documents to assess your financial situation before enrolling you. A scammer doesn't need to do that because they don't plan on actually helping you.

You may report consumer fraud to the Michigan Attorney General's Office at <https://secure.ag.state.mi.us/complaints/consumer.aspx> or by calling 877-765-8388.



AROUND THE INSPECTOR GENERAL WORLD



By Kelechi Akinbosede

The OIG Sheds Light on Nebulous Relationships between Atlanta City officials, Employees and Contractors Prompting Task Force to Limit OIG

In January 2023, the City of Atlanta Office of Inspector General (OIG) received a complaint about a \$20,000 reimbursement request City Council Member Michael Julian Bond made for Hello Fresh food distribution expenses. The payment was directed to a post office box address linked to Council Member Bond’s former campaign manager, Bernard Tokarz. The City Council rejected Bond’s reimbursement request and ultimately approved donating the funds to a food relief organization instead of reimbursing Council Member Bond. The OIG’s investigation focused on Mr. Tokarz and Bond’s former chief of staff, and current City employee Vanessa Manley to shed light on nebulous relationships between city officials, employees and vendors. The OIG found that Mr. Tokarz, a registered Georgia lobbyist, did not disclose financial and personal ties with various city employees and officials. In addition, Mr. Tokarz regularly advises Council Member Bond on city matters and serves as the principal agent for multiple businesses with contracts with the City of Atlanta. One of Mr. Tokarz’s businesses, Howell Mill Communications LLC, received \$52,303 from the city between July 2021 and August 2023. Over \$42,000 of those payments originated from Council Member Bond’s council account. The OIG also discovered that Howell Mill Communications paid over \$13,000 to senior city employees for campaign consulting during the 2021 election season.



City Ethics rules state that officials with even an indirect personal interest in any proposed legislation “shall not vote for or against, discuss, decide, in any way participate in considering the matter or seek to influence the votes or decisions of others on such matter.” Council Member Bond did not recuse himself from considering the 2022 Cloverhurst bid despite his relationship with Tokarz and voted to approve the agreement. Cloverhurst was one of two companies awarded the contract.

Sources:
<https://atipresscollective.com/2024/10/07/atlanta-city-council-members-under-scrutiny-in-inspector-generalprobe/>
<https://atipresscollective.com/2024/09/03/city-council-approves-new-task-force-heating-up-atlantas-battle-onoversight/>



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Groundhog Day is a whimsical day, we look forward to the antics of Punxsutawney Phil, the famous groundhog, who is said to predict whether we'll have six more weeks of winter or an early spring. While the weather might be unpredictable, it's a fun tradition that brings a little joy and anticipation to the heart of winter.

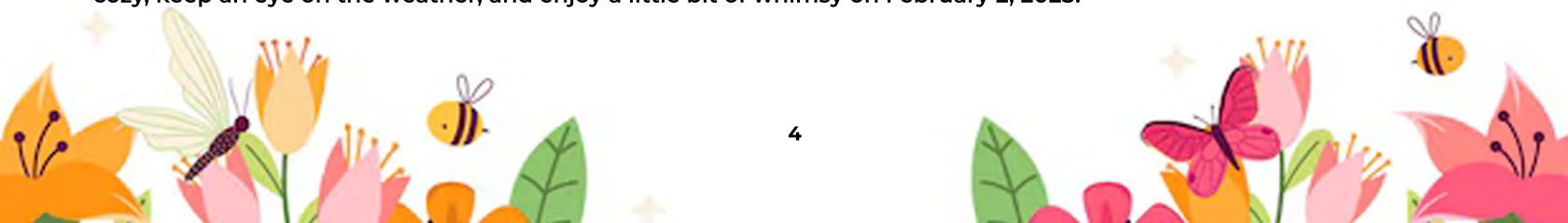
Groundhog Day, celebrated every year on February 2, has roots in the ancient European tradition of Candlemas Day. It was believed that if the weather was sunny on Candlemas, it foretold a longer winter. This tradition evolved when German settlers in Pennsylvania brought the custom of using an animal, the groundhog, to make the prediction. In 1887, the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club was founded, and Punxsutawney Phil became the central figure of the celebration.

At dawn, crowds gather at Gobbler's Knob in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, to watch as Phil emerges from his burrow. According to tradition, if Phil sees his shadow, we'll face six more weeks of winter. If he doesn't, an early spring is on the way! The ceremony is an event full of fun, music, and excitement, often broadcast to millions of viewers. Here a few fun facts:

1. Punxsutawney Phil has been making weather predictions since 1887.
2. He's "seen" his shadow about 105 times and failed to see it around 20 times.
3. While Phil's accuracy is debated, his predictions have become a fun part of winter lore.



Groundhog Day offers a moment of light-hearted fun in the coldest part of winter. It's a reminder to laugh, enjoy the quirky traditions, and perhaps even make some predictions of your own—whether it's about the weather or the future of our Detroit Lions, or when you'll finally get that first taste of spring sunshine. The forecast for Punxsutawney Phil's prediction this year is set to draw excitement, but no matter what, it's a great reason to find joy in the little things. Stay cozy, keep an eye on the weather, and enjoy a little bit of whimsy on February 2, 2025!



DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT

By Edyth Porter-Stanley

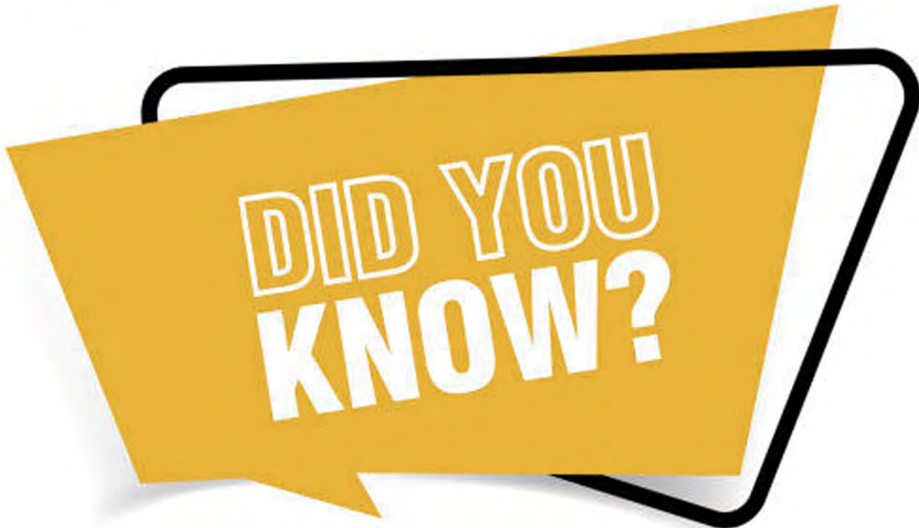


**DDOT Director
G. Michael Staley**



**DDOT Assistant Director
of Operations Geo Joy**

The Office of Inspector General appreciates the cooperation of Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) Director G. Michael Staley and Assistant Director of Operations Geo Joy during the OIG’s follow-up forensic audit of DDOT’s scrap material process. Their efforts to implement the recommendations from the OIG’s previous audit report exemplify their commitment to mitigating waste, fraud, and abuse. In addition, their successful recycling of parts mechanics removed from buses has resulted in over \$15,000 in additional income and supports the City’s dedication to reducing landfill waste and protecting our environment. Therefore, the OIG would like to formally thank Mr. Staley and Mr. Joy, and we look forward to working with them in the future.



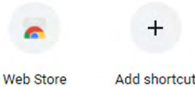
By Kaniya Foster

Did you know when looking for things to do around the City of Detroit, it can be quite interesting. The City of Detroit holds several events throughout the year to give their residents a chance to fellowship together. During different seasons, residents reach out the most to see what's going on in and around their area. There are multiple ways you can find out "what's happening" in Detroit.



🔍 Downtown Detroit 🔊

One of the best sites to find out about downtown Detroit is....
<https://downtowndetroit.org/experience-downtown/downtown-detroit-parks/cadillac-square/>



You can always connect with the city through **Facebook, Instagram, Indeed, X-formerly Twitter, YouTube** and by subscribing to the newsletters on the city of **Detroit website www.detroitmi.gov**.



Detroit for Life keeps all residents up to date on what's going on in the neighborhoods around the City of Detroit. Detroit for Life is also excited to announce September 1st will be the launch of WGPR Hot 107.5 on the first Sunday of every month "what's happening in Detroit" radio show hosted by Vickie Thomas & Dody Johnson keeping the residents aware of all the opportunities our city has to offer.



REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY

If you are a Detroit resident, City of Detroit employee, contractor, or are considering doing business with the City, the Office of Inspector General will be conducting employee training as well as community events throughout Detroit. We will present information including what we do, who we investigate, and how to submit a complaint. This is an opportunity for you to ask questions and address concerns involving fraud, waste, abuse, and corruption within the City of Detroit.

If you would like to schedule an event for your department or community group, contact us during regular business hours at 313-628-2517. We look forward to meeting you!

