



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Sept. 1, 2017
Contact [John Milgrim](#): 518-474-1010

HARLEM STATE OFFICE BUILDING SUPERINTENDENT TOOK IMPROPER PAYMENTS AND SOLICITED CONTRIBUTIONS FOR PLAZA CONCERTS WHILE NEGLECTING FACILITIES AS THEY DETERIORATED

NEW YORK CITY – New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today released a [report](#) of an investigation that found that Willie Walker, superintendent for the Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building in Harlem, improperly used his position to solicit contributions for outdoor events held on the building plaza, and improperly received \$6,750 in “finder’s fees” from the donations that he solicited, all while the building facilities he was in charge of deteriorated below State standards.

The investigation found that during an approximately three-year period from 2009 through 2012, Walker solicited approximately \$80,000 in event sponsorship donations and received \$6,750 in finder’s fees, potential violations of State ethics laws and the policies of the New York State Office of General Services (“OGS”), which owns the building and directly employs Walker.

The Powell Building has an outdoor plaza that hosts community and cultural events, including the annual Summer Stage in Harlem (Summer Stage), a summer-long series of weekly musical performances. Specifically, Walker received five checks representing finder’s fees from Harlem Memorial Community Development, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation that managed Summer Stage finances during the time period covered by the investigation. All five checks were made payable to Walker and included notations in the memorandum line, suggesting that they were finder’s fees. In addition, Walker utilized state resources, such as telephones, letterhead, and the work time of at least one other state employee to promote Summer Stage, even though OGS was not an official event sponsor at the time.

The investigation further revealed that while Walker was involved with Summer Stage, the condition of the Powell Building deteriorated and failed to meet OGS maintenance standards. Following a change in senior management in 2012, OGS conducted a complete assessment of the Powell Building and identified several maintenance deficiencies, such as unclean carpets, leaking windows, and poor air quality throughout the building.

“This employee neglected his primary responsibilities and improperly used the resources of his position to promote a summer concert series and enrich himself with payments he should not have solicited or received,” said Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott. “He was clearly more interested in working as an event promoter than performing his public employment duties, and his neglect became an additional burden to the State with excess cleaning and repair costs covering maintenance that should have already been done. I will continue to use all the resources at my disposal to help ensure that members of public workforce adhere to the highest standards of integrity and performance.”

The Inspector General's investigation concluded that Walker violated several OGS policies regarding employee conflicts of interest, outside activities, use of state property and resources, and restrictions on receiving gifts and benefits. Walker may have also violated the conflicts of interest and gift proscriptions of the State's Public Officers Law. The Inspector General is referring this matter to OGS to take whatever disciplinary action it deems appropriate. The Inspector General is also referring the matter to the Joint Commission on Public Ethics, and to the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance for a review of Walker's reported income and taxes in the years he received finder's fees.

In addition, the Inspector General recommends that OGS provide training to all agency employees regarding the Public Officers Law and agency policies concerning conflicts of interest, limitations on outside activities, gift restrictions, and the appropriate use of state property. The Inspector General further recommends that OGS review the Facilities' Manager Manual and update it as necessary.

OGS has agreed to and is implementing the Inspector General's recommendations.

A copy of the investigative report may be obtained by clicking [HERE](#)

###