



County of Erie

MARK C. POLONCARZ  
COMPTROLLER

PS

March 23, 2011

Hon. Timothy B. Howard  
Erie County Sheriff  
10 Delaware Avenue  
Buffalo, New York 14202

**Re: Waste, Fraud and Abuse Tip Line Communication**

Dear Sheriff Howard:

On March 22, 2011, our office received a communication from an anonymous citizen through our waste, fraud and abuse reporting mechanism. The caller claimed to have knowledge of a contract to sell advertising at the Holding Center. Specifically, the caller stated that the Sheriff's Department is planning to sell advertisements at the Holding Center targeting prisoners and visitors using some type of TV or computer monitor placed in the visitors waiting area and near the booking area. The caller raised questions about the propriety of such action, and, if appropriate, what account the proceeds from such advertisements would be deposited.

It is the policy of the Comptroller's Office to investigate all claims of possible waste, fraud or abuse reported through our reporting mechanisms. This item is not an allegation of waste, fraud or abuse. However, we do request a written or electronic response from your department before 3:00 PM on March 28, 2011 confirming whether the alleged allegation has merit, and if so, providing us answers to below-described questions:

- ✓ Is there a plan to sell ads at the Holding Center?

If so:

- ✓ Is there an RFP? (If so, please provide a copy.)
- ✓ Is there a contract? (If so, please provide a copy.)
- ✓ Who are the advertisers?
- ✓ What are the rates they are charged?

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✓ In what account are the proceeds deposited?

Audit is aware that ads are sold for video displays within the County Clerk's waiting area. Ads at the Holding Center would not be covered under that RFP.

Thank you for your cooperation and attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,

  
Michael R. Szukala  
Deputy Comptroller - Audit

MS/rt

Cc: Erie County Legislature ✓  
Bridget Corcoran, Director, Department of Purchase  
Erie County Fiscal Stability Authority