



**CITY OF DETROIT
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**

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Inspector General

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REQUEST TO INITIATE ACTION MEMORANDUM

DATE Aug 21, 2025

TO: Kamau C. Marable
Inspector General

Approved
Kamau C. Marable

FROM: April Page, M.A., CIGI
File Manager

RE: OIG FILE# 25-0012-INV

I. Summary

On June 2, 2025, an anonymous complaint was submitted to the City of Detroit Office of Inspector General (OIG) alleging that a mandatory Mayoral Fellowship Orientation, which was organized by the Human Resources (HR) department, included what appeared to be campaign activity for the 2025 Detroit Mayoral Campaign. The orientation took place at the Ford AB Community Complex, a City of Detroit building. The complainant alleges that while most speakers at the orientation were City of Detroit employees, mayoral candidates Councilmember Fred Durhal and Attorney Todd Perkins arrived at the orientation near the end of the scheduled program. They were noted only as "special invited guests" on the agenda.

The complainant also alleged that the program moderator introduced both individuals as "candidates for mayor." They were then allowed to give opening remarks about their background, purpose for being there, and their plans for the city if elected. Both individuals also reportedly self-identified as candidates and seemed knowledgeable about the program and its orientation.

The moderator's questions to Attorney Perkins and Councilmember Durhal included whether they would continue the mayoral fellowship program and how they would expand or change it. Both candidates reportedly affirmed they would keep and expand the program in various ways if elected. The complainant perceived this as a call for votes, particularly given the audience consisted of individuals who might be eligible voters and potentially interested in participating in the program in the future. This impression was further reinforced, according to the complaint, when the moderator asked the room about Detroit residency and voter registration during the candidates' introductions. Therefore, the OIG sought to determine if any HR employees abused their position by allowing Mr. Perkins and Councilmember Durhal to conduct campaign activities with City personnel on City property during work hours.

The OIG did not investigate the allegations that Councilmember Durhal conducted campaign activities during working hours. This allegation falls within the purview of the Ethics Ordinance and thus outside of OIG's jurisdiction. Instead, the OIG referred the matter to the Board of Ethics (BOE) for further review.

The OIG did not substantiate the allegation that HR employees abused their positions by allowing Mr. Perkins or Councilmember Durhal to conduct campaign activities with City personnel on City property during work hours. The investigation determined that Famika Roberts had not attended the BOE training and was unaware of the restrictions on campaign activities involving city employees or property. Furthermore, the HR employees who had received BOE training were not aware that the mayoral candidates were invited to speak until after the fact. Therefore, there is insufficient evidence the HR employees abused their positions.

The OIG recommends that BOE conduct refresher training for all employees during election years. This will help ensure employees do not engage in campaign activities during work hours or while on city property.

II. Background

The Mayoral Fellowship Program is an opportunity for graduate and undergraduate students from all disciplines to apply their coursework within city departments. Mayoral Fellowship interns utilize their skill sets to support policy, communications, and public engagement initiatives within city government. Interns work directly with senior staff across various City departments.¹

On June 2, 2025, a complaint was submitted concerning the orientation for the Mayoral Fellowship Program, which was held in the A.B. Ford Community Complex. It alleged that the mandatory intern event, hosted by HR, included campaign-like activities involving 2 mayoral candidates—Councilmember Fred Durhal and Attorney Todd Perkins.

Appointees, appointive officers and employees are prohibited from engaging in campaign activities using City property or engaging in such activity during working hours.² The Mayor, City Council members and City Clerk are prohibited from soliciting appointees, appointive officers and employees to work on political campaign activities using City property or during working hours.³ The OIG sought to determine whether an employee abused their position by authorizing the use of City property for campaign activities during work hours.

The OIG interviewed HR employee Famika Roberts, a Project Manager and Data Analytics Specialist for the Mayoral Fellowship Program. Her responsibilities include managing the summer fellowship program, onboarding interns, coordinating program data, and supporting returning citizens. She began her role in March 2024. Ms. Roberts led the planning for the Intern Orientation on June 2, 2025. The event was mandatory for interns to complete their onboarding

¹ "Mayor's Initiatives and Programs", City of Detroit, <https://detroitmi.gov/government/mayors-office/mayors-initiatives-and-programs#documents-block>.

² 2012 Charter of the City of Detroit, § 2-106.7. Campaign Activities Using City Property or During Working Hours.

³ *Id.*

process. Previous and current staff, including former interns and HR personnel, volunteered to assist with the planning and execution. Intern hosting departments and HR representatives were also invited to attend.⁴

The OIG interviewed HR employee Tracey Meek, Recruitment General Manager for the City of Detroit. Her responsibilities include managing the recruitment team and test development. She stated that the intern orientation was created in 2021. Prior to HR managing the intern orientation, it was initially managed by the Mayor's Office and then the Civil Rights, Inclusion & Opportunity Department (CRIO).

The OIG also interviewed Dary Conrad, HR's Chief Recruitment Officer, who oversees recruitment including the interns, and supervises staff. Mr. Conrad's responsibilities include monitoring vacancies, training, and compliance with civil service and collective bargaining rules.

III. Analysis and Findings

The investigation found that Ms. Roberts' desire to enhance the intern experience inadvertently led to an appearance of abuse of position. This appearance of abuse is due to a lack of awareness of the ethics policy, a wish for a "surprise," and a breakdown in oversight within the HR department. As detailed below, the subsequent actions by Ms. Meek and Mr. Conrad indicate a commitment to preventing similar incidents in the future through stricter adherence to review processes and ethics guidelines.

A. Famika Roberts

Ms. Roberts decided to invite mayoral candidates as a "wow factor"⁵ and for the interns to interact with potential future city leaders. Ms. Roberts contacted all candidates that she had information for including candidates; Mary Sheffield, Saunteel Jenkins, Fred Durhal, Todd Perkins, and Solomon Kinloch. Not all responded or agreed to attend the event. Ms. Roberts denied any prior professional relationships with candidates, except for previous contact with Candidate Kinloch.⁶

Ms. Roberts stated that during the orientation planning process, she had meetings with management to keep them "abreast of what's going on."⁷ However, she stated that she did not let anyone know who the panelists were because she wanted it to be a surprise. She stated that prior to the orientation, she asked the interns if they "could talk to the powers that be about the mayoral fellowship program, what would those questions be, what would [they] like to see."⁸ A moderator asked the questions that were received from the interns.⁹

⁴ OIG Interview of HR Project Manager and Data Analytics Specialist, Famika Roberts, June 11, 2025.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

Ms. Roberts explained that she did not view the candidate's presence as campaigning but as engagement with future city leadership. She stated that she was not initially aware of specific city policies regarding political activity at events, and she only received policy guidance after the event. She reiterated that her intent was to enhance the intern experience and not to endorse any candidate.¹⁰

Ms. Roberts stated that she received positive feedback after the event from supervisors and attendees, including HR and department leaders. She never received any complaints or negative feedback regarding candidate involvement during the event. She believes that the participants considered the event successful and engaging for interns.¹¹

The investigation determined that Ms. Roberts did not use her position to serve her own interests or the interests of any candidate when she allowed campaign activities with City personnel on City property during work hours. Instead, she believed she offered a "wow factor" for the participants by inviting the mayoral candidates. The evidence showed that Ms. Roberts had not attended BOE training. Therefore, she was not formally trained on the specific rules prohibiting campaign activities with City personnel on City property during work hours. As such, the OIG is unable to substantiate the allegation she abused her position.

B. Tracey Meek

Ms. Meek stated that she led the first intern orientation in 2021 after the program was transferred to HR. In 2022, Valerie Pilot was the Project Manager who planned the orientation. Ms. Pilot held that role until she moved to another position. At that time, the Project Manager position was backfilled with Famika Roberts as a TASS Project Manager. In 2023 and 2024, Ms. Roberts and Ms. Pilot worked together to plan the intern orientation. Ms. Roberts then took over as the sole planner of the intern orientation.¹²

Ms. Meek stated that she was on vacation and had no involvement or review of the agenda before the orientation. She explained that Ms. Roberts led the planning and coordinated with HR employees Briana Jones, Shawn Rule, and a volunteer from another department. Neither Ms. Meek nor Mr. Conrad saw or approved the agenda in advance. Past practice included agenda review when Mayor Duggan participated in the intern orientation. Ms. Meek stated that mayoral candidates have never participated in, or been invited to, previous intern orientations. Ms. Meek was not informed of the inclusion of political candidates and learned post-event via Mr. Conrad.¹³

Ms. Meek indicated that allowing mayoral candidates a platform during work hours is inappropriate and against ethics guidelines. Ethics guidance, including restrictions on campaign activities during working hours, was discussed during mandatory BOE training in 2024. However, Ms. Meek could not recall if Ms. Roberts attended or received the BOE training.¹⁴

¹⁰ OIG Interview of HR Project Manager and Data Analytics Specialist, Famika Roberts, June 11, 2025.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² OIG Interview of Human Resources Recruitment General Manager, Tracey Meek, June 25, 2025.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*

After learning of the candidate panel, Ms. Meek discussed her concerns with Ms. Roberts, and referenced prior ethics notifications.¹⁵ Both Ms. Meek and Mr. Conrad addressed the issue directly with Ms. Roberts.¹⁶ Since Ms. Meek was not aware the mayoral candidates would be speaking at the orientation, the OIG is unable to substantiate that Ms. Meek abused her position. Ms. Meek committed to personally reviewing all future orientation agendas to prevent similar issues and stressed the importance of no surprises.¹⁷

C. Darryl Conrad

Mr. Conrad attended the intern orientation and stated that his involvement was primarily in logistics and budget control.¹⁸ Mr. Conrad acknowledged that he printed a copy of the agenda the evening before the orientation event. However, he quickly reviewed it and threw it in the folder for the next day. There was no discussion between Mr. Conrad and Ms. Roberts regarding who the “special invited guests” were. He stated that he was unaware of campaign activities and the acoustics in the room made it hard to hear what the speakers were saying. He also stated that he was in and out of the room several times during the orientation and was not present for some speakers.¹⁹ While Mr. Conrad was present at the intern orientation, he stated in his interview that he was unaware the candidates were engaged in campaign activities. Mr. Conrad stated that the presence of invited candidates was discovered after the orientation at which point it raised potential ethics violations to him.²⁰ As such, the OIG has insufficient evidence to substantiate that Mr. Conrad abused his position.

D. Ethics Training

Mr. Conrad recalled details on the BOE Training for the HR Department held on April 4, 2024 at a mandatory in-person HR meeting.²¹ Mr. Conrad provided the OIG with a copy of the sign-in sheet from that BOE training and Ms. Roberts did not sign-in for the training.²² Her timesheet does not indicate she was absent. Although the meetings are mandatory in-person, there is a possibility that she had an emergency and needed to work remotely.²³ Both Mr. Conrad and Ms. Meek’s signatures are reflected on the sign-in sheet.²⁴ Michael O’Connell, BOE Training Specialist, confirmed that Daryl Conrad and Tracey Meek attended the HR all-staff training on April 4, 2024, held in the Erma Henderson Auditorium in CAYMC.²⁵ Ms. Roberts was not on the roster for sign-in. According to the BOE records for online training, Ms. Roberts has not

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ OIG Interview of Human Resources Recruitment General Manager, Tracey Meek, June 25, 2025.

¹⁸ OIG Interview of Human Resources Chief recruitment officer, Daryl Conrad, July 1, 2025.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ Email from Daryl Conrad, Human Resources Chief recruitment officer to OIG Investigator April Page, RE: Ethics Training Sign-in Sheet, dated July 2, 2025.

²² *Id.*

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ Email from Michael O’Connell, Board of Ethics Training Specialist to OIG Investigator April Page, RE: Famika Roberts, dated June 11, 2025.

completed online training either.²⁶

IV. Conclusion

The OIG sought to determine if any HR employees abused their position by allowing Mr. Perkins and Councilmember Durhal to conduct campaign activities with City personnel on City property during work hours. The OIG found that Ms. Roberts did not abuse her position by inviting mayoral candidates to speak and actively campaign at the intern orientation because the OIG cannot confirm she was informed of the restrictions on campaign activities. The OIG also found that Mr. Conrad and Ms. Meeks did not abuse their positions by allowing campaign activities on City property involving City employees because they were unaware the candidates were invited to speak until after the event.

V. Recommendation(s)

The OIG recommends Board of Ethics refresher training to all employees during election seasons. This will help ensure employees do not engage in campaign activities during work hours or while on city property.

VI. Evidence Reviewed

a. Interviews

Famika Roberts was interviewed on June 11, 2025

Tracey Meek was interviewed on June 25, 2025

Daryl Conrad was interviewed on July 1, 2025

b. Documents

Intern Orientation Agenda dated June 2, 2025

Email from Michael O'Connell dated June 11, 2025

Ethics training sign-in sheet dated April 4, 2024

Email from Daryl Conrad dated July 2, 2025

²⁶ *Id.*

Audit trail

Details

FILE NAME	M_RTIOC_25-0012-INV_21July25_AP - 8/21/25, 1:01 PM
STATUS	<div><div></div>Signed</div>
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Activity

<div><div></div><div>SENT</div></div>	pagea@detoig.org sent a signature request to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Kamau C. Marable (marablek@detoig.org)	2025/08/21 17:01:46 UTC
<div><div></div><div>SIGNED</div></div>	Signed by Kamau C. Marable (marablek@detoig.org)	2025/08/21 17:04:48 UTC
<div><div></div><div>COMPLETED</div></div>	This document has been signed by all signers and is complete	2025/08/21 17:04:48 UTC

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