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City of Chicago  
Brandon Johnson  
*Mayor*

December 22, 2023

Peter Neumer  
Inspector General  
Chicago Park District OIG  
740 N. Sedgwick, Suite 300  
Chicago, IL 60654

Re: IG Report 23-Q4-0576, Failure to Post Senior Manager List

Dear Inspector General Neumer,

I am writing in response to the Office of Inspector General ("OIG") Report No. 23-Q4-0576, dated November 17, 2023, which states that the Park District is not in compliance with Section VIII of the Chicago Park District Employment Plan ("the Plan") as it relates to maintaining and posting a Senior Management list.

BACKGROUND:

In general, the Plan sets forth requirements for hiring processes and includes several different categories of employees, and each category is treated differently under the Plan. Most titles are subject to "the general hiring process" which sets strict requirements related to job description review, minimum qualifications, posting requirements, narrowing of the applicant pool, interview questions, interview monitoring, interview scoring, recordkeeping and other pre-employment requirements. Under the Plan, there are limited exceptions to the general hiring process for titles categorized as "Senior Manager" and for those categorized as "Exempt" and some others. The processes related to hiring individuals into either of those titles are less prescriptive than for those subject to the general hiring process.

With respect to Senior Managers, as noted by the OIG Section VIII of the Plan provides:

Senior Manager Positions are those Positions that have **significant managerial responsibilities** such as management of **three or more subordinates**, **authority to initiate Employment Actions as to each subordinate (sic?) are not covered under any CBA, are exempt from career service, are at-will, and are not Exempt Positions.**

The Plan also provides that titles deemed Senior Manager be posted on the District website.

NO CURRENT SENIOR MANAGER LIST EXISTS:

The OIG recently requested a copy of the Senior Manager list from the Human Resources Department ("HR") and also noted that there is no Senior Manager list currently on the District website. HR provided a list containing six titles and names of employees in those titles, including names of two individuals who no longer work for the District. It was explained to the OIG that the list provided was the only document able to be found in HR records identified as a Senior Manager list.

In addition, those same six titles correctly appear on the current Exempt list. HR has confirmed that it has not exercised the Senior Manager exception provision for any hiring in the past two years. To our knowledge there is no record of the Senior Manager exception being used at any time after the list produced for the OIG was created. As such, rather than being a failure to maintain and post a Senior Manager list, it is more accurate to say that since all recent hiring has been done according to either the general hiring process or other exceptions enumerated in the Plan there is no Senior Manager list to post.

It does not appear to be the intention of the Plan that some titles appear simultaneously on both the Exempt list and a Senior Manager list. Nor does the Plan seem to require posting of a list that is not complete or current as is the case with the most recent list HR was able to locate. With no current Senior Manager list existing and given that the titles listed on an old list are properly listed as Exempt and made public on the District's website, the transparency goals of the Plan have been met even if HR record keeping under prior department leadership was not well maintained.

UPDATING THE EMPLOYMENT PLAN:

The Employment Plan was first adopted in 2014 and has not been amended since that time. As you know, currently HR, in collaboration with the OIG, the Law Department and my office has already begun a comprehensive review of the Plan with the goal of maintaining the purpose of ensuring a hiring process free of political influence while also eliminating unclear and outdated operational requirements. It has also been acknowledged that certain exceptions to the general hiring process to allow for some flexibility in the areas of posting, selection of candidates to interview, HR interview monitoring, and discretion to fill high level management vacancies in Exempt or Senior Manager titles is appropriate and will be maintained.

Going forward while the Plan is being reviewed and revised, HR will also work to identify positions that meet the Senior Manager criteria currently provided or as may be revised in the review process. A Senior Manager list should be created, and the prescribed Section VIII hiring process followed. This will also include posting a Senior Manager list on the District website.

As Superintendent and CEO I have put a high priority on having a well-functioning, effective HR Department guided by clear and up to date policies. I look forward to our continued collaboration on updating the 2014 Employment Plan and maintaining the integrity and accountability of the District's hiring processes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rosa Escareño", with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Rosa Escareño**

General Superintendent and CEO

Cc: Argentene Hrysikos  
Director of the Department of Human Resources