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Public Finance Authority Adopts Credit Card and Travel Policies to Prevent Misuse

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During a V.I. Public Finance Authority board meeting Wednesday, the board discussed adopting credit card and travel policies to prevent misuse of funds.

The policies were explained by PFA Attorney Lorelei Farrington.

The credit card policy outlines how employees with a corporate card are to use the card and “more importantly how not to use a credit card.”

A corporate card will not be used for any personal expenses and never for cash advances. Any one that uses the card in that regard can face consequences that range from suspension of the card to disciplinary action up to termination, explained Ms. Farrington.

The card is to be used for travel-related purposes and in some instances business purposes. The new policy details how the card can be used for authorized travel-related expenses: an employee would need to be approved for business travel before this employee can use the card for purchase of airline tickets and other travel-related expenses.

There are checks and balances provisions in the policy including filing a travel expense report with attached receipts of those expenses, which has to be approved by a senior-level management official. This system of checks and balances was put in place “to ensure the card is not misused,” said Ms. Farrington.

If an employee does not clear the expected expenses on the card before traveling, funds can be deducted from pending payment.

At the moment there is just one corporate credit card that is held by Nathan Simmonds, director of finance and administration for the P.F.A.

Along with the credit card policy, the PFA also announced its new travel policy. The travel policy outlines how employees should go about dealing with expenses that can occur on business trips for the authority.

The policy describes how transportation fees should be handled and does not allow employees to rent a vehicle without previous approval. It allows for employees to be paid for their airline travel, using economy or coach, unless first class use is justified because there are no other tickets available. Lodging and a proposed per diem of \$100 per day were also discussed as part of the travel policy.

The use of the per diem does not have to be documented unless the employee spends more than the allotment, and is looking for additional reimbursement. Such a request would be subject to review and not automatically approved.

If an employee does not present an additional reimbursement request within a 45-day period, the employee may not be reimbursed unless there is an insinuated circumstance.

“We realize that we are sending the employees on business travel and so we certainly don't want the employee coming out of their pockets. But we certainly don't want to send you on the Taj Mahal of business travel,” said Ms. Farrington.