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PRESS RELEASE

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OFFICE OF AUDIT AND CONTROL COMPLETES THEIR UTILITY, INTERNET, AND CELLPHONE USAGE AUDIT AND ISSUES A REPORT

ALBANY, NY – The Office of Audit and Control (OAC) has released its Utility, Internet, and Cellphone (UIC) Usage Audit report. The City’s utility (including energy, internet, and cellphone) billings totaled \$26,336, 259. 45 during the audit period January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2020. OAC was prompted to initiate an audit of the City’s utility usage after observing trends of service interruption threats, excessive billing carryover balances, and confusion over roles and responsibilities regarding utility matters. The UIC Usage Audit objectives include: assessing utility usage, including energy, internet, and cellphone and management practices to identify potential waste and organizational gaps; collecting and analyzing data related to City departments’ formal and informal processes, policies and practices for acquiring new and enhanced utility services; and providing recommendations to improve efficiencies and minimize costs when managing City utility accounts. The audit report highlights seven findings and 11 recommendations.

The audit findings are as follows:

- City departments are not engaged in the monitoring and management of utilities to the extent needed, resulting in a track record of delayed utility payments, ongoing disruption of service notices and an instance of a disruption to an emergency service.

- The process of adding and upgrading service lines is not standardized across City departments resulting in ambiguity with the management of accounts.
- City departments do not possess a thorough understanding of how to access information pertaining to their utility accounts.
- While a majority (71%) of City departments were able to stay within their respective utility budget during the audit period, 29% needed substantial budget modifications (18 budget transfers, totaling \$378,451) to pay for utility expenses.
- City departments are unclear of the established protocols for collecting City-issued devices such as cellphones, tablets, and/or laptops upon an employee's termination or retirement.
- The majority of departmental staff stated they were unaware that the City hired an Energy Manager and as a result are unclear of the Manager's role.
- The City continued to pay all operating expenses, including utilities, through 2020, for a building (45 Lark Street) it owns but does not occupy despite findings and recommendations cited in a 2018 OAC audit report.

“The City’s reliance on utilities cannot be understated as these resources are vital to meet the needs of residents, local businesses, non-profit organizations, and state and local government. I applaud City leadership’s commitment to implementing a handful of OAC’s recommendations and the steps the Office of Sustainability has already taken to initiate several projects aimed at tracking and lowering energy costs City-wide,” said Albany Chief City Auditor Dr. Dorcey L. Applyrs.

The complete Utility, Internet, and Cellphone Usage Audit can be viewed [here](#)

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