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AND PENSIONS



RICK W. ALLEN

12TH DISTRICT, GEORGIA

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

January 22, 2024

Shawn Edwards
Executive Director
Augusta, Georgia Land Bank Authority
1450 Greene Street, Suite 80
Augusta, GA 30901

Dear Mr. Edwards:

I write to request information regarding the Augusta, Georgia Land Bank Authority's (AGLBA) utilization of \$1 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. AGLBA is a public entity which works on behalf of Augusta-Richmond County to "identify, improve, reactivate and redistribute vacant, abandoned, and dilapidated properties for housing, economic, and civic purposes."¹ My office was asked to investigate claims of misused federal ARPA funds by AGLBA.

In October 2022, AGLBA requested \$1 million in funding as part of a memorandum of understanding with the City of Augusta.² The Augusta Commission agreed on November 1, 2022 to provide AGLBA with \$1 million from the American Rescue Plan Act, meant to go towards the "upkeep or demolition of property to combat blight."³ However, it has been reported that AGLBA may have misused those funds, including expending these funds on staff pay raises, dinners and meals, and to finance various trips.⁴

My office was informed that the ARPA funds appropriated from the Augusta Commission were Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF). SLFRF funds had four allowable uses:

1. Public health and negative economic impacts;
2. To provide premium pay to workers who had to work during the pandemic;
3. To provide for government services that would have otherwise been cut due to a lack of revenue coming in during the pandemic; and
4. To make necessary investments in sewer, water, or broadband infrastructure.⁵

¹ <https://aglbsa.org/documents/>

² Scott Hudson, *Augusta Land Bank Authority requests American Rescue Plan funding*, THE AUGUSTA PRESS (Oct. 27, 2022)

³ Scott Hudson, *Commission gives Augusta Land Bank Authority \$1 million*, THE AUGUSTA PRESS (Nov. 2, 2022).

⁴ Scott Hudson, *Augusta Land Bank travel, entertainment, and other costs soar*, THE AUGUSTA PRESS (Nov. 27, 2023).

⁵ American Rescue Plan Act §9901, 42 U.S.C. §§802-803..

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I am requesting that the Augusta, Georgia Land Bank Authority account for the dollars spent using the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) with a written response no later than February 5, 2024. Please detail how the distribution of these funds was in compliance with the allowed uses for SLFRF funds, as detailed in the SLFRF 2022 Final Rule.

As a Member of the House of Representatives for Georgia's 12th Congressional district, I am doing my due diligence to ensure the AGLBA is utilizing taxpayer dollars correctly and ethically. If you have any questions about this matter, please contact my office at 202-225-2823.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick W. Allen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rick" being more prominent and stylized.

Rick W. Allen
Member of the U.S. Congress