

CITY OF NEW YORK
**THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER OF INVESTIGATION
FOR THE NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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ANASTASIA COLEMAN
SPECIAL COMMISSIONER

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September 24, 2019

Hon. Richard A. Carranza
Chancellor
New York City Public Schools
Department of Education
52 Chambers Street, Room 314
New York, NY 10007

Re: Alexandra Robinson
SCI Case #: 2018-6050

Dear Chancellor Carranza:

An investigation conducted by this office has substantiated that Alexandra Robinson ("Robinson"), the executive director for the Department of Education ("DOE") Office of Pupil Transportation ("OPT"), committed employee misconduct when she requested subordinate employees use her City-owned vehicle to transport her to Newark International Airport ("Newark"), John F. Kennedy International Airport ("Kennedy"), and LaGuardia Airport ("LaGuardia") during work hours.¹

I. Investigation & Findings

a. Initial Complaint

On September 20, 2019, office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District ("SCI") received a complaint from [REDACTED] who relayed that several OPT employees transported Robinson to and from the airport using City-owned vehicles. SCI had previously received a complaint from [REDACTED] by email on September 24, 2018.² [REDACTED] also alleged that Robinson requested that staff members in City vehicles drive Robinson to and pick Robinson up from the airport.

¹ All parties describe the vehicle as Robinson's; it is unclear if it was assigned solely to her or also to others.

² [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

On September 25, 2018, SCI investigators interviewed [REDACTED] who advised that Robinson requested OPT employees use City-owned vehicles to drop her off and pick her up from the airport. [REDACTED] personally witnessed this on two occasions.

[REDACTED]

On October 2, 2018, SCI investigators met with [REDACTED] who stated that “during the past few years” he “offered” Robinson rides to the airport, if investigators were “going out on something.” [REDACTED] stated that investigators would drop her at the airport using Robinson’s DOE-assigned vehicle and then continue with their field work. Per [REDACTED] this was not required of him by Robinson, but was done as a courtesy. He further advised that these rides happened once or twice a month, and always to LaGuardia Airport – only for drop-off, and not pick up.

[REDACTED]

On December 20, 2018, SCI investigators interviewed [REDACTED] who stated that he reported to Robinson and was [REDACTED] [REDACTED] advised that it was “common knowledge” that OPT staff would drop off and pick up Robinson at the airport using DOE vehicles during the work day. [REDACTED] stated that the rides – which were to and from LaGuardia, Kennedy, and Newark – occurred twice monthly for the seven years Robinson was a DOE employee, which would amount to nearly 170 rides. [REDACTED] knew from [REDACTED] who mentioned the rides in conversations, and also from having seen Robinson leave the office or returning with a staff member, that this system of ride-giving occurred. He specifically named [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] as Robinson’s drivers.

[REDACTED]

SCI investigators met with [REDACTED] on March 25, 2019. [REDACTED] confirmed that on one occasion, “a few years ago” and “during work hours,” she drove Robinson to LaGuardia using Robinson’s DOE-assigned vehicle.

[REDACTED]

On April 1, 2019, SCI investigators interviewed [REDACTED] [REDACTED] stated that during his [REDACTED] years working for OPT; he once drove Robinson to LaGuardia during work hours using Robinson’s DOE-assigned vehicle.

[REDACTED]

SCI investigators met with [REDACTED] on April 4, 2019 and May 9, 2019, respectively. [REDACTED] stated that he drove Robinson to LaGuardia once during work hours using Robinson’s DOE-assigned vehicle. [REDACTED] worked for OPT from [REDACTED] during that time, he

drove Robinson to LaGuardia “once a month or once every two months,” and that he may have picked her up from the airport on one occasion. [REDACTED] confirmed that these rides were during work hours, that he used Robinson’s DOE-assigned vehicle, and he did so [REDACTED]

h. Robinson

On May 29, 2019, SCI investigators met with Robinson, who confirmed that on “several occasions” she accepted rides to LaGuardia from other OPT employees during work hours, frequently in her DOE-assigned vehicle. She stated that on seven separate dates, [REDACTED] offered – and she accepted – to have an OPT investigator drive her to the airport and use her vehicle for the remainder of the day. Robinson also recalled an occasion when [REDACTED] picked her up from LaGuardia, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Per Robinson, most of these rides to the airport occurred on Fridays, and that her flights were either to San Diego for pleasure or for a DOE-approved trip. She stated that five of the rides she received – “half” of them – were for pleasure. On June 10, 2019, Robinson emailed SCI investigators 10 attachments containing trip documents. A review of these documents indicated that Robinson traveled on 10 DOE-approved trips between 2012 and 2018.

On June 13, 2019, SCI investigators met again with Robinson. After having emailed the previously-mentioned documents to SCI, she “realized” that there were 10 DOE-approved trips for which she received rides from a OPT employees to LaGuardia, and that there were “six or seven” other occasions when she received rides to LaGuardia for personal trips – also with OPT employees driving her, and with use of her DOE-assigned vehicle.

It is unclear for which excursions Robinson utilized OPT drivers; however, a review of Robinson’s publically available Instagram account [REDACTED] demonstrates that she has travelled extensively since the start of 2018. Postings on her Instagram account since January 2, 2018 include numerous tagged locations, indicating that Robinson was traveling on the following dates (location included in the right-most column):

Date	Location
Tuesday, January 2, 2018	Chicago O'Hare International Airport, Chicago, Illinois
Friday, January 12, 2018	San Diego, California
Saturday, January 13, 2018	Eastlake Greens, California
Sunday, January 14, 2018	Silver Strand State Beach, California
Monday, January 15, 2018	San Diego International Airport, San Diego, California
Sunday, January 28, 2018	Lakeside, California
Friday, February 16, 2018	Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Sunday, February 18, 2018	Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Wednesday, February 21, 2018	San Diego, California
Thursday, March 22, 2018	San Diego, California
Sunday, April 22, 2018	Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Monday, April 23, 2018	Dubai World Trade Centre
Friday, April 27, 2018	Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Saturday, April 28, 2018	Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Monday, May 14, 2018	Chicago O'Hare International Airport, Chicago, Illinois
Thursday, June 14, 2018	Boussac, Limousin, France
Saturday, June 16, 2018	Sancerre, France
Sunday, June 17, 2018	Boussac, Limousin, France
Monday, June 25, 2018	American Bank Center, Corpus Christi, Texas
Friday, June 29, 2018	San Diego International Airport, San Diego, California
Sunday, July 1, 2018	San Diego, California
Sunday, July 15, 2018	Reno, Nevada
Monday, July 16, 2018	Reno, Nevada
Friday, July 20, 2018	San Diego International Airport, San Diego, California
Monday, July 23, 2018	Silver Strand State Beach, California
Friday, August 3, 2018	New Smyrna Beach, Florida
Tuesday, August 7, 2018	Lake Nona, Florida
Saturday, August 11, 2018	Farges, France
Monday, August 13, 2018	Brion, Centre, France
Tuesday, August 14, 2018	Malta Marriott Hotel & Spa
Thursday, August 16, 2018	Marsaxlokk, Malta
Thursday, August 16, 2018	Malta
Monday, September 3, 2018	San Diego, California
Sunday, September 9, 2018	Charles Town, West Virginia
Sunday, September 23, 2018	La Playa De Rosarito, Mexico
Saturday, October 6, 2018	San Diego, California
Saturday, October 6, 2018	San Clemente, California
Sunday, October 7, 2018	San Diego International Airport, San Diego, California
Tuesday, October 9, 2018	Los Angeles, California
Monday, October 22, 2018	San Diego, California

Saturday, December 29, 2018	San Diego, California
Sunday, January 20, 2019	Disney California Adventure Park, Anaheim, California
Tuesday, January 22, 2019	San Diego International Airport, San Diego, California
Wednesday, February 20, 2019	San Diego, California
Monday, March 11, 2019	Chula Vista, California
Monday, March 18, 2019	Newark Liberty International Airport, Newark, New Jersey
Monday, April 1, 2019	Silver Strand State Beach, California
Sunday, April 14, 2019	Anaheim, California
Saturday, May 25, 2019	New Port Richey, Florida
Monday, May 27, 2019	Tampa, Florida
Friday, May 31, 2019	San Diego, California
Saturday, June 1, 2019	Baja, California
Thursday, June 20, 2019	San Diego International Airport, San Diego, California
Monday, June 24, 2019	San Diego, California
Monday, July 15, 2019	John F. Kennedy International Airport, Queens, New York
Tuesday, July 30, 2019	Denver International Airport
Wednesday, August 21, 2019	Eastlake Greens, California

i. Relevant Guidelines

Per the May 2016 City Vehicle Driver Handbook, "Drivers are not allowed to use City Government Vehicles for personal activities, except for required rest periods, meals, and brief stops incidental to the conduct of official City business. Such stops do not entitle drivers to use the vehicle for shopping, recreation or to transport others...Likewise, drivers may transport other City employees, as well as contractual personnel *who are on official City business*, to destinations *directly along the driver's route*" (emphasis added).

II. Conclusion and Recommendation

Alexandra Robinson repeatedly had subordinate employees utilize her DOE-assigned vehicle to drive her to the airport for both business and personal trips. The allegations of Robinson's conduct are serious, and the reporting and the accounts of all parties interviewed are consistent and credible, and demonstrate that Robinson misused City resources.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of this office that the DOE take appropriate disciplinary action regarding Robinson, and that the DOE direct Robinson to review and adhere to all applicable requirements regarding the use of City vehicles.

We are sending a copy of this letter to the DOE Office of Legal Services. We also note that the conduct of Alexandra Robinson may have violated the conflicts of interest provisions of the New York City Charter, which is administered by the New York City Conflicts of Interest Board.

Please respond within 30 days of receipt of this letter as to any action taken or contemplated regarding this matter. Should you have any inquiries regarding the above, please contact Jonathan Jacobs, the assigned attorney for this matter, at (212) 510-1423.

Sincerely,

ANASTASIA COLEMAN
Special Commissioner of Investigation
for the New York City School District

By:



Daniel I. Schlachet
First Deputy Commissioner

AC:DS:JJ:lr

c: Howard Friedman, Esq.
Karen Antoine, Esq.
Katherine Rodi, Esq.

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September 25, 2019

Hon. Richard A. Carranza
Chancellor
New York City Public Schools
Department of Education
52 Chambers Street, Room 314
New York, NY 10007

**Re: Correction to Page 1
Alexandra Robinson
SCI Case #2018-6050**

Dear Chancellor Carranza:

On September 24, 2019, we sent you our letter regarding the above referenced case. However, in the original letter there is an error on page one – **Investigations & Findings** (a. Initial Complaint) first paragraph where it reads: “On September 20, 2019,” the correct date should read: “September 20, 2018.”

We ask that you please attach this correction to the original letter previously sent. We apologize for the inconvenience.

If you need any information or assistance, please contact me at (212) 510-1418. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Daniel I. Schlachet
First Deputy Commissioner

AC:DS:JJ:lr

C: Howard Friedman, Esq.
Karen Antoine, Esq.
Katherine Rodi, Esq.

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BOARD

In the Matter of

ALEXANDRA ROBINSON

Respondent.

DISPOSITION

COIB Case No. 2019-640

WHEREAS, the New York City Conflicts of Interest Board (the "Board") commenced an enforcement action pursuant to Section 2603(h)(1) of Chapter 68 of the New York City Charter ("Chapter 68"), the City's conflicts of interest law, against Alexandra Robinson ("Respondent"); and

WHEREAS, the Board and Respondent wish to resolve this matter on the following terms,

IT IS HEREBY AGREED, by and between the parties, as follows:

1. In full satisfaction of the above-captioned matter, Respondent admits to the following:
 - a. From December 13, 2011, until October 4, 2019, I was employed by the New York City Department of Education ("DOE") as the Executive Director of the Office of Pupil Transportation ("OPT"). During that time, I was a "public servant" within the meaning of and subject to Chapter 68.
 - b. As OPT Executive Director, I supervised, directly or indirectly, all OPT employees. Thus, every OPT employee was my subordinate within the meaning of Chapter 68.
 - c. I was assigned a City "take-home" vehicle to be used in the performance of my official City duties and to commute between my City residence and the OPT office in Long Island City.
 - d. While employed as OPT Executive Director, I lived in the Bronx and often spent my weekends in California where I was domiciled.
 - e. On numerous occasions during my eight years as OPT Executive Director, I accepted offers from on-duty OPT subordinates to drive me in my assigned City take-home vehicle from the OPT office to LaGuardia Airport to travel to California.
 - f. On three occasions, I accepted offers from off-duty OPT subordinates to drive me in their personal vehicles from the OPT office to LaGuardia Airport to travel to California.

- g. I acknowledge that, by accepting offers from on-duty OPT subordinates to drive me to the airport to travel to California and by using my assigned City take-home vehicle to be driven to the airport for this travel, I used City personnel and a City resource for personal, non-City purposes in violation of City Charter § 2604(b)(2), pursuant to Board Rules § 1-13(b), which state respectively:

No public servant shall engage in any business, transaction or private employment, or have any financial or other private interest, direct or indirect, which is in conflict with the proper discharge of his or her official duties.

Except as provided in subdivision (c) of this section, it shall be a violation of City Charter § 2604(b)(2) for any public servant to use City letterhead, personnel, equipment, resources, or supplies for any non-City purpose.

- h. I acknowledge that, by accepting offers from my OPT subordinates to drive me to the airport, I used my City position to obtain a personal benefit in violation of City Charter § 2604(b)(3), which states:

No public servant shall use or attempt to use his or her position as a public servant to obtain any financial gain, contract, license, privilege or other private or personal advantage, direct or indirect, for the public servant or any person or firm associated with the public servant.

- i. On October 4, 2019, DOE terminated my employment for the above-described conduct and additional conduct that does not implicate Chapter 68.

2. After considering prior cases in which public servants used their City vehicles for personal travel and cases in which public servants had their on-duty and/or off-duty subordinates drive them to personal destinations, the Board has determined that DOE's imposed penalty of termination of Respondent's employment is sufficient to address Respondent's violations of Chapter 68 and that no additional fine is necessary.

3. In recognition of the foregoing, Respondent agrees to the following:

- a. I agree that this Disposition is a public and final resolution of the Board's charges against me.
- b. I knowingly waive on my behalf and on behalf of my successors and assigns any rights to commence any judicial or administrative proceeding or appeal before any court of competent jurisdiction, administrative tribunal, political subdivision, or office of the City or the State of New York or the United States, and to contest the lawfulness, authority, jurisdiction, or power of the Board in imposing the penalty which is embodied in this Disposition, and I waive any right to make any legal or equitable claims or to initiate legal proceedings of any kind against the Board or any

members or employees thereof, arising out of their official capacities, relating to or arising out of this Disposition or the matters recited therein.

- c. I confirm that I have entered into this Disposition freely, knowingly, and intentionally, without coercion or duress, and after having been represented by an attorney of my choice; that I accept all terms and conditions contained herein without reliance on any other promises or offers previously made or tendered by any past or present representative of the Board; and that I fully understand all the terms of this Disposition.
- d. I agree that any material misstatement of the facts of this matter, including of the Disposition, by me or by my attorney or agent shall, at the discretion of the Board, be deemed a waiver of confidentiality of this matter.

4. The Board accepts this Disposition and the terms contained herein as a final disposition of the above-captioned matter only, and affirmatively states that other than as recited herein, no further action will be taken by the Board against Respondent based upon the facts and circumstances set forth herein, except that the Board shall be entitled to take any and all actions necessary to enforce the terms of this Disposition.

5. This Disposition shall not be effective until all parties have affixed their signatures below.

Dated: May 12, 2020




Alexandra Robinson
Respondent

Dated: May 12, 2020



Lewis Tesser
Tesser, Ryan & Rochman, LLP
Attorney for Respondent

Dated: July 14, 2020



Jeffrey D. Friedlander
Chair
NYC Conflicts of Interest Board