



OHIO AUDITOR OF STATE  
**KEITH FABER**





CITY OF ELYRIA  
LORAIN COUNTY

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# OHIO AUDITOR OF STATE KEITH FABER



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City of Elyria  
Lorain County  
131 Court Street  
Elyria, Ohio 44035

To City Council Members, Amanda Deery, Law Director, and Ted Pileski, Finance Director:

## **Background**

The Auditor of State (AOS), Special Investigations Unit (SIU) conducted a criminal investigation and special audit of the City of Elyria (the City) predicated on information received alleging the former Mayor improperly used City funds for his personal re-election campaign.

The investigation began in April 2023, after SIU was contacted by investigators from the Lorain County Prosecutor's Office with a complaint alleging former Mayor Frank Whitfield hired a vendor, Correa Media Productions (Correa), to provide campaign advertising services. The allegation noted Mr. Whitfield maintained three Facebook pages, including a personal campaign page, "WElyria – Frank Whitfield, Mayor of Elyria," where campaign advertising content created by Correa was posted; however, the City paid for the services provided.

After the information obtained from interviews and preliminary examination of City payment records, vendor invoices, and Facebook posts was considered, a special audit was declared by the Auditor of State.

This engagement was conducted in accordance with the [Auditor of State Special Investigations Unit, Quality Standards](#).

## **Suspect**

Frank Whitfield was elected Mayor in November 2019, serving a four-year term from January 2020 to December 2023. Mr. Whitfield ran for re-election for City Mayor in 2023 but was defeated.

## **Scheme**

We identified our audit period as July 1, 2022 to December 31, 2023 (Period) based on the City's ledger and invoices related to the vendor, Correa. During the Period, the City contracted with Correa to create videos and other content as promotional material for the City's two Facebook pages, "City of Elyria" and "Mayor Frank Whitfield." The City's former Public Information Officer and certain department heads had access to post to the City's two Facebook pages. Mr. Whitfield indicated he was the only person with access to his "WElyria" campaign Facebook page created in 2019, and at times borrowed content from the City's two pages to post to his campaign Facebook page.

We examined all invoices paid by the City for content services provided by Correa and compared to the three Facebook pages. We identified five events where content created for and paid by the City were solely posted to Mr. Whitfield's campaign Facebook page. For the other events on the invoices, content was posted to a combination of all three Facebook pages or only to the City's Facebook pages. Of the \$22,032.50 paid to Correa during the Period, we identified \$956.67 related to content created and used only for Mr. Whitfield's campaign Facebook page.

## **Findings**

Based on the special audit procedures and investigation, the Auditor of State confirmed the allegation that Frank Whitfield illegally spent \$956.67 over a span of one and a half years.

We issued \$956.67 in a finding for recovery for illegal expenditures during the Period.

The full details of the finding for recovery are located in the Appendix.

## **Prosecution**

At the conclusion of the special audit and investigation, a prosecution packet was presented to the Lorain County Prosecutor. The County Prosecutor declined to pursue criminal charges.

The exit conference was waived by the City; however, the City Council and Management were given five days to respond to this special audit report. A response was not received from the City.

KEITH FABER  
Ohio Auditor of State

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tiffany L. Ridenbaugh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tiffany L. Ridenbaugh, CPA, CFE, CGFM  
Chief Deputy Auditor

July 24, 2025

# **APPENDIX**

## **SCHEDULE OF FINDING FOR RECOVERY**



## APPENDIX

### FINDING FOR RECOVERY – REPAID UNDER AUDIT

**Ohio Rev. Code § 9.03(D)(8)** indicates no person shall knowingly conduct a direct or indirect transaction of public funds to the benefit of a candidate.

During the Period, the City paid a total of \$956.67 in improper payments to Correa for content related to posts and events solely appearing on Mr. Whitfield's campaign Facebook page. Mr. Whitfield was the only person from the City with access to his campaign Facebook page.

In accordance with the foregoing facts and pursuant to Ohio Rev. Code § 117.28, a finding for recovery for public monies illegally expended is hereby issued against Frank Whitfield and his bonding company, Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services, Inc., in the amount of \$956.67 and in favor of the City's General Fund.

On July 7, 2025, Mr. Whitfield repaid \$956.67 to the City, which was properly deposited and recorded in the City's General Fund.



# OHIO AUDITOR OF STATE KEITH FABER



## CITY OF ELYRIA SPECIAL AUDIT REPORT

LORAIN COUNTY

### AUDITOR OF STATE OF OHIO CERTIFICATION

This is a true and correct copy of the report, which is required to be filed pursuant to Section 117.26, Revised Code, and which is filed in the Office of the Ohio Auditor of State in Columbus, Ohio.



**Certified for Release 8/19/2025**

65 East State Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215  
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This report is a matter of public record and is available online at  
[www.ohioauditor.gov](http://www.ohioauditor.gov)