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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sloppy Records. Unenforced Rules. MWRD Candidates Ask: Who's Watching Your Tax Dollars?

Inspector General finds inadequate mileage logs for eight commissioners, raising broader questions about accountability at the top.

CHICAGO — MWRD Commissioner candidates Michelle Pennington, Tim Rueckert, and Jill Shestokas are demanding answers about the district's failure to enforce mileage-reporting rules for commissioner vehicles and asking whether unlimited personal use of those vehicles should continue.

An anonymous whistle blower from a district employee prompted an investigation that exposed inadequate mileage documentation among all eight commissioners with assigned district vehicles. The Interim Inspector General's October 12 quarterly report found that every 2025 mileage log examined lacked the detail required to distinguish business travel from personal use. Yet the eight commissioners submitted year-end forms reporting business use ranging from 31.87% to 98%, averaging 79.4%.

Finance accepted those figures without reviewing supporting mileage documentation.

"It took a whistle blower from inside the district to uncover incomplete records and rules that weren't being enforced," said Michelle Pennington. "If basic mileage reporting isn't being checked, what confidence should taxpayers have in the oversight of contracts, infrastructure spending, and projects their communities are waiting for? This report gives us every reason to ask those questions. Accountability starts at the top."

The Inspector General found that the district was neither enforcing its monthly mileage documentation requirements nor applying its policy requiring personal mileage to be treated as a taxable benefit.

"If I claim a business expense, I need records to support it. Commissioners should meet that same basic standard," said Jill Shestokas. "Why were incomplete logs accepted? Why weren't the records checked against the percentages being reported? Having rules on paper means nothing if nobody enforces them."

The investigation began with a whistle blower alleging that a commissioner misused a district vehicle to attend concerts on two nights. Investigators confirmed the vehicle's proximity to the concert and its subsequent towing but found the alleged vehicle misuse unfounded. District policy permits personal use of commissioners' assigned vehicles, subject to ethics restrictions. The broader investigation nevertheless uncovered failures in mileage documentation and enforcement.

The Inspector General recommended complete monthly business-mileage logs, review of those records alongside annual vehicle tax forms, and a cost-benefit review to determine whether unlimited personal use of district vehicles should end. All three recommendations remained pending when the report was published.

"We want a public timetable, someone clearly responsible for checking the records, and a review of the 2025 documentation to determine whether corrections are needed," said Tim Rueckert. "Tell taxpayers what these vehicles cost. Have the board decide publicly whether unlimited personal use should continue. The Inspector General has identified the problem. Now the board needs to act."

"People are paying property taxes and counting on MWRD to protect their homes from flooding and keep our water clean," Pennington said. "Before asking taxpayers for more, we need to make sure the money already collected is being used wisely. Commissioners should be setting the example. Following the rules is the minimum taxpayers should expect."

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The 2026 midterm election takes place on Tuesday, November 3.

Vote 3 for MWRD—Michelle Pennington, Timothy E. Rueckert and Jill B. Shestokas

Elect three new commissioners who will challenge mismanagement, demand transparency and ensure that MWRD protects the communities affected by its decisions.

Visit www.michelleforcleanwater.com for more information