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REPORT INSERT – OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
MEMORANDUM OF INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW OF Robert Peck	DATE OF INTERVIEW February 9, 2011
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On February 9, 2011, at approximately 10:30 a.m., [REDACTED], Special Agent in Charge (SAC), General Services Administration, Office of Inspector General (GSA OIG), Midwest Regional Investigations Office, [REDACTED] Regional Inspector General for Audits, GSA OIG, both of Kansas City, MO, [REDACTED], Assistant Inspector General for Audits (AIGA), [REDACTED], Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Real Property Audits, (DAIGA) GSA OIG, Washington, DC, met with Robert Peck, Commissioner, Public Buildings Service (PBS), GSA, Washington, DC. Also in attendance was [REDACTED], Associate Commissioner, PBS, Washington, DC. The purpose of this meeting was in response to Peck's request to meet pursuant to the draft JANE MOBLEY ASSOCIATES (JMA) audit memorandum.

Prior to the interview, SAC [REDACTED] identified himself to Peck and AIGA [REDACTED] explained that Peck reached out to Brian Miller, Inspector General (IG), GSA OIG, Washington, DC, claiming to have information. Peck said he did not want to talk about whether the JMA contract methodology was justified or the deliverables received by PBS. Peck said that the issues raised in the draft audit memorandum were legitimate and that he hoped the regional office had good results and a detailed response.

Peck said his main information is that there were lots of discussions regarding communications at Bannister from August of 2009 through the time of the JMA contract award. Peck said that on a number occasions he discussed the importance of effective communication with Paul Prouty (acting GSA Administrator), Cathy Kronopolus (acting Chief of Staff), and Mary Ruwwe (Regional Commissioner, PBS, Region 6). Peck said he had discussions with Kronopolus and Prouty regarding Bannister, the possibility of a new federal building and whether to lease or build, and concerns from the media and tenants about health safety. Peck said there were two issues. The first was had GSA identified the problem and was working to alleviate it, and the second was how to communicate effectively to the people and public. Peck explained that if people even start to think there are health problems; then, perception becomes an issue. Peck explained a syndrome known as sick building where even if tests come back negative, some people will still think they are sick and complain about their health. Peck, Prouty, Ruwwe, and Kronopolus wanted to talk effectively with tenants/media, about what went on in the past, the present, the testing, and the use of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and National Institute of Safety and Health as consultants.

Peck stated that the region had no Regional Administrator and public affairs staff was lacking so the region needed outside help with crisis communications to put people at ease. Peck said that Ruwwe, along with PBS personnel, did not feel the GSA Kansas City public affairs staff had experience and were small in size. It was thought they probably needed some outside help to talk to people to communicate and were told to go out and get some outside expert in crisis communication. Peck said these discussions occurred over several months. Peck believes and would be willing to provide emails reflecting these discussions. Peck advised he just wanted to notify the OIG of the above information because he felt it was important to note.

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OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION (Use continuation sheet, GSA Form 9506-C)

General Services Administration

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GSA FORM 9506-A (Rev 7-98)

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RIGA [redacted] asked Peck when he felt the use of public relations contracts were applicable and when they weren't. Peck responded that he understood the line between public affairs and propaganda. It was their belief that any information would be a legitimate communication of facts. Peck said our job was real estate and they needed to provide space where people feel comfortable. Peck said that part of providing space includes productivity and people that are worried and talking about the building conditions are less productive. Peck said there was some aggressive media and you have got to know what to say and what not to say, and how to communicate Bannister to the public.

When asked about his involvement, Peck said he was not very involved with the JMA procurement especially since it was in Missouri. Peck said he did not know of JMA and all procurement was done out of Region 6. Peck said he thought at one point he was notified through an email about how EPA had found a company to work with, but he did not recall his exact response, and thinks he said something like go with it.

Peck was asked if he saw the JMA deliverables, and he said he did not recall, and also said he had seen something like a history of the testing, but he did not know if it was produced by JMA. If he saw any deliverables, he did not see very many, so he did not really know. He said that it is not appropriate to ask him because he is not familiar with the deliverables and not sure of the different deliverables.

At this point, AIGA [redacted] explained Peck reached out to IG Miller in regards to the audit memorandum for clarification. Peck said Ruwwe did not procure JMA on her own it was done in consultation with Central Office senior management, in order to get them some help. She may have felt that there were compelling circumstances. PBS Central Office had felt the need for the services and it was not all Ruwwe's decision. AIGA [redacted] asked Peck if he was concerned about the part of the draft audit memo where the OIG states that the RC directed the procurement on February 4, 2010, and the task order was awarded the next day. Peck confirmed that this was the part of the memo he was referring to. Peck said that this award was not made overnight. RIGA [redacted] asked if there was any urgent need to award the contract in one day. Peck said that there was not. Peck said that his normal response would be to find a contractor on schedule or an IDIQ (indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity) contract and "Let's get it done legally." AIGA [redacted] advised that the OIG's concern was that PBS thought they needed this immediately and bypassed competition requirements, when in fact previous media reports had already occurred. Peck said that they had been discussing the need, but he never said there was a need to contract for it tomorrow. He said that fast is fast, but don't know if there was a need for a sole source justification. He would have expected Counsel's review. Peck said we had talked about this previously, and he did not recall anyone saying this needs to happen on a particular day. Peck feels the contract community and legal counsel should still be consulted to determine if fair. Peck said that there was no life/safety emergency and things would be different if you found toxins and people were in danger.

Peck said he can't comment on the deliverables, or on if PBS got what they paid for. Peck said he had not looked at it himself and he is not going to express an opinion on contract procedures. Peck said they normally follow established legal procedures in order to secure the procurement, and they don't want to be directing awards. He said that Kansas City may have felt pressure to get someone on board, but no one said "now". It wasn't a life safety issue. In regards to public affairs, if it is not an immediate threat to life or safety, Peck said it is not in their nature to push it through right away.

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Peck could not remember but thought that Ruwwe or ██████████ (Branch Chief, Contract Services Branch) could have gotten EPA involved and he thought that EPA had used the firm.

Peck was asked who was involved in these discussions. Peck said Kronopolus was involved and Peck provided the name of Danielle (may have been Chief of Staff at that time), but he did not think she would have anything. Peck was asked about Prouty, but said he was not involved. Peck also offered he might have had some conversation with Steve Leeds.

RIGA ██████ asked Peck for the emails concerning discussion of the public relations firm option and the attachments issued with Martha Johnson's response letter to Senator McCaskill. Peck advised he did not assemble the attachments, and Congressional Affairs probably put this information together. RIGA ██████ advised Peck that he had information that the procurement and topic were discussed over approximately 4 months and this was contradictory to the contract file that stated these services were needed immediately. Peck said he thought there was an urgent need, but did not feel or think it was an overnight need. Peck agreed to provide his emails regarding this matter. Peck said they wanted to do what was right and understood people were watching so they wanted to make sure they got it right. Peck said Region 6 will provide additional comments on the OIG audit memo and he will encourage the Region to be as specific as possible regarding the deliverables and sole source justification.

Peck was asked if he had any financial affiliation with JMA, knew anyone with JMA, or ever dealt with anyone at JMA, and he responded, "No" to all these questions. Peck was asked what he knew about JMA and said only what he learned in the course of working with GSA. Peck learned of JMA either when Region 6 retained a public affairs firm or when he heard about it from EPA. Peck said he did not recall his involvement in authorizing use of JMA, but said he knows he did not sign it. Peck said he discussed JMA with Ruwwe and ██████. When asked, Peck thought the implementation of JMA was useful. Peck said he did not know of any other JMA contracts issued. Peck was not aware if Ruwwe has had any contact with JMA since this issue was raised by Senator McCaskill.

Peck was asked about the bonus issued to Ruwwe. Peck said he did not issue the bonus, but said he was part of the process to evaluate Senior Executive Service staff and to determine a bonus dollar amount. Peck believes Martha Johnson, GSA Administrator, is the final authority regarding bonuses.

AIGA ██████ asked who was Ruwwe's rating official, and Peck believed it was the Region 6 GSA Administrator who assigns her a rating number, and signs her rating. Peck explained the bonus dollar amount is considered by a performance review board. Peck said he determined Ruwwe's proposed rating, but it goes to the Regional Administrator in the end. The Regional Administrator determines a rating number between 1-5, which goes to a committee for evaluation. The committee and Peck then decide on a dollar amount based on a pool of money. Peck said while he could not recall all the members of the committee, they are all SES, to include the Commissioner of Federal Acquisition Service, Head of the Chief People Officer, and Deputy GSA Administrator.

Peck was asked when Ruwwe's bonus was issued and said he did not recall but thinks it was around December or January. Peck was asked if Ruwwe's bonus was delayed and not issued when the other bonuses were. Peck did not think Ruwwe's bonus was delayed and it was issued with the other SES bonuses.

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Peck said he talked to Ruwwe about her bonus. He discussed her overall performance and rated her on a couple of things, citing they have 10-11 business measures. He would compare Ruwwe with the other GSA regions, he would have discussed some aspects of her performance, would determine if employees are engaged, well treated, her participation in National initiatives, he looks at the one-off issues, and would look at those things which look good and those that don't.

Peck thought Ruwwe received a \$9,000 bonus, and was not aware of any other award money Ruwwe would have received, and if so it could have come from Anthony Costa, Office of Chief People Officer. Peck said he did not know if Ruwwe knew anyone with JMA prior to the JMA task order award. Peck said he did not know if anyone within GSA knew anyone with JMA prior to the task order award. Peck had no other information concerning JMA beyond what was discussed. Peck did not think anyone came to him on JMA, or to discuss the JMA Statement of Work, or even asked his opinion. Peck was asked about deliverables and said he did not know what JMA provided to GSA PBS.

The interview ended at approximately 11:15 a.m.