



WENDY GREUEL
CITY CONTROLLER
CITY OF LOS ANGELES

DATE: July 8, 2009

TO: Jim Featherstone, General Manager, Emergency Management Department

FROM: Wendy Greuel, City Controller *W Greuel*

SUBJECT: **Expenditure for Michael Jackson Memorial**

I understand that with projections of hundreds of thousands of people expected downtown yesterday, the City needed to have LAPD officers present in order to ensure the public's safety. I also understand the need to feed these first responders when they are working long hours in the summer heat.

However, it came to my office's attention, after the payment had already been approved, that your department requested \$48,826 for lunches from a Jensen's Finest Foods in Wrightwood - nearly 80 miles from Los Angeles - for first responders to the Michael Jackson memorial that was held at the Staples Center on July 7, 2009.

There are many troubling issues that are raised by this expenditure. While it appears your office followed the rules for when an emergency is declared, it does not appear your office took steps to find the lowest possible price to provide lunch for the first responders. Additionally, in an effort to support local business during these difficult economic times, it would have been preferable to make this purchase from a business located in the City of Los Angeles, as opposed to nearly 80 miles away.

Upon seeing this bill, my staff called a local Subway - in the City of Los Angeles - and was quoted a price of \$17,491.25 for 3,500 box lunches. That's a potential savings to the taxpayers of more than \$31,000.

I understand that when the City is operating in an emergency that expenditure requests under \$100,000 can be approved on an expedited basis. But there is no reason that an extra call couldn't have been made to try and save tens of thousands of dollars. If this request had been brought to my office before it had already been approved, I would have had to reject it.

This is an example of why, on Monday, I asked the City Council and Mayor to immediately create a clear, coherent City policy that dictates who is financially responsible when an extraordinary event such as the Michael Jackson memorial takes place, to ensure we are protecting our scarce resources during this budget crisis.

I await your response on what steps your office could have taken to reduce taxpayer funds being spent and on what your Department's current policy is on procuring food and similar items during an emergency.

access
hollywood