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**DECISION**



**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL  
OF THE UNITED STATES  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548**

FILE: B-188213

DATE: December 12, 1977

MATTER OF: W. G. McDaniel - Relocation Expenses

**DIGEST:** Employee may be reimbursed for cost of Surveyor's Report incurred in connection with purchase of home at new duty station as Department of Housing and Urban Development area office was advised that Surveyor's Report is expense customarily incurred by purchaser incident to real estate transaction. In addition, claim for reimbursement for costs of plat preparation and land location survey is expressly allowable under para. 2-6.2c of Federal Travel Regulations.

This matter concerns the request of Mr. Robert E. Reid, Jr., Chief, Payroll, Travel and Commercial Accounts Branch, Office of the Controller, Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA), for a decision as to whether Mr. W. G. McDaniel, an ERDA employee, may be reimbursed for expenses in the amount of \$110 for a location survey, plat, and a Surveyor's Report paid in connection with the purchase of a residence incident to a change of official duty station.

The record shows that Mr. McDaniel purchased a home in Frederick, Maryland, incident to his transfer in 1975 from Rock Island, Illinois, to Washington, D.C. In connection with the purchase of the residence Mr. McDaniel incurred the costs of a location survey, plat, and Surveyor's Report in the total amount of \$110. Mr. McDaniel was informed by the firm which conducted the location survey, that the Surveyor's Report was a special form which was prepared only upon the specific request of an attorney or bank and that accordingly a separate charge of \$35 for the Report was made. The Surveyor's Report was prepared upon the request of an attorney because it was required by the bank.

The agency felt that Mr. McDaniel's claim for reimbursement of the \$35 fee for the Surveyor's Report should be disallowed on the basis that it was a special and not a customary charge. In addition ERDA disallowed the entire \$110 claim, because Mr. McDaniel did not furnish a breakdown of the claim.

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The authority for reimbursement of legal and related expenses is contained in para. 2-6.2c of the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) (FPMR 101-7) (May 1973), which provides as follows:

"c Legal and related expenses. To the extent such costs have not been included in brokers' or similar services for which reimbursement is claimed under other categories, the following expenses are reimbursable with respect to the sale and purchase of residences if they are customarily paid by the seller of a residence at the old official station or if customarily paid by the purchaser of a residence at the new official station, to the extent they do not exceed amounts customarily charged in the locality of the residence: costs of (1) searching title, preparing abstract, and legal fees for a title opinion or (2) where customarily furnished by the seller, the cost of a title insurance policy; costs of preparing conveyances, other instruments, and contracts and related notary fees and recording fees; costs of making surveys, preparing drawings or plats when required for legal or financial purposes; and similar expenses. Costs of litigation are not reimbursable."

Federal Travel Regulations paragraph 2-6.3c provides that the local or area office of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) serving the area in which a real estate expense occurred will furnish upon request information concerning local custom and practices with respect to closing costs related to either a sale or purchase, including information as to whether such costs are customarily paid by the seller or purchaser. We have been informally advised by an official of the Baltimore, Maryland, area office of HUD that the cost of a Surveyor's Report is an expense customarily paid by the purchaser incident to the purchase of a residence and that the fee of \$35 paid for the Surveyor's Report is within the amount customarily charged in the

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Frederick, Maryland, area. Accordingly, the claim of \$35 for reimbursement of the cost of the Surveyor's Report may be allowed for payment.

Concerning Mr. McDaniel's claim in the amount of \$75 for reimbursement of the costs of a location survey and plat preparation, both expenses are expressly allowable under paragraph 2-6.2c of the FTR and payment therefor should be allowed.

In accordance with the above, the reclaim voucher in the amount of \$110 may be certified for payment if otherwise proper.

  
Deputy Comptroller General  
of the United States