



The Comptroller General
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

Riedinger, PLY

Decision

Matter of: Charles H. McClelland - Temporary Duty Travel -
Use of Motor Home - Monthly Mortgage Payments
and Utility Costs

File: B-227383

Date: September 25, 1987

DIGEST

An employee who, incident to the performance of long-term temporary duty travel to a number of locations, chose to use a motor home as his travel residence, is permitted to include certain expenses to compute his average lodging costs for per diem purposes under the Federal Travel Regulations. The expenses permitted are parking space rental fees, utility costs (connection and disconnection fees, bath or shower fees and dumping fees), and where it is established that the motor home was purchased specifically as a travel residence for such temporary duty, monthly interest paid on his motor home loan during the temporary duty period. However, he may not include loan principal payments or the cost of maintenance or depreciation on the motor home.

DECISION

This decision is in response to a request from the Directorate of Settlement and Adjudication, Headquarters, Air Force Accounting and Finance Center. It concerns the entitlement of Mr. Charles H. McClelland, an Air Force employee, to be reimbursed certain expenses incident to temporary duty travel during the period from March 28 through December 1, 1983. We conclude that he may be reimbursed for the following reasons.

Mr. McClelland was stationed at the F. E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming, and he was authorized to perform temporary duty travel to a number of Air Force Bases in Missouri, Wyoming, Montana, and North and South Dakota, under blanket travel orders issued September 28, 1982.

In connection with his temporary duty travel to Montana and North Dakota, Mr. McClelland purchased a 33-foot motor home as a travel residence because of the questionable availability, adequacy, and cost of lodgings due to the isolation

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of the temporary duty stations to which he was assigned. We note that, during the temporary duty period in question, Mr. McClelland did not own or lease any other residence for use as his domicile at or near his permanent duty station and that the motor home was sold in early 1984 following completion of that temporary duty.

Upon submission of travel vouchers by Mr. McClelland, a partial settlement was made but certain expenses associated with his use of the motor home as a residence (monthly interest and utility costs) were disallowed. Mr. McClelland appealed that determination, and the matter was submitted here for resolution. The Air Force recommends payment but points out that while paragraph C4552-2o of Volume 2, Joint Travel Regulations (2 JTR), authorizes reimbursement for the type of expenses claimed when a residence affixed to land is purchased for lodging purposes while on a temporary duty assignment, it is not clear whether a motor home can be considered a residence in that context. The Air Force also notes that where use of a mobile home is specifically authorized elsewhere in 2 JTR as a residence for permanent change of station allowances, the regulations are silent on the point in connection with temporary duty assignments. Finally, the Air Force refers to our decision Lieutenant Robert G. Stentz, USN, B-196968, July 1, 1980, where we prohibited reimbursement for use of a recreation vehicle as lodgings on temporary duty where the vehicle was originally purchased for reasons other than the temporary duty assignment.

RULING

An employee who uses a travel trailer, camping vehicle, or motor home in connection with a temporary duty assignment away from the official duty station may be reimbursed for certain expenses as lodging costs. The Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) which were in effect at the time of Mr. McClelland's claim allowed the payment of per diem for such use of travel trailer or camping vehicle but did not specify what expenses could be claimed.^{1/} However, the applicable agency travel regulations, 2 JTR para. C4552-2j (Change 195, Jan. 1, 1982), authorized payment for such expenses as rental of the camper, parking or campsite fees,

^{1/} FTR para. 1-7.6d (Supp. 1, Sept. 28, 1981), incorp. by ref., 41 C.F.R. § 101-7.003 (1981). However, FTR para 1-7.9b (Supp. 20, May 30, 1986), now specifies those costs which are reimbursable for use of a privately owned or rented recreational vehicle.

utility costs, and shower and dumping fees. This is consistent with prior decisions of our Office. See Lucius Grant, Jr., 62 Comp. Gen. 635 (1983); Billy W. McDonald, B-199462, August 12, 1981; Jerry G. Witherspoon, B-189392, August 23, 1977; Melvin E. Suess, B-180650, March 9, 1976.

However, our decisions have denied reimbursement for the expenses of ownership of such vehicles such as upkeep and maintenance, depreciation, and interest payments. See Grant, McDonald, Witherspoon, and Suess, cited above. Such costs are considered to be personal and not related to the temporary duty assignment.

On the other hand, there are also decisions involving situations where an employee purchases a residence in connection with a temporary duty assignment and seeks reimbursement for interest payments, property tax, and utility costs. In Robert E. Larrabee, 57 Comp. Gen. 147 (1977), we allowed reimbursement of the prorated monthly interest, property tax, and utility costs where the employee purchased a residence because of the temporary duty assignment and not because of his desire to maintain a second residence. See also James H. Quiggle, B-192435, June 7, 1979. This holding was incorporated into the provisions of the Joint Travel Regulations applicable at the time of Mr. McClelland's travel.^{2/} The Air Force questions whether Mr. McClelland's situation falls within the scope of our decision in Larrabee, and we conclude that it does for the following reasons.

The record indicates that Mr. McClelland purchased this motor home for use during this temporary duty assignment and, upon completion of that assignment, he sold the motor home. This situation is distinguishable from our decision in Stentz, cited above, where we disapproved reimbursement of the monthly payments for purchase of the recreational vehicle because we determined those expenses were incurred independent of his temporary duty assignment. See also Suess, cited above.

We would interpret "residence" as the term is used in 2 JTR para. C4552-2o to include a motor home or recreational vehicle where it can be clearly established that the vehicle was purchased for use as lodgings during a temporary duty assignment and not for personal reasons. Therefore, we conclude that Mr. McClelland may be reimbursed for the monthly interest and utility costs which were incurred in connection with his use of this motor home, along with any

^{2/} 2 JTR para. C4552-2o (Change 185, Mar. 1, 1981).

campsite fees, shower and dumping fees, or other fees associated with the use of this vehicle, not to exceed the applicable limit for reimbursement of lodging costs as an element of per diem.

The costs of maintenance, depreciation, or loan principal payments would not be allowable.


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