



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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Inspector General Selection and Retention Committee (IGSRC) Meeting Minutes

Note: Below is a summary of the meeting as required by Florida's Sunshine Law; See AGO-82-47

Date: January 29, 2025

Location: City Hall, St. James Building, 117 West Duval Street, Lynwood Roberts Room

Call to Order: Committee Member Public Defender (PD) Cofer called the meeting to order at 10:01 AM

Pledge of Allegiance: PD Cofer opened with the pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call – Committee Members present:

- James Bodden, Director of the Judicial Staff Attorneys, designee for Chief Judge Lance Day, the 4th Judicial Circuit
- Karen Bowling, Chief Administrative Officer, designee for Honorable Donna Deegan, Mayor
- Erich Freiberger, Chair, Ethics Commission, and Chair of the IGSRC
- Charlie Cofer, Public Defender for the Fourth Judicial Circuit
- Stephen Siegel, Assistant State Attorney, designee for the Honorable Melissa Nelson, State Attorney for the Fourth Judicial Circuit
- Lt. Col. Chambliss, Chair, TRUE Commission

A quorum was met with five members present;

- IGSRC Chair Freiberger arrived at 10:04 AM
- Randy White, City Council President, was not in attendance

Office of Inspector General Staff Present:

- Matthew J. Lascell, Inspector General
- Khalilah Watts, Executive Assistant
- Christina Gatto, Senior Program Coordinator/Accreditation Manager
- Richard Samples, Deputy Inspector General for Investigations
- David Johnston, Deputy Inspector General for Audit
- Katie Turner, Investigator
- Bryce Ayers, Investigative Support Analyst
- Maria Pompelia, Auditor

I. Old Business

A. Approval of October 30, 2024, Meeting Minutes

PD Cofer asked the Inspector General Selection and Retention Committee (Committee) if there were any questions or corrections to the October 30, 2024, meeting minutes.

Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Bowling moved to approve the October 30, 2024, meeting minutes as circulated. Mr. Siegel seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

II. New Business

A. OIG Annual Update

Inspector General (IG) Lascell presented the annual report summation. IG Lascell stated the Office of Inspector General (OIG) has a deterrent factor and value related to costs to the COJ. The OIG has a great return on its investment for the office and the cost estimate is approximately seven million dollars.

IG Lascell stated the OIG has procured two imperative software systems for the office to utilize: one for data analytics and the second for the office's case management system. Both systems utilize technologies which have enhanced and improved the OIG's capabilities, efficiencies, and albitites to process data.

IG Lascell reviewed OIG complaint statistics which predominantly come in through email and the new case management system database via online submission from the OIG's website. IG Lascell identified the OIG does not only rely on the complaints received as the office also conducts proactive analysis and identifies areas to concentrate on for review.

IG Lascell explained for an office that conducts administrative investigations, many of the case results have resulted in criminal investigations, now pending with the State Attorney's Office and the U.S. Attorney's office.

IG Lascell led a discussion regarding budget concerns across COJ and explained he assessed other sister OIGs across Florida State regarding opportunities for additional revenue. Miami has a unique way of collecting funds for the OIGs efforts as they put a small percentage in every contract and it goes toward the funding of the OIG. The COJ OIG currently has revenue from the General Fund as well as an MOU with some of the Independent Agencies (JEA, JTA, etc.) with JEA funding the most at \$100,000 – this provides a revenue stream. The MOU is set to expire in 2026 and there will be discussions to revisit or increase contributions.

CAO Bowling inquired if there are annual escalators built into the contract. IG Lascell stated there is, but the bulk of the budget is going toward salary, and a small percentage goes toward training and travel. The training is built towards the accreditation requirement and office staff is certified in their specific field.

IG Lascell explained the OIG is working on big projects such as being oversight over the new Jaguars Stadium. This project is one of the biggest the City has seen in the last 20 years. The OIG has reviewed the contract and are identified in the contract as having oversight.

IG Lascell addressed the Committee and asked if there are further questions. Chair Freiburger inquired as to how many complaints are usually referred to the Ethics Commission. IG Lascell explained the OIG has an MOU with the Ethics Office and reviews questions and referrals with them.

Chair Freiburger asked if the Committee has any other questions. CAO Bowling inquired about other investigations the OIG is currently working on. IG Lascell deferred to DIG Samples to explain cases that can be discussed due to confidentiality.

DIG Samples explained there are currently cases with the SAO related to COVID money through the housing assistance program; a case regarding a housing authority employee who was using the identity of a JHA client and was benefiting from the system; and a case with federal court involving COVID grants where a landlord had multiple properties and would pay people to use their names for the properties. As soon as they are arrested and indicted more information can be provided.

CAO Bowling inquired about the new legislation regarding entities not being required to take anonymous complaints, and more specifically asked if this legislation also applies to the OIG. IG Lascell answered that legislation applies to Ethics but not the OIG. He added Ethics refers anonymous complaints to the OIG.

Chair Freiburger asked how the referral process would be if the OIG had to refer the anonymous complaint back to Ethics after the investigation was completed. IG Lascell responded he will be having a meeting with Ethics Director Oberdorfer and OGC to work out the process to adhere to the legislation.

DIG Johnston stated he contacted other OIG offices, including Miami Dade, regarding if they have an official MOU related to this legislative matter, and he relayed there are concerns of circumventing the law. There is a need to ensure complaints can be referred to Ethics without circumventing the legislature.

IG Lascell explained in terms of audits, investigations, and data analytics, the OIG has determined many of the outcomes are a lack of COJ oversight and lack of compliance. Going forward, there will be a large emphasis on reviewing contracts as they have the most monetary impact and risk for the City. The OIG's focus is to reduce risk and liability on the City.

Chair Freiburger asked about synergy with Ethics Office regarding Training. IG Lascell explained an OIG staff member presents the office at the New Employment training as does the Ethics Office. IG Lascell added new legislation would help the OIG regarding when Departments and Agencies would be required to report fraud, waste, and abuse to the OIG, and having a sponsor from the City Council and if OGC could assist in writing this legislation. CAO Bowling asked if the Administration could sponsor this and IG Lascell affirmed.

Chair Freiburger asked the Committee if there were any other questions; there were none. Chair Freiburger asked for public comment; there was none.

III. Any Other Business

IG Lascell informed the Committee his four-year contract ends in March 2026. He explained the Ordinance states six months prior to the IG's term ending is when the IGSRC would need to convene to discuss retaining him as Inspector General.

The Committee decided to reconvene in September 2025 to discuss IG Lascell's annual review and employment.

IV. Comments from the Public

There was no public comment.

V. Adjournment

Chair Freiburger adjourned the meeting at 10:38 AM.