



Deborah Witzburg | Inspector General
City of Chicago
Office of Inspector General
740 N. Sedgwick St., Ste 200
Chicago, IL 60654
Phone: (773) 478-7799

Statement of the Inspector General to the City Council Committee on the Budget and Government Operations

November 9, 2024

Chairman Ervin and Members of the City Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the City Council Committee on Budget and Government Operations.

In 2024, OIG continued the growth and progress for which we have planned and built since my term began in 2022. Through the end of the third quarter of this year, OIG processed more than 9,000 Intakes—an increase over this time last year of more than 40%. In our Investigations section, we are working more cases and doing so in a more timely manner; as of the end of the third quarter, we have both opened and closed more misconduct investigations than at the same time last year. In our Audit and Program Review section, we continue to identify opportunities to make City government operate more effectively, efficiently, and equitably. We have seen a marked increase in the frequency of City Council hearings on our audits in the Committee on Ethics and Government Oversight, including on audit reports concerning permit inspections by the Department of Buildings and the Department of Family and Support Services' outreach to residents of unhoused encampments. Our Public Safety section, whose efforts led to OIG's being the first and only component of City government to be released from our obligations under the consent decree entered in *Illinois v. Chicago* in 2023, published reports on topics including the Chicago Police Department's preparedness for mass gatherings, and at the end of the third quarter had reviewed more than 1,000 police disciplinary investigations conducted by CPD's Bureau of Internal Affairs and the Civilian Office of Police Accountability. Our Center for Information Technology and Analytics has built and is maintaining 41 public facing data dashboards in the service of our transparency mandate, animated by the principle that information about the government belongs to the governed. The number of users viewing those dashboards on our Information Portal has increased nearly one third since last year. Our data analytics team also maintains tools for and works with other OIG sections, leveraging our access to City data to empower our investigative and evaluative efforts.

I continue to believe that among the ways we ought to pay down the deficit of legitimacy at which the City of Chicago operates with its residents is by holding bad actors accountable when they break the rules, regardless of their position or title. We have dramatically increased the frequency and rigor with which we pursue violations of the City's ethics rules; over two thirds of all probable cause findings—ever—by the Board of Ethics in OIG investigations have occurred in the past two years. So far in 2024 we have successfully pursued probable cause findings in 10 ethics investigations and the Board of Ethics has announced it would pursue fines totaling over \$120,000 this year. This is an enforcement effort of a different order of magnitude; for too long the rules that

stand between us and a government no one has any reason to trust were categorically under-enforced. We have changed that.

Meanwhile, we are going everywhere we are invited and some places we're not to talk to Chicagoans about our work and to listen to Chicagoans about the work we should be doing. So far in 2024 we have visited 27 of your wards, dramatically increased our digital engagement, distributed public awareness materials—including to each of your ward offices—in five languages (English, Spanish, Polish, Mandarin, and Arabic), arranged awareness-raising billboards and digital PSAs, and run awareness-raising signs in English and Spanish on CTA busses and trains.

Looking ahead to 2025, OIG's proposed budget reflects cuts in certain personnel and non-personnel costs, as mandated by the City in light of the budget shortfall. In our budget planning process, we were asked to reduce non-personnel costs by 3%, and we did so by substantially reducing our proposed allocation in account 0149, a confidential account for Software Maintenance and Licensing. To accommodate this reduction, we are not planning for new information technology initiatives in 2025 and will delay new software purchases as necessary. In personnel, three positions have been eliminated from OIG's proposed budget: an Investigator position in our Investigations section, a Senior Performance Analyst in our Audit and Program Review section, and an Investigative Analyst in our Public Safety section, from the unit charged with reviewing closed police disciplinary cases. We selected those positions for elimination to meet the cost reduction target for OIG determined by the Office of Budget Management. To be clear, these positions were not selected for elimination because they are extraneous or unnecessary; we selected those positions, which had been vacant pending approval to hire into them, to avoid laying off employees by eliminating filled positions. The work done in each of those positions is vital—to managing the large volume of OIG's misconduct investigations in a timely manner, to identifying waste and inefficiency in City programs in our performance audits, and to doing the vital work of overseeing Chicago's police disciplinary system including, for example, our work on allegations that CPD members have belonged to or associated with extremism or anti-government groups.

We have made small increases in certain non-personnel accounts in anticipation of our workspace relocation and to reflect our prioritization of training and credentialing of OIG staff, to ensure the rigor, quality, and credibility of our work, and have offset those increases in other areas where we have reduced needs or available efficiencies. We currently have three vacant positions, all of which we will look to fill as quickly as possible in 2025: two Investigator positions and a technical support position. OIG's proposed budget would fund the office above the floor established by the Municipal Code, which sets a mandatory minimum for OIG's budget at 0.14% of the City's overall budget.

The cuts in OIG's budget at this point are not insignificant, but nor are they crippling. We will continue holding City actors accountable when they abuse the public trust, shining light into the dark corners of City Hall, and finding ways for the City to better serve Chicagoans. The Municipal Code of Chicago sets a floor for OIG's budget in order to protect OIG's structural and operational independence. That independence is the hallmark of inspector general work, and the lifeblood of effective oversight. We will continue to guard our independence fiercely, including in initiating our work and in allocating the resources provided by this body in our annual appropriation.

I look forward to the work we will do in 2025 in pursuit of a government which more closely resembles the one Chicagoans deserve. Thank you for your time today; I welcome your questions.