



Overdue Detroit Office of Inspector General ready to fight public corruption and waste



By [Gus Burns | fburns@mlive.com](mailto:fburns@mlive.com)

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DETROIT — Detroit government is no stranger to public corruption and the city's new independent Office of the Inspector General hopes to put it in check.

Just for starters, Detroit's former mayor Kwame Kilpatrick is currently awaiting the ruling of a jury that could put him in prison for up to 20 years, several of his former staff have already been convicted on crimes and former City Councilwoman Monica Conyers and her aide Sam Riddle were recently released from house arrest resulting from bribery convictions.

Prompted in part by situations like these and others, the revised 2012 Detroit City Charter called for the formation of the OIG office specifically tasked to "to root out waste, abuse, fraud, and corruption in city government," according to a release from the agency Monday. "It investigates the actions of city employees, elected and appointed city officials, all other public servants as defined by the City Charter, contractors and vendors who do business with the city."

- [More about the office's role and duties here](#)

City Council appointed [James W. Heath, 37](#), the first inspector general in July. Since being sworn in a month later, he's worked to put together a staff office and policies.

"You only get one chance to make a good impression," said Heath. "We wanted to make sure that when complaints started coming in in earnest, we were able to handle them efficiently and effectively."

The office is now fully operational, operating with a nearly \$1 million budget and six employees. The office received 17 complaints since its formation but expects the number to "greatly increase" with the launch of its tip line and website.

Although it is funded by the city's general fund, the OIG operates independent of Mayor Dave Bing's office and City Council.

It had been accepting complaints but not advertising its operations until now.

An email went to all city employees notifying them of the agency and their function; a similar letter is being mailed to all city contractors.

Complaints or tips may be filed [online](#) or by calling 313-964-8477 (TIPS).

"Having an internal watchdog for all branches of government is what we've needed for a long time," said Detroit City Council President Charles Pugh. "The ability for people to report abuse, misuse or misconduct anonymously is going to have a major impact on curtailing the pockets of corruption we've wanted to get rid of for quite some time."

Detroit is not alone in its establishment of an Office of the Inspector General. Similar independent overseers exist in Chicago, Baltimore, New Orleans, Houston, Albuquerque and Philadelphia.

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