



ASSOCIATION OF INSPECTORS GENERAL

524 West 59th Street, 53334HH
New York, NY, 10019
212-237-8001

November 18, 2024

Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Council
55 Trinity Ave. SW
Atlanta, GA 30303

Re: Resolution 24-R-4518 regarding the work of the Atlanta Temporary Task Force as it relates to the Office of Inspector General.

The Association of Inspectors General (AIG) is an independent, non-partisan 501(c)(3) organization composed of more than 2,500 members working in hundreds of Inspectors General offices across the United States and internationally. The AIG has been advancing the mission of independent oversight in government for nearly 30 years.

As you may know, the AIG has been closely following developments regarding the independent Office of Inspector General (OIG) since early 2024 and have noted along with many other observers that tensions between the Mayor and City Council and the OIG have steadily increased.

Issues related to OIG investigations have resulted in the City Council's creation of a Temporary Task Force (TTF) charged, in part, with reviewing the "processes and procedures of the Office of Inspector General" and making "written recommendations to the Mayor and the City Council in regards thereto".¹ The TTF produced a report, which now appears as Resolution 24-R-4518 on the November 18, 2024, City Council meeting agenda. The passage of this resolution will direct the City Attorney to prepare legislation consistent with its findings and recommendations.

Upon review of the TTF's report dated November 8, 2024 and Resolution 24-R-4518, the Association of Inspectors General has extremely serious concerns with merit of the report and thus, the use of the report as the foundation for legislation. We strongly recommend that Resolution 24-R-4518 be rejected or deferred, pending a more complete review consistent with the AIG's recommendations set forth in the letter of

¹ The Atlanta City Council passed Resolution 24-R-3983 on September 3, 2024. The resolution provided 45 days to conduct a review and produce a report.

October 5, 2024.²

We would like to point out three preliminary issues that stand out and contradict the well-established *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General* that have been in place for more than two decades:

1. The legal authority of an OIG should authorize specific functions including the referral of matters for further civil, criminal, and administrative action to appropriate administrative and prosecutorial agencies; to issue public reports; to establish policies and procedures to guide functions and processes conducted by the OIG;
2. Excessive authority over the operations of an OIG, such as the type proposed in the TTF's recommendations can effectively gag and shackle the Inspector General from conducting independent investigations for the ultimate benefit of Atlanta's citizens.
3. The implementation of policy and procedural control mechanisms that remove the authority of the Inspector General and place it into the hands of an oversight body that does not and should not possess operational knowledge or involvement. Such mechanisms are easily weaponized to influence, intimidate or directly hinder audits, investigations and other actions that are not to the liking of the government, its appointee or others who may impart their preferences.

The AIG knows through experience that these issues are not unique to the City of Atlanta but have manifested in various forms throughout the country wherever Inspectors General exist. Transparency, accountability and integrity are essential principles and vital to any government's credibility with its citizenry.

Like those in any democratic society, the citizens of Atlanta deserve and expect that their government will serve their best interest, be transparent, and accountable to the public.

² AIG correspondence of October 5, 2024, to the TTF regarding process and transparency, as well as, recommending that the TTF formally request that the City Council to: 1. Charge the TTF with the additional duty to examine the policies and procedures of the City Administration and City Council to ensure they expressly provide for operational independence of the OIG and ensure accountability to the public. 2. Extend the time permitted for the issuance of a report from 45 days to 180 days. 3. Require at least 2 public work sessions for the TTF with subject matter experts and practitioners within the national OIG community to discuss best practices on topics that would include, but not be limited to, the policies and practices bearing on the guiding principles i.e. operational independence, independent legal counsel, and access to information as well as the day-to-day engagement between OIGs and the entities that they oversee. 4. Enhance transparency of process by calling for at least 3 additional public meetings to be conducted during non-business hours so that members of the public can meaningfully participate, permit virtual comments, and ensure ample periods for comment of at least 2 hours.

Basing legislation on the TTF's report of November 8th would deprive the Office of Inspector General of the ability to fulfill its mission consistent with best standards and would lack the independence that the City of Atlanta deserves.

The appearance government oversight is worse than no oversight at all. We believe that founding legislation on the flawed TTF report will most certainly deprive the Office of Inspector General of the ability to fulfill its mission.

Since the formation of the TTF the AIG has been concerned and repeatedly pointed out the processes did not adequately allow the engagement of the public nor that of practicing inspectors general. We sincerely and respectfully ask that Council to remedy these inadequacies moving forward with more comprehensive and transparent review.

The AIG possesses the experience and expertise in navigating these complex issues and, as a non-partisan and not-for-profit organization, stands ready to assist or provide a more detailed analysis.

Sincerely,



Will Fletcher
President, Association of Inspectors General

DM/wf

cc:

Andre Dickens, Mayor
Doug Shipman, City Council President
Michael Julian Bond, At Large Post 1
Matt Westmoreland, At Large Post 2
Jason Winston, District 1
Amir R. Farokhi, District 2
Byron Amos, District 3
Jason Dozier, District 4
Lilliana Bakhtiari, District 5
Alex Wan, District 6
Howard Shook, District 7 (Temporary Task Force Member)
Mary Norwood, District 8
Dustin Hillis, District 9
Andrea I. Boone, District 10
Nicola Hines, Chair - Governing Board
Todd Gray, Vice Chair – Governing Board
Rebecca Brubaker, Governing Board
Andrew Cohen, Governing Board
Natalie Lewis, Governing Board
Lisa Liang, Governing Board
Terri Simmons, Governing Board
Richard Taylor, Governing Board
Cecily Welch, Governing Board
Shannon K. Manigault, Inspector General