



Joseph M. Ferguson
Inspector General

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Tom Balanoff
President, SEIU Local 1
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Mr. Balanoff:

Thank you for your letter concerning the City of Chicago Office of Inspector General's (IGO) recently published Savings & Revenue Options Report.

First, I assure you that your thoughts will be considered when we develop future reports.

However, please note that what your letter refers to as proposals are not in fact, proposals. Nor are the options described in the report my recommendations or suggestions. I urge passage of none of them, and stand only by the work done by IGO staff in researching the option.

The report is comprised of areas which the City and its stakeholders might look to in assessing and evaluating City operational and revenue mechanisms to better serve the causes of efficiency, economy, effectiveness, and sustainability. As such, each option constitutes a starting point for conversation, rather than a proposal to respond with a thumbs up or down. Indeed, the options each contain potential arguments of both opponents and proponents. Many of them raise additional questions, research and analysis that may be necessary for a thoroughgoing assessment of potential costs and benefits, and in raising all of the foregoing make clear that the option should not be treated as final in form or analysis. Moreover, it is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

I make these observations in the hope that a better understanding of the nature and intent of the report will foster engagement and dialogue in the future. It is engagement and dialogue in what I am sure you would agree is the shared mission of this office and the public sector employees you represent: to provide the best service in the most cost effective and sustainable way to the public whose taxes pay our wages and salaries.

This brings me to the intent of our options report. Your letter stresses the importance of transparency and public engagement in budget formulation.

Our options report is meant to further those causes.

Many of these options are not new ideas; oftentimes, they have been rattling around the City for years, or have been debated publicly in other cities. Our report is meant to provide some context for those ideas in the hopes they foster additional public discourse about the best ways to solve Chicago's structural deficit. The IGO's investigations and audits give us access into nearly every facet of municipal governance, and this report is another way we pass that knowledge on to other stakeholders in City government, including the public, so they have up-to-date and objective information before making lasting budgetary choices. To not share it with the public, as well as the City's elected officials, would be tantamount to waste or negligence - what is the point of this information if it is not used?

I also note that your membership is as well positioned as any of the City's stakeholders to identify efficiencies and savings. Their views, including items such as those suggested in the 2011 Efficiency Report, are always appreciated, and I ask that you encourage them to please bring them to us so we can include their ideas in future reports.

Again, thank you for writing. I believe your letter will further the engagement and dialogue necessary to move this City off of the fiscal precipice on which it presently stands and that, because of the looming pension payments, it will be precariously positioned for the foreseeable future.

Please do not hesitate to consider the IGO as a forum for your concerns about how the City operates, and ideas on how it may better serve the taxpaying public.

Respectfully,



Joseph Ferguson
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