




City of San Diego
Councilmember Scott Sherman
Seventh District

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 31, 2013
TO: Eduardo Luna, City Auditor
FROM: Councilmember Scott Sherman 
RE: Fiscal Year 2014 Citywide Risk Assessment and Audit Work Plan

In response to your memo of May 14 requesting feedback for the FY 2014 Citywide Risk Assessment and Audit Work Plan, please see the following work plan. Based on input that I have received from within District Seven and throughout the City of San Diego I respectfully submit the following performance audits for your consideration:

Open government practices including responsiveness to Public Records Act requests

The San Diego City Council has displayed commitment to ensuring that the public has readily available access to government documents and records. In recent years city leaders have worked towards increasing transparency at City Hall by passing the “Sunshine Act” ordinance – which requires certain records be posted online, established and allocated funding for the Department of Open Government, launched an Open Government website, and the Mayor is currently in the process of hiring a new Director of Open Government to oversee the city’s open government policies.

The California Public Records Act (CPRA) requires that the public be allowed to access information concerning the conduct of the people’s business because it is a fundamental right of every person in the state. By law, the City’s business is the people’s business and the people have a right to access information that will allow them to be informed or influence the affairs of their city government.

To ensure that City Departments are fully complying with open government regulations and requests for records in a timely manner, utilizing best practices, and are fully complying with open records requests, I recommend that the Office of the City Auditor conduct a

performance audit of the City's open government practices and PRA policies. In addition, I recommend the scope of the audit include:

- Accuracy and effectiveness in how the city tracks, routes, assigns, and responds to PRA requests.
- PRA request response times, analyzed citywide.
- Best practices used by other governments to track and respond to PRA requests.
- Recommendations to achieve greater transparency and effectiveness.
- Compliance with the California Public Records Act and the Sunshine Act ordinance.
- Uniformity in responding to PRA requests among city departments.
- The process and criteria used to deny or withhold certain information requested under PRA laws.

Graffiti removal

Promptly removing graffiti from City owned property in a cost effective manner is a mechanism that the city uses to combat gang activity and keep neighborhoods clean and safe. However, over the past several years the Graffiti Abatement program has been transferred between several different departments which has caused delays in responding to removal requests and confusion amongst residents. In addition to "in-house" crews, the city has established partnerships with Urban Corps and other local agencies to assist with the graffiti removal process.

Due to the amount of time and resources that are spent on removing graffiti, I am recommending that the graffiti abatement program undergo a performance audit. As part of the scope of the audit I recommend the following issues be taken into consideration:

- Accuracy and effectiveness of how the city tracks, routes, assigns, and responds to graffiti.
- Graffiti removal response times, analyzed by council district.
- Effectiveness of the City's Pay and Spray Rewards Program.
- Best graffiti removal practices used by other governments.
- Recommendations to achieve greater cost effectiveness.

Public Utilities Department reserve funds

The Independent Rates Oversight Committee (IROC) released a report earlier this year which identified large amounts of ratepayer funds held in reserves at the Public Utilities Department. The issue has been discussed at the Natural Resources & Culture Committee meeting on more than one occasion, but there still seems to be some confusion or disagreement about the appropriateness of these large reserves. I recommend that the City Auditor's Department audit these reserves, which are currently in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Firefighter overtime

In recent years the Fire-Rescue Department has regularly gone over its substantial overtime budget. This year the Fire-Rescue Department is budgeted almost \$23.7 million in overtime. In FY13 the overtime budget was increased by \$6.6 million from FY12.

The Department has pointed to the high cost of hiring new personnel as a reason for the large amount of overtime. However, the use of such a large amount of overtime raises concerns about fatigue, morale and other issues. In addition, there has been abuse of overtime, vacation hours, and sick leave at other agencies throughout the country. For example, a firefighter in Cleveland was able to work only 12 days over 2.5 years while collecting a full salary by trading shifts with other firefighters.

I recommend the City Auditor perform an audit of the financial and operational impacts of overtime, traded shifts, and other related issues in the Fire-Rescue Department. Some questions to consider:

- Is it more cost-effective to use overtime?
- How much overtime is the average firefighter working? What are the high and low thresholds?
- Are firefighters allowed to trade shifts? If so, how are the shift trades documented and who keeps the records?
- Are there any time requirements to repay traded shifts? Who keeps those records?
- Are Firefighters required to clock in and out? If so, what system is used?
- Regarding the above question, is it possible or common for another person to clock someone in or out?
- Does the SDFD use the KRONOS payroll system?
- How are comp time, sick time, and training time records kept and managed?
- Are San Diego firefighters allowed to have outside employment? If so, what limits are in place?