



Office of Inspector General
City of New Orleans
525 Saint Charles Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70130-3409
Office: (504) 681-3200 Fax: (504) 681-3230
www.nolaoig.org

December 14, 2009

Hon. C. Ray Nagin
Mayor, City of New Orleans
1300 Perdido Street
New Orleans, LA 70112

Dear Mr. Nagin:

This letter shall serve as an ongoing request, pursuant to Section 2-1120 of the New Orleans City Code, for notice of pending contract awards for future professional services contracts that exceed the \$15,000 threshold for competition, together with all documentation of the competitive selection process for all such contracts. This request was necessitated by the decision to discontinue the role of selection review panels in the contract award process, which effectively also circumvented the required notice to the Office of Inspector General.

Open and fair competition for public contracts is vital to maintaining public confidence in government. The citizens of New Orleans demanded accountability for contracting decisions when they approved a Charter amendment in 1995 to require City contracts for professional services to be awarded on the basis of a competitive selection process. Prior to February 2009, the selection procedures established by Executive Order called for proposals to be evaluated by selection review panels and for the Inspector General to be notified of and permitted to attend those panel meetings. The presence of the Inspector General at selection panels was also incorporated into the ordinance enacted by the City to establish the powers and duties of the Inspector General's Office.

After the Louisiana Attorney General ruled that selection review panels are subject to the State's Open Meeting Law, the procedures established by Executive Order were modified to eliminate the participation of selection panels in the proposal evaluation process. It is my understanding that since February 2009, proposals and statements of qualifications to provide professional services to Executive branch agencies are evaluated by the Chief Administrative Officer or the City Attorney, rather than by a selection review panel. The Inspector General's Office is therefore no longer notified of the outcome of RFP evaluations or pending contract awards.

Hon. C. Ray Nagin
December 14, 2009
Page -2-

I am concerned that the decision to eliminate selection review panels, in addition to imposing a shroud of secrecy over contracting decisions, also effectively curtailed the Inspector General's role in monitoring the process. I note that the ordinance requiring the Inspector General to be notified of and invited to attend all meetings relating to contract procurement remains in force. In order to give meaningful effect to both the Charter requirement for an open and competitive process and the ordinance calling for Inspector General oversight of that process, I believe it is incumbent on the City to notify the Office of Inspector General of the results of proposal evaluations. To be timely, this notification must be given prior to the award of a proposed contract for professional services.

I would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation with this ongoing request for notification and look forward to working with you to serve the citizens of New Orleans.

Sincerely,



E. R. Quatrevaux
Inspector General

EQ/bb

cc: Arnie Fielkow, President
Jacquelyn B. Clarkson, Vice President
Shelley Midura, Councilmember
Stacy Head, Councilmember
James Carter, Councilmember
Cynthia Hedge-Morrel, Councilmember
Cynthia Willard-Lewis, Councilmember
Dr. Brenda G. Hatfield, Ph.D.
Chief Administrative Officer