

## **Head of Baltimore's inspector general's office resigns**

### **Green replaced on interim basis by deputy city solicitor**

By Brent Jones and Julie Bykowicz, *Baltimore Sun*, June 23, 2009

The embattled head of Baltimore's inspector general's office resigned Monday, days after city officials publicly criticized his department and the City Council slashed its funding.

Hilton L. Green, 62, submitted his retirement papers and informed his staff of his departure, according to the city solicitor's office. Mayor Sheila Dixon appointed Green, a city housing inspector, to the \$127,300-a-year post in February 2007.

City officials said they will conduct a national search for a new inspector general, a watchdog position intended to root out fraud, waste and abuse in city government. The interim inspector will be Donald R. Huskey, a deputy city solicitor who stepped in for about six months last year when Green took a medical leave.

City Solicitor George A. Nilson, who oversees the inspector general's office but is not allowed to interfere with its work, said he and Green had "a conversation on Friday and discussed the situation and recent events."

"He took the weekend to reflect on all that and submitted his retirement this morning," Nilson said.

Nilson would not say what he and Green discussed, and Green could not be reached for comment. Nilson has been critical of Green and said city officials will try to "bring some clarity [to] some of the responsibilities to the office."

Established in 2005 by then-Mayor Martin O'Malley, the inspector general's office has grown over the years but also has developed a reputation among some city officials as unproductive.

As *The Baltimore Sun* reported last week, questions about the agency began circulating at City Hall shortly after Green released his office's first annual report in February - about 18 months later than anticipated and with few major accomplishments.

The long-awaited 18-page report included a two-page introduction and a four-page summary of Green's prior work as a city housing inspector. It showed the office, a staff of five that includes a sheriff's deputy, has investigated 67 complaints since July, closing 54 of them and referring four to the city state's attorney's office for prosecution.

Nilson said the report was not fully informative and "didn't say to me that [the inspector general's office] was knocking the city's socks off."

Many City Council members agreed, and a week ago voted 9-5 to slash \$200,000 from the inspector general's \$500,000 annual budget. It was the only agency they cut, though

Dixon quickly said she would likely veto that move and reinstate the office's funding.

Dixon's spokesman said Monday that Green's resignation convinced the mayor to veto the council cut. (The 15-member council needs 12 votes to override a veto, something council members said is unlikely to happen in this case.)

"It makes it tougher to recruit someone when their office has basically been depleted," mayoral spokesman Scott Peterson said.

Councilman Robert W. Curran, who opposed cutting the inspector's budget, said Green might have seen the council's move as a vote of no-confidence.

"I know Hilton has done a good job, as best he can, looking into improprieties," Curran said. "To cut that office is penny-wise and pound-foolish."

Councilman Bernard "Jack" Young, also voted against decreasing the inspector's budget, saying it "is not a good idea to cut any office that looks into corruption."

Young said he was sorry to see Green go. "He is a man of integrity. He didn't take any BS. I have no problems with that office."

But Councilman William H. Cole IV, who voted in favor of the cut, said he would be disappointed if the mayor restores the office's funding. "Nothing we've seen so far indicates we should be spending that much taxpayer money" on the inspector general's office.

Cole said he did not know Green personally but has been "disappointed with the outcomes. I thought we could be getting a lot more out of the office." Cole said the office can conduct its business adequately with far fewer staff members and a smaller budget.

Baltimore Sun reporter Annie Linskey contributed to this article.