

New Orleans police monitor asks city for more money, manpower

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By **Brendan McCarthy, The Times-Picayune**

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The city's independent police monitor pushed a proposal Wednesday at a **New Orleans City Council** committee hearing to more than triple the size of her four-person office, saying she is sorely in need of money and manpower. Monitor Susan Hutson portrayed her office as overwhelmed and unable to complete some of the tasks required of it by city law.



[View full size](#) Michael DeMocker, The Times-

Picayune archive Independent police monitor Susan Hutson, right, listens as NOPD superintendent Ronal Serpas speaks during his swearing-in ceremony at Gallier Hall in May 2010.

Already this year, the agency has received more than double the 110 citizen complaints logged last year. And once a pending federal consent decree over the **Police Department** is in place, the monitor's office is expected to take on even more duties, Hutson said.

"We need some attorneys to review legal issues," she said. "We need auditors to conduct these audits ... And then we need investigators to actually conduct investigations."

Moments later, Hutson remembered that she also needs a data analyst. Her briefing, before two members of the council's criminal justice committee, comes at a pivotal moment. The consent decree, now being hammered out by federal and local officials, will call for sweeping reforms of the department. Meanwhile, the financially strapped city is about to begin hearings on next year's budget.

The independent police monitor's office was more than a decade in the making, and it was enmeshed in controversy in its early days, in late 2009. Hutson, who took over about 18

months ago, said the office has been "laying a foundation" and installing databases and systems.

"Now, all of our time is going to complaints," she said, noting that her staff reviews the NOPD's internal investigations into officer misconduct. The office falls under the umbrella of Inspector General Ed Quatrevaux's office, which fully finances three staff positions. The office's fourth staffer is loaned to Hutson from Quatrevaux's office.

City law calls for three staffers within the office and doesn't define where its budget directly comes from.

Hutson said Wednesday that she believes any additional money should come from the city's general fund, but she added that that decision would be up to city leaders. By her estimate, the manpower she wants would cost about \$1.1 million a year.

Other than an annual report, Hutson has yet to release any studies, reviews or other reports. She said Wednesday that several reports should be released later this year, including a look at police stop-and-frisks and another analyzing officers who receive repeated complaints.

The monitor, by charter, is supposed to review civilian and internal police complaints, as well as internal police investigations, disciplinary actions, police shootings, reports of use of force and in-custody deaths.

The office is not necessarily supposed to conduct its own investigations, but rather to oversee and analyze the NOPD's work. The monitor is also charged with looking at larger trends of misconduct and spotting signs of possible corruption.

Hutson's presentation on Wednesday was cut short because the two council members in attendance, Susan Guidry and Jackie Clarkson, had other appointments.

Guidry and Clarkson gave no indication as to whether they'll try to pay for the additional positions Hutson seeks. Clarkson said she wanted an additional briefing from the agency.

Guidry, meanwhile, applauded Hutson's efforts and remarked on the importance of getting the monitor's message out to the public so "people become more secure" that the NOPD is being watched closely. "And certainly that is going to lead to better patterns and behaviors within the department and a healthier culture."

About 20 members of the group Safe Streets/Strong Communities attended the hearing. Several gave public remarks imploring the council to increase financing for the monitor.

Brendan McCarthy can be reached at bmccarthy@timespicayune.com or 504.826.3301.

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TheWorldMatters October 12, 2011 at 10:51PM

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Quatreveaux gets what he wants. Give the woman the additional dough.

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maurepas October 12, 2011 at 11:26PM

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I guess our property taxes will be going up next year to pay for yet another new department under Mitch. Eventually we'll have one inspector general/monitor for every ten cops.

How a small American city with 350,000 people can have a government this size is amazing. Yet, what is more amazing is that our streets are a mess, street signs are missing everywhere and a few inches of rain causes half the city to flood.

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quan chi October 12, 2011 at 11:40PM

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Let me get this straight this woman who's probably making a six figure salary wants more employees to do her job for her. How about taking a pay cut first then come to the table. looking at the current trend of things we've already lost 200 officer's in a year with more making their way out so why do we need to increase her office? how about we put into the budget a pay increase to our officer's to at least the national average. Because guess what new Orleans the 16 that were hired could never replace the 200 gone.

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NOLACitizenVoter October 13, 2011 at 12:10AM

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I'm amazed that she thinks it can be done so cheaply. The NOPD really does need the oversight, though. We need to fund this department for everything they need. Only when they are able to do this job will we stand any chance of beginning to trust NOPD.

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maurepas October 13, 2011 at 12:20PM

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Yes, there is no problem that money can't solve; and there is nobody that you can trust more when they ask for more money is a government official. Thank goodness the City is flush with cash!

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FriscoKid2 October 13, 2011 at 7:26AM

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Nothing against Ms. Hudson, but I think they should take that money and put more than 16 police officers on the street. This administration is too top heavy with nice salaries, too many chiefs and not enough Indians. There should never be a budget issue when it comes to public safety. It should make the citizens of New Orleans sick to their stomach to short change first responders; (Fire Dept, Police Dept, E.M.S etc).

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ninthwardhotgirl October 13, 2011 at 9:06AM

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While monitoring the NOPD is a full time job, I don't think that the city can even afford to give the Monitor's more money right now.

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Donalds October 13, 2011 at 1:15PM

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DHS expanding their polygraph program to fight corruption of CBP agents.

<http://t.co/qwsBwrp>

All levels of law enforcement need a consensual polygraphing program. Not only on hire, but every 5yrs and for internal affairs investigations.

Corruption on any and all levels has become our world's biggest security threat.

The only way to once and for all 'break the code' is the 'truth'.

Plain and simple.

If officers knew that this investigative tool was in place, maybe they would think twice before breaking the very laws they are sworn to uphold.

It only takes one good man with the vision, courage and integrity to lead by good example.

The world will follow his lead.

If our local top cops and leaders can't or won't see this, maybe the federal level should step in and change policies and laws for them.

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