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and its "early warning system" to flag troubled officers; and conduct "pattern analysis."

The office is also supposed to hold community meetings in each of the five City Council districts every four months, watch over lawsuits filed against the NOPD and create a mediation program.

Hutson has repeatedly asked the City Council and Landrieu for more money and staff - at times also asking for more investigative authority. Each time, she's been rebuffed. Yet the setbacks didn't bother Hutson that much because of the ongoing consent decree negotiations. In other cities, such decrees contained provisions supporting local civilian oversight, often strengthening an existing outfit. Surely, she thought, her office would be included.

But the decree revealed this summer proved a major disappointment for Hutson. It doesn't outline any specific role for her office, and it makes no promise of financial help.

"I'm so perplexed because nobody will tell me why this office doesn't have a prominent role in this consent decree," Hutson said. "It doesn't make any sense. We've been talking to both sides for two years about the things we can do if we are properly staffed."

In court hearings, attorneys for the Justice Department said they consider Hutson's office a vital institution that will be responsible for oversight of the NOPD after the consent decree is over. City attorneys also emphasized that Landrieu supports the office, and noted that the city approved an ordinance this summer to allow the monitor better access to documents.

But the Landrieu administration also made clear it won't come up with more money. In a statement, the administration emphasized that the monitor's budget is determined by New Orleans' inspector general, who receives a dedicated stream of funding each year that is outside City Hall's control.

Inspector General Ed Quatrevaux noted that the ordinance creating the office only specified the three professional positions that he currently finances. Quatrevaux, who took office before Hutson was hired, said nobody at the time seemed to think more monitor staff positions were needed. In order for him to direct more money to Hutson, he would have to fire someone on his staff, he said.

Out of the inspector general's \$3.7 million budget, the police monitor gets \$500,000, while the city's ethics board gets another \$250,000, Quatrevaux said.

"At this stage, she's got what she's got and she needs to make good use of it," Quatrevaux said. He added, however, that he is trying to figure out alternative revenue sources for the monitor.

The consent decree puts the city on the hook for expensive monitoring by an outside consulting firm. This federal monitor, backed by a team of experts, will report to U.S. District Court Judge Susie Morgan about the NOPD's progress implementing the 124-pages of required changes.

While the federal monitor's reports to the judge will be public record and the monitor is required under the consent decree to hold community meetings, the public function of the office is limited. Any media statements by the federal monitor must first be approved by the city and Justice Department.

The way Hutson reads it, the consent decree gives all the substantive oversight role to the federal monitor, while beefing up the NOPD's ability to audit and review itself. The additional staff she says she needs -- such as a statistician to analyze all the data created by police officers -- will go to the police.

A wide range of people filed letters with the court supporting an expanded role for her office, from the Business Council to victims of rogue police officers. Jasmine Groves, whose mother was killed in 1994 by a hitman hired by police officer Len Davis, called the monitor's office "a safe place" where people with complaints about the police could go for help.



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... Groves family and others whose  
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... go, they had to make a lot of  
compromises, said Norris Henderson, one of the original proponents. They ended up  
putting the monitor in the inspector general's office and limiting the office's  
investigative authority.

But Henderson said he always assumed a staff of three was just a starting point. "You  
could work those three people to death," he said.

The office's lack of real investigative power also frustrates some activists. Malcolm  
Suber, whose Community United for Change organization filed its own comments as  
part of the consent decree process, said he just doesn't see the point of an institution  
that reviews the NOPD's reports without the ability to separately subpoena and  
question officers.

"We have an office that is supposed to represent change but hasn't represented change,"  
he said.

NOPD leadership and the police associations have been opposed to letting the monitor  
conduct its own investigations into alleged officer misconduct.

Still, Raymond Burkart III, an attorney for the local Fraternal Order of Police, had  
mostly praise for Hutson and her staff. He said the office has provided an outlet for  
police who want to lodge a complaint, but don't feel comfortable directly going to the  
Public Integrity Bureau.

"That has been an outlet that our officers used," Burkart said. "Sometimes it has worked  
out that the IPM was effective in dealing with PIB. Other times it wasn't effective. It  
really depends on the nature of the complaint."

Although the office was created in 2008, it had a shaky beginning. Community activists  
complained the first selection process was hasty and political, with short-tenured  
Inspector General Leonard Odom picking an office insider, Neely Moody, for the  
position. Moody resigned from the post in less than a month. After Quatrevaux became  
inspector general, he reopened the search for a monitor in early 2010, eventually  
selecting Hutson, a veteran of police oversight in Los Angeles and Austin, Texas.

Hutson first hired Price and brought Levine on board in April 2011. One of the office's  
most significant achievements to date has been helping the NOPD set up a new protocol  
to investigate officer-involved shootings.

In the past year, either Hutson or Levine has rolled out to scenes after an officer fired  
his or her weapon, asking questions and observing to see if NOPD officers follow  
protocol. They watch the NOPD investigation closely, even sitting in on interviews.

While Henderson said he's been to shootings where it seemed like the monitor's staff  
was relegated to the sidelines, Deputy NOPD Superintendent Arlinda Westbrook - who  
heads the Public Integrity Bureau -- said Hutson's office has been given unprecedented  
access to scenes and NOPD internal interviews.

Because of the NOPD's troubled history with police shootings - and the sometimes-  
corrupt investigations that followed - Westbrook said she knows many New Orleanians  
remain suspicious of the department's ability to investigate itself in these cases.

"I want her (Hutson's) office to be involved, so we make sure we get it right," Westbrook  
said.

Levine, the deputy monitor, agreed the office has been given remarkable access, but she  
noted that looking into such shootings takes a toll on the office's ability to do other  
work. Hutson agreed. In March, when NOPD officers were involved in two fatal  
shootings in a week's time, she and Levine spent all their time monitoring the internal  
investigations.

"Everything else falls by the wayside when that happens," Levine said.

Either Levine or Hutson has attended PIB's weekly meetings to keep tabs on pending  
investigations, as well as tracking complaints as they go through the NOPD's  
disciplinary process.



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disciplinary hearings, said  
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itting and critical reports. But

there is a lot to be said for being on the ground and trying to make sure that things don't go that way and that is what we've tried to work on," Hutson said. "We are monitoring and giving input as we go along."

Westbrook argued this is the most effective role the monitor can play. She says there is no sense in after-action reports, as they will come too late for her office to do anything. In Louisiana, state law limits how long administrative probes of police officers can go on.

"Let's work together on these cases," Westbrook said. "It's not doing much good to get an after-the-event product that says this could have been done better."

Only one report about an individual complaint received by the office has been released on the monitor's website. It involved a grandmother who said the NOPD responded lackadaisically to her granddaughter's disappearance in 2010, as well as improperly handling the discovery that the teenage girl had been sexually assaulted.

Deborah Batiste, the grandmother, had first filed a complaint with PIB, which found two officers at fault in connection only with the missing person follow-up. Batiste felt that probe was lacking and contacted the monitor's office. She said Levine's critique of PIB's work was "great," but ultimately was unsatisfied because PIB didn't reopen the case.

"They pointed out the wrongdoing and everything and their hands were tied. What is the purpose of having them?" she asked.

Westbrook, however, said that case is actually an example of how closely the two offices work together, saying she consulted Hutson throughout the investigation. For example, while Levine, in her deconstruction of the investigation, faulted the PIB investigator for using leading questions, Westbrook said that's a problem she's aware of and trying to provide more training to prevent.

Going forward, the kind of review Levine did of the Batiste case - which she said took perhaps 80 hours - is unlikely to happen again in the near future. Hutson said monitoring complaints is something the office needs to dial back on until it gets more staff or enough volunteers to lend a hand.

In February, Hutson and her staff decided they couldn't do everything mandated in the ordinance, so they whittled down their responsibilities. Their main focus will be responding to officer-involved shootings and reviewing the NOPD investigations. The office will continue with a mediation program meant to provide another avenue for citizens to work out problems with the police. They will also take complaints from the public and from officers who don't feel comfortable going to PIB on their own.

If volunteer levels are sufficient, Hutson said the office will try to take on reports it had planned to do, including an evaluation of NOPD's use of warrants and an analysis of whether police are engaging in racial profiling. But all that will depend on whether there is time.

"We can't review investigations. We can't monitor investigations," Hutson said. "We have tried to do all those things these past two years, and it hasn't worked."

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