



Pay Boost Sought for Police Watchdog Commission flip-flop means higher pay all around

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Last year, when police commissioners maneuvered to push up the salary of top commission administrator Joe Gunn, critics grumbled about mild skullduggery, or at the very least, unwarranted pandering to Police Chief Bernard Parks, a Gunn ally.



Now it looks as though the salary bump is becoming an annual event. This time the recipient is Jeffrey Eglash, who started this week as the new inspector general of the Police Department. Eglash was hired at the established salary of \$102,000, but the appointed citizens panel that oversees the department, led by commissioner Gerald Chaleff, is pushing to increase Eglash's salary to \$115,000, the same as Gunn's. And while Eglash, a well-respected federal prosecutor, may be worth every penny, the evolving rationale behind the salary increases is a head spinner.

Gunn, the Police Commission executive director, was deemed worthy of a raise because he was the boss of the inspector general and he should make more money. At the time, police commissioners were at odds with then-Inspector General Katherine Mader, who resigned last year amid commission efforts to push her out.

But this time around, commissioners like the inspector general; they chose him, after all. And so he deserves to make just as much as executive director Gunn, because the inspector general is more of an equal than a subordinate.

Police Commissioner Chaleff justifies the logic as in keeping with the new city charter approved by voters in June. The new charter, he says, redefines the inspector general's role as more independent, reporting directly to the Police Commission rather than working under commission administrator Gunn.

But critics, such as City Councilwoman Jackie Goldberg, are baffled. "This is what makes the public crazy about how government works," says Goldberg, who will soon be voting on the proposal with fellow council members. "It puts us in a terrible situation [for the Police Commission] to come in and say, 'We have to do it this way because [Gunn] is in charge' and then ratchet up the salary, then say, 'We have to do it another way because now he's not in charge.'"

It was almost exactly a year ago that the Police Commission hired Assistant Deputy Mayor Joseph A. Gunn, a retired police commander, at a \$115,000 annual salary, the highest pay step allowed and \$22,500 more than the figure set by city administrative code. It all boils down to the boss thing: He and the commission intended to make it clear who was in charge, and, apparently, there

was no better way to do this than to take home more than Inspector General Mader.

Police Commission members successfully pushed the request through two city committees and the City Council. The hiring — and the pay hike — was one more sign of increasing pressure on the investigative autonomy of Mader from a commission often criticized for being too close to Police Chief Parks.

When Mader resigned, the police panel replaced her temporarily with former commission President Deirdre Hill. A month later, citing Hill's experience and private-sector salary, the commission persuaded the city's chief administrative officer to pay Hill \$102,855, the maximum step of the pay scale and about \$20,000 more than the lowest level on the salary range.

But even that wage is less than what is being sought for Eglash, who, in May, got the nod as Mader's permanent replacement. The angling for a salary boost began early this month. As with Gunn, the point man has been Commissioner Chaleff. He says the actions are not contradictory — the difference is the charter change.

Last year, he says, "The position of the inspector general was beneath the position of the executive director, but when [voters] raised the inspector general to become someone who is equal to the executive director as far as reporting responsibilities and initiatives, it only seems fair that they be paid the same. The inspector general is recognized in the charter as a key, semiautonomous position."

Of course, last year, numerous observers disputed the commission's contention that the executive director was supposed to command the inspector general in the first place. The I.G. position was crafted to be a civilian watchdog of the Police Department, and many civic leaders accused the commission of undermining reform efforts by subjugating the I.G. to the control of Gunn, a close ally of Police Chief Parks. Moreover, the commission opposed the very charter changes now being cited as justification for the pay hike.

Not only is that opposition past history, Chaleff adds that the I.G. position requires a higher salary "in order to attract highly qualified employees."

Councilwoman Goldberg, who chairs the council Personnel Committee, doesn't buy that — and not, she emphasizes, because of any doubts about Eglash's ability. She objects to starting anybody out in a new job at the highest possible salary. "Because now, everybody that you hire who's 'on the same level as Joe Gunn' has to be placed at the [top] step." In the case of Eglash, the commission wants to blow the lid off the top step and create a new, higher salary range.

For his part, Eglash said in an interview that he understood that the maximum salary for the inspector general's job was less than he made as an assistant U.S. attorney. He took the job unconditionally, but also asked the commission to consider matching his previous pay level. "They said that they didn't have the authority to raise it and that they'd seek that authority," he says.

The city administrative officer will assess the commission's request; review by the City Council is still several weeks away.