The Department of Public Safety is in the process of adopting the corrections identified by the Division of Internal Audit. One of the immediate steps taken will be to integrate the Emergency Medical Service and Division of Fire's payrolls and implement new technology that will automate the payroll process to ensure compliance.

By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff Reporter

This week the City of Cleveland announced they are in Phase II of an Internal Audit of the Division of Fire. Phase I of the audit was prompted after the Division of Fire failed to bring their overtime (OT) budget in line.

At the direction of Mayor Jackson, Internal Audit was sent to the Division to try to understand why the overtime budget was in excess. Based on the findings of the initial query, Internal Audit began a thorough review on July 6, 2011 of the Division's budget and payroll activities, now known as Phase I of the Audit.

The projected expenditures in the Division of Fire will exceed the authorized budget in excess of $1.5 million. The total OT budget was set at $5.3 million but will hit $6 million by the end of this year.

Based on the tests and procedures performed by the Division of Internal Audit, the following areas represent the major concerns noted during this audit:

• Employees called in sick, but their benefit balances were not adjusted to reflect the time taken.

• FIRE’s funeral leave policy does not follow the City-wide Policy.

• FIRE’s payroll paperwork is inconsistent throughout the process.

• Trades are uneven, undocumented and incomplete.

• FIRE is not submitting employee changes to the Department of Personnel and Human Resources timely.

• The manual entry and recording of payroll should be automated and accessible to

management at all work locations.

• General Orders and Special Orders should be reorganized and approved by both the Chief of Fire as well as the Safety Director when they have a fiscal impact on the City.

In the midst of this audit, Mayor Jackson has implemented a new fully integrated Division of Fire, Rescue and Emergency Medical Services department that will improve the service in the city.

Also Fire Chief Paul Stubbs will retire around April 1, 2012 after nearly 35 years, this was not in conjunction with the audit and the Mayor swore in Edward Eckart Jr. (former EMS Commissioner) as the Assistant Director of Public Safety.

Phase II will primarily focus on the following:

1. More in-depth analysis of shift trades, impact to operations and on overtime; and, accountability;

2. Analysis of furloughs, specifically, how they are chosen, are they being deferred, and its impact on operations and overtime;

3. How firefighters are chosen for overtime and if those decisions impacted operations and the budget; and

4. Other issues that come to light as a result of the Phase II audit

Public Safety Director Marty Flask is currently reviewing the findings from the first phase of the Audit to determine which individuals should be held accountable for deficiencies detailed in the Audit and what actions can and should be taken at this time including disciplinary and administrative action, as well as, policy and procedural changes.

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