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**Council chief wants audit of city cops**  
**By Heather MacDonald – Oakland Tribune**

**Wednesday, December 01, 2004** - OAKLAND -- Frustrated by unchecked police spending, City Council President Ignacio De La Fuente called Tuesday for a top-to-bottom, independent audit of the Oakland Police Department.

Joined by Council member Larry Reid (Elmhurst-East Oakland), De La Fuente (Glenview-Fruitvale) said the audit, which may be completed as early as March, would allow the city to better manage the department's finances and reduce overtime.

"We need to get a hold of this huge expenditure," De La Fuente said. "It's time for different tactics and a different approach."

Taking pains to praise Oakland police officers and the department, De La Fuente and Reid said the audit -- which still must be approved by the full Oakland City Council -- isn't intended as a slap against the department but instead as a necessary step in wiping the slate clean for the next police chief.

De La Fuente said he will recommend the council select a firm with experience in auditing police departments, but he declined to speculate about how much that could cost the cash-strapped city.

Deputy police Chief Pete Dunbar, who along with two other deputy chiefs has been running the department since former Chief Richard Word left Oakland to take over the Vacaville Police Department, said he welcomes the audit.

"We're very open," Dunbar said. "They're welcome to look at our books and give us kudos on what we're doing well and make suggestions on where we can improve."

Dunbar acknowledged that a culture of overtime has developed within the department as commanders routinely approve extra hours to ensure the city is adequately policed. The department spends almost \$5,000 a day on overtime to meet minimum staffing levels and expects to be at least several million dollars over budget by the end of the fiscal year, he added.

City Auditor Roland Smith won't conduct the inquiry because of a lack of expertise, De La Fuente and Reid said.

Trying to save money, city officials have relied on overtime while reducing the overall size of the department. De La Fuente and Reid said they hope the audit will find savings that would allow more officers to be hired and overtime reduced.

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Last year, the Police Department exceeded its overtime budget by nearly \$10 million, city officials said.

Bob Valladon, president of the Oakland Police Officers Association, said the audit is a good idea.

"The audit will show the council members they never budgeted enough money for overtime," Valladon said. "It's not that we're overspending, it's that they're not budgeting enough. We need more money."

Oakland officials spent most of Monday at a retreat where they grappled with a shortfall estimated at \$31.7 million next year. To close the gap between revenues and expenditures, the council will consider adding fees, shutting down city government and selling surplus city property.

If the council does not institute long-term measures to cut spending or increase revenues, the city will face an additional shortfall of \$26.4 million in 2006-07. Almost 40 percent of the city's \$440 million budget is devoted to public safety.

De La Fuente said the audit would also lay the groundwork for the implementation of Measure Y, which voters approved Nov. 2. The measure will raise nearly \$20 million to hire 63 new police officers and expand violence-prevention programs.

Opponents said Measure Y didn't guarantee additional officers and accused the council of underfunding the Police Department despite its promises.

"The audit is long overdue," said Steve Edrington, a leading opponent of Measure Y. "There's got to be some sanity in how they operate. We just want to make sure the money is going where they say it is going."