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Where is the police auditor?

Seven months later, and still no appointment

The case seemed to be made last December, when the Akron City Council approved by a 12-1 vote a resolution to proceed with hiring an independent auditor to review police department internal investigations and to work broadly to make the department's operations more transparent to a sometimes skeptical public.

Already the council had spent more than three years interviewing neighborhood residents and members of the police department. Several people, including council members and the police chief, had visited cities across the country that have employed police auditors and benefited from the experience.

Mayor Don Plusquellic supports the idea. Even members of the police force, at first leery of having yet another set of eyes looking over their shoulders, appeared increasingly warm to the concept. Despite the continued complaint from the police union leadership, hiring a police auditor seemed a matter, not of whether, but when? And who?

Those questions remain. Seven months after the legislation was approved, where is the police auditor, or even a job posting outlining qualifications, needed experience, scope of duties? Akron City Council President Marco Sommerville, who has been pushing the idea of independent oversight of police complaints, said he doesn't know.

The issue is about far more than council members getting their way. They responded to real concerns raised by their constituents, issues that affect the credibility of officers, and the department, among Akron residents. The depth of concern could be felt Tuesday evening at a forum in which people asked questions about police operations, the use of Tasers, the treatment of people in police custody. Evidence already suggests the police operate effectively and fairly in most cases. An independent auditor could make that case clearly.

The legislation is in place. The idea is sound. If the position requires uncommon sensitivity and true independence, it now falls to the mayor to find that person so the city can soon begin to benefit.