
Vokal to drop auditor proposal

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Omaha City Councilman Jim Vokal is abandoning his proposal to reinstate the city's controversial public safety auditor position.

Vokal, who introduced the proposal late last year, said Friday that he was unable to reach a compromise with the activists who had opposed some aspects of his plan.

Critics have maintained that the auditor's role as proposed by Vokal lacked independence and oversight. Because of that, Vokal said, he will ask the City Council at Tuesday's meeting to scrap the measure.

"I'm going to leave it up to the next (mayoral) administration and the next council," said Vokal, who lost his bid for mayor in this week's primary election.

Members of Omaha Together One Community — a group that draws from churches, schools and neighborhood associations — have objected to Vokal's idea to put the auditor position under the authority of the City Attorney's Office. In Vokal's latest revision, the auditor would report to the mayor.

That still didn't satisfy OTOC leaders. "They wanted all or nothing," Vokal said.

It appears the city won't have a public safety auditor any time soon. The general election is May 12. Voters will choose a new mayor and could elect up to six new faces to the council.

The auditor's post has been vacant since 2006, when Mayor Mike Fahey fired then-auditor Tristan Bonn, saying she was insubordinate in releasing a report on police traffic stops without his OK.

Bonn was a watchdog of both the Police and Fire Departments, but Vokal's ordinance narrowed the position's focus to the Police Department only.

OTOC leader Susan Kuhlmann applauded Vokal's decision to kill the ordinance.

"We are looking forward to revising the existing police auditor position," she said. "We feel that's a substantial ordinance, and we hope to make that happen in the future."

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