

# The Philadelphia Inquirer

## City is way over budget on overtime

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by **Claudia Vargas**, Staff Writer

The City of Philadelphia has already spent \$25 million more in overtime than it had budgeted this fiscal year. And that year doesn't end until June 30.

Through the end of April, city workers were paid \$159.7 million in overtime, blowing through the \$135 million budgeted, according to a new report from the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority (PICA), the state board that oversees the city's finances.

This will be the fifth year in a row that overtime has increased substantially. The city spent \$159 million in fiscal 2015 and is on track to spend tens of millions more in overtime by the end of this fiscal year.

City Finance Director Rob Dubow blamed the increase on a variety of factors, including September's papal visit, the January blizzard, and new hires in the Fire Department.

"The Kenney administration is strongly committed to controlling overtime costs, and is confident that measures already in place will move the city in that direction," Dubow said. He also was finance director during the eight years Michael Nutter served as mayor.

Dubow said the administration was studying whether new federal overtime rules would have an effect on the city's budget next year. Those rules, which take effect Dec. 30, dictate that salaried workers earning below \$47,476 annually get time-and-a-half pay if they work more than 40 hours in a week.

For fiscal 2016, the city had budgeted \$1.5 billion in salaries including overtime, a nearly 2 percent increase from the previous year. The total general fund budget for the year was \$3.9 billion.

As was the case in previous years, police officers and firefighters earned the most overtime.

The Police Department's overtime budget was \$49 million this year, but in 10 months it has already spent \$68 million. A lot of that was spent last fall, when Pope Francis came to town after the World Meeting of Families.

The Fire Department was budgeted to spend \$25 million, and by the end of April had spent \$31 million. Dubow said the 179 recruited firefighters were in training and won't begin working until June 29.

"As they are not yet able to respond to emergency calls, they are not assisting the department to manage the heavy workload," Dubow said. He said training recruits also added to overtime costs. He said he expected the department's overtime would be "significantly reduced" next year.

The Department of Licenses and Inspections has spent \$1.4 million, triple what it was budgeted to spend on overtime for the entire fiscal year, according to PICA's report.

L&I spokeswoman Karen Guss said the boom in construction in the city had meant "a lot more work" for L&I. Also, the department had not been able to fill vacant budgeted positions, so "existing staff has had to work overtime to keep up with the work," Guss said.

PICA compiled its report based on monthly overtime data from the city, the agency's executive director, Harvey Rice, said. PICA staff plans to use the data in its recommendations for the city's five-year plan.

The overspending in overtime will be covered in part with money from departments that spent less than budgeted, Dubow said.

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[cvargas@phillynews.com](mailto:cvargas@phillynews.com)

215-854-5520 @InqCVargas