

Wellman Hill Summer 2018 Reflection

This past summer, I had the pleasure to work with the Cuyahoga County Agency of Inspector General ("AIG"). The AIG was established in 2011 in the wake of the prosecution of former County Commissioner Jimmy Dimora, and is charged with investigating "fraud, corruption, waste, abuse, misfeasance, malfeasance, and nonfeasance" (Cuyahoga County Code §204.01(B)(3)). As an independent agency within the County government, the AIG has the jurisdiction to investigate any employee that falls under the County Executive - approximately 2,000 employees in all.

As an extern with the AIG, my work fell under three primary categories. The first was to assist the Deputy Inspector Generals with their cases. Whenever a complaint comes into the AIG, the Inspector General assigns the case to one of the five Deputy IGs. That Deputy is then responsible for completing an investigation into the complaint and making recommendations to the IG as to how to proceed. Investigative processes can include interviewing the complainant, subjects of the complaint, collecting evidence, and so on. I would help the Deputies by analyzing initial complaints against the Cuyahoga County Code and identifying areas where, if the facts of the complaint are assumed true, the Code had been violated. Then the Deputy and I would go about working to discover if the facts of the complaint were indeed accurate. Following the investigation, I would write a memo to the Inspector General detailing what the potential code violations were, what our investigation found, and recommendations as to what should be done next.

The second category of my work was research. Inspectors General are most common at the State and Federal levels of government, not so much at the local level. Due to this, and due to the fact that the AIG is still in its adolescence, I was tasked with researching how to improve our internal processes. The main research I conducted was into handling County employee conflicts of interest. Whenever someone is hired by the County, they need to identify places of secondary employment, if they or any immediate relatives have contracts with the County, etc. The problem faced by the AIG was how to store this information in a way that was easily accessible and could be checked whenever the County issued a new contract (which is very often). I contacted roughly 120 other Offices of Inspectors General around the United States and surveyed them on how they handled their conflicts of interest. Following this research, I wrote a detailed report to the Inspector General with my recommendations on how to improve our own processes.

The final area of my work was an extensive deepdive into the County Department of my choice. I chose to look at the Cuyahoga County Department of Development ("DoD"). I investigated what the DoD was responsible for, what their internal policies and procedures looked like, and identified areas of concern for the Inspector General: specifically areas where I thought waste, fraud, or abuse might be occurring. I conducted this investigation by reading the DoD employee and procedure manuals, and by interviewing the Department leadership. On the last day of my externship, I presented to the entire Agency on my findings.

In all, I immensely enjoyed my time with the Cuyahoga County Agency of Inspector General. The employees were exceedingly knowledgeable about their field and were more than willing to share their experience with me. Despite working on severe and difficult issues, the office had a light and friendly atmosphere. I am very grateful for the chance to work there.