Outlook

Fw: Detailed OIM Concerns, Phone Call Follow-Up

From Govindarajan, MGR <district8@cityofmadison.com>
Date Fri 4/3/2026 8:00 AM
To All Alders <allalders@cityofmadison.com>
Cc Haas, Michael R <MHaas@cityofmadison.com>; Edgerton, Sarah <SEdgerton@cityofmadison.com>; Hillson, Erin <EHillson@cityofmadison.com>; Schmiedicke, David <DSchmiedicke@cityofmadison.com>
Bcc Munger, Sam R. <SMunger@cityofmadison.com>; Brogan, Dylan <DBrogan@cityofmadison.com>

Hi friends,

Several of you have asked to review the email I referenced during the March 25th PCOB meeting regarding Legistar #92386, making ordinance changes to the OIM and PCOB. Before sharing this, I wanted to ensure there had been direct in-person communucation with both Chair Maia Pearson and IM Meeka Glass so they were aware the email would be shared with the full Council. Thank you for your patience in waiting for that conversation to take place.

Below is my original email to Chair Pearson dated March 24th, along with her response from March 31st. Prior to me sending this email, I shared much of this information with her in a phone conversation on March 21st. During that phone call Chair Pearson shared with me that was the first she had heard these concerns, I wrote to her via email so it could be shared with PCOB members.

My goal in sharing this with you is to ensure transparency and provide all alders with the same baseline information as conversations continue about the OIM, PCOB and the ordinance proposals coming to the Council on April 21st.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions.

Best,

MGR Govindarajan *(he/him/his)*
District 8 Alder | (608) 509-9119
My Blog

From: Maia Pearson <mpearson.cob@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 31, 2026 5:16 PM
To: Govindarajan, MGR <district8@cityofmadison.com>
Cc: Glass, Aeiramique <AGlass@cityofmadison.com>; Edgerton, Sarah <SEdgerton@cityofmadison.com>; Schmiedicke, David <DSchmiedicke@cityofmadison.com>; Hillson, Erin <EHillson@cityofmadison.com>; Haas, Michael R <MHaas@cityofmadison.com>

Subject: Re: Detailed OIM Concerns, Phone Call Follow-Up

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

[The full PCOB has been bcc'd for information purposes only]

Good Afternoon MGR,

Thank you for following up on our phone conversation and outlinding the concerns raised. To ensure transparency, I have cc'd the relevant department leaders, as noted in your email.

To date, the majority of the concerns outlined in your email have not been formally communicated to me or to members of the Board by department leadership or alders, particularly within the timeframe you reference. To the concerns that have been raised previously under prior leadership, they have been addressed. Moving forward, timely and direct communication of this nature will be important to ensure concerns can be fully understood and resolved by the board.

As a governing body and the Independent Police Monitor's direct report, we take seriously both our oversight responsibilities and our obligation to the community.

With respect to the specific areas you elevated:

Technology procurement processes (APM 3-20) *and* ***logo usage (APM 3-18):***

At this time, no specific instances of noncompliance have been provided. Additional detail would be helpful to ensure clear and accurate understanding of these concerns. Based on current information, the interim IPM is actively working with IT to procure appropriate systems needed by the office. It is also important to note that oversight bodies often require specialised systems that are different from standard City infrastructure, which may require additional clarification and coordination. Regarding branding, the Board previously engaged with the City Communications Manager to discuss branding and received approval to use a distinct logo reflecting the unique role of the PCOB. To further note, in the spirit of collaboration, when creating the branding, the Board ensured to use the City's branding document as reference.

Information Technology and data security:

Concerns related to device usage and data access were addressed prior to the interim IPM's tenure. My understanding is that the necessary trainings have been completed and that staff are working within established protocols. If there are new or ongoing concerns, the Board would welcome the opportunity to review and discuss them directly.

Website and digital infrastructure:

The concept of a more independent, accessible, and functional web presence has been discussed for several years, in response to community feedback regarding the accessibility of PCOB and OIM information. Improving public access to reports, meetings, and materials remains a priority for the Board. I would like to note that due to the unique role of oversight, most oversights in the US have their own standalone sites or have more autonomy with design and mechanisms/coding of said site. We are happy to provide examples and anticipate working collaboratively with the relevant departments.

Human Resources:

The OIM and PCOB are actively working with HR to ensure compliance with FLSA and other HR applicable policies. The recruitment and hiring processes for the next IPM has started. We are working in partnership with HR, learning more about the City's Equitable Hiring Plan and crafting a process that ensures robust community input.

Finance:

At this time, the board has not been made aware of the concerns referenced. We are committed to working collaboratively with finance to ensure procurement and contracting processes align. Especially as we prepare for the 2027 budget.

More broadly, I want to acknowledge the theme raised regarding the relationship between independence and administrative compliance.

The Board fully understands that the OIM operates within City systems and may be subject to basic applicable legal and administrative requirements. At the same time, the independence of the OIM and PCOB in carrying out its core mission is fundamental and must be preserved. In practice, this can require thoughtful coordination where existing policies do not always fully align with the unique structure, needs, and responsibilities of civilian oversight.

We believe that alignment is best achieved through direct communication and welcome continued conversations with alders and City stakeholders to ensure there is a shared understanding of this balance and to strengthen the systems supporting this work.

Finally, with respect to your reference to potential Council action, I would simply note that the ordinance establishing the OIM clearly affirms its independence in the performance of its duties. Maintaining that independence remains essential to the integrity and effectiveness of the oversight function and the Board remains committed to upholding that independence while also ensuring accountability and compliance with applicable basic requirements (MGO 5.19 (6)(b))

I appreciate your willingness to raise these concerns and agree that continued communication will be important moving forward. The Board remains committed to addressing issues constructively, collaboratively when necessary, and ensuring the long term suitability of the OIM and PCOB.

In solidarity,

Maia

--
Maia Pearson, Board Chair
City of Madison Police Civilian Oversight Board
Office of the Independent Monitor

On Tue, Mar 24, 2026 at 12:26 AM Govindarajan, MGR <district8@cityofmadison.com> wrote:

> Hi Maia,
>
> Thank you again for taking the time to speak with me on Saturday regarding Legistar 92386. I appreciated the conversation and your willingness to engage on this issue. As discussed, I wanted to

follow up in writing to share a set of concerns that have been raised to me by multiple City departments regarding the current operations of the Office of the Independent Monitor.

My intention in sharing this information is not to assign fault or draw conclusions prematurely, but to ensure that the PCOB as the governing body of the OIM, is aware of potential operational, legal, and compliance risks that may warrant further discussion or review. I believe that you having all the information available will allow you to do the vital role you've all volunteered to fulfill.

Several departments have raised concerns regarding adherence to City policies, processes, and APMs. In particular, there have been instances where standard City requirements have been questioned or not consistently followed, including:

- Technology procurement proceseses (APM 3-20)
- Logo usage policies (APM 3-18)
- Use of City-managed systems and devices

In some cases, City staff have had to reiterate that OIM employees, as City employees, are subject to the same policies and procedures as other departments. This has placed department leadership in the difficult position of needing to clarify or enforce policies with a peer office, particularly given the unique structure and perceived indepndence of the OIM.

Information Technology leadership has also raised concerns to data security and compliance. These include:

- Use of personal or unmanaged devices to access or store City data
    - This presents significant cybersecurity risks
    - Would not meet Criminal Justice Information Systems (CJIS) standards
    - Could jeopardize MPD's access to state and federal data systems
- Resistance to required training and established processes
    - Requests for access to systems without completing required trainings
    - Questions about whether certain procedures are "mandatory"
- Website and digital infrastructure concerns
    - References in the OIM Annual Report to a potential independent PCOB website raise issues related to:
        - Records retention and open records compliance
        - Accessibility requirements
        - Long-term maintence and staffing capacity
        - Cybersecurity risks

There are also questions regarding compliance with existing policies in published materials, including logo usage standards and the potential use of generative AI in official documents.

Human Resources has similarly identified araes of potential legal and financial risk. These include:

- Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) compliance if staff are working beyond allotted or budgeted hours
    - There was also a public statement made during the press conference indicating that OIM staff may be working beyond their allotted or budgeted hours, which could raise FLSA compliance concerns if staff are working unpaid hours.

    - Tax law compliance concerns related to out-of-state work
- Hiring process for the next Independent Monitor
    - Ensuring the process follows established HR procedures and legal standards to avoid potential claims of discriminatory hiring practices, particularly given prior issues that have required significant staff time and legal resources
- Adherence to workplace policies related to
    - Discrimination
    - Workplace safety

As you know, these policies exist to mitigate risk and ensure that issues are addressed promptly and appropriately.

I haven't yet directly spoken to them, but I've heard that the Finance Department has similar concerns, mainly regarding:

- Contracting with services or programs without following established processes
- Purchasing equipment, software, or other items without following city policies

From my understanding, the Finance Department will not process payments if required policies are not followed. This reflects their responsibility to ensure that taxpayer funds are spent in accordance with Council authorization and City policy. Situations like this can create legal and financial risk if not addressed proactively.

The issues above, which staff have shared with me, seem to be just from the last three months. *[NOTE TO ALDERS: IT and HR have since confirmed not every instance was in the last three months, and/or no longer existing issues. Departments heads are now in direct communication with the PCOB and OIM]*

Across these conversations, a consistent theme has emerged: concern that the OIM's independence in carrying out its core mission (investigations, findings, and recommendations) is being interpreted to include adminstrative, legal, and operational requirements. *While independence in its core function is both important and necessary, extending that independence to areas such as compliance with City policies and legal requirements creates risk not just for the OIM, but for the City as a whole.*

I am sharing these concerns so that the PCOB is aware of potential compliance gaps and operational risks, as well as areas where additional clarity or oversight may be warranted. These issues also directly informed portions of the ordinance revisions I recently introduced, particularly those clarifying that the OIM is fully independent in its mission but remains subject to City administrative structures, policies, and other applicable laws.

Staff Contact Information:

- Information Tech.: Sarah Edgerton -- SEdgerton@cityofmadison.com
- Human Resources: Erin Hillson -- EHillson@cityofmadison.com
- Finance Dept.: Dave Schmiedicke -- DSchmiedicke@cityofmadison.com
- City Attorney: Mike Haas -- MHaas@cityofmadison.com

Additionally, as I mentioned in our call, some of the information shared here may become part of

broader public discussion. My preference, however, is to work collaboratively with you and the Board to address these concerns directly *and ensure that the Council is kept appropriately informed*. If these risks are not addressed and result in avoidable liability for the City, I believe the Council would be compelled to take steps to mitigate that risk, including reevaluating the structure, oversight, and funding of the OIM and PCOB.

I want to reiterate that I believe strongly in the mission and importance of both the OIM and the PCOB. My goal is to ensure that the structure supporting that mission is sustainable and aligned with existing policies of the city. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of these concerns further and to hear the Board's perspective.

Best,

MGR Govindarajan *(he/him/his)*
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