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Fire records changes likely to receive OK A proposal before the City Council would address the state auditor's concerns about the Omaha department's financial procedures.

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The **Omaha** City Council is expected to approve a resolution to formally support the **State Auditor's** findings about **Fire Department** finances. It would formally support Mayor Jim Suttle and **State Auditor** Mike Foley's efforts to make changes in the way the **Fire Department** tracks work hours, among other things.

The council could vote on the resolution Tuesday, after a public hearing.

Introduced by Councilman Chris Jerram, the proposal has the support of the full council, Councilman Pete Festersen said.

Last week, Foley said his office received tips from people inside the **Fire Department** that some firefighters assigned to administrative jobs did not show up for work as scheduled but were paid. He said the lack of additional attendance reports left his **auditors** unable to confirm or disprove those reports.

Foley's office began looking into the **Fire Department's** finances in February, after receiving complaints of financial improprieties.

Foley said city officials cooperated with his office during a lengthy review of the **Fire Department** and have shown willingness to address areas of concern that he found. The city is working on implementing a new record-keeping system to track firefighters' work hours.

Foley's report centered on the time-reporting matter, but he also looked into other areas:

A \$2 million grant, awarded to the city in January 2009 under the federal Staffing for Adequate **Fire** and Emergency Response (SAFER) program, that would have required the city to add 18 firefighters.

Because of tight city budgets, officials determined that they would not be able to afford the additional staffing and gave up the grant, reimbursing the \$166,000 that already had been spent.

Foley said city officials handled the matter properly, although he noted that the city didn't formally end the grant until after his office began its inquiry.

The nonprofit Kloewer Fund, established more than 30 years ago to honor a former firefighter. Money donated to the city-run fund has been spent on training, equipment and other **fire** safety efforts. Earlier this year The World-Herald reported that loose accounting and ambitious spending had largely depleted the fund.

Foley said the Kloewer Fund at times lacked proper documentation and made some mistakes, but the Suttle administration has improved oversight.

The fund will now be managed by an outside nonprofit group.

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