



Office of Professional Accountability Review Board (OPARB)
Minutes of Thursday, March 19, 2009 Meeting
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Patrick Sainsbury, Chair:	P	Steve Freng, Member:	P
Tina Bueche, Vice Chair	P	Martha Norberg, Member:	P
George Davenport, Member:	AE	David Wilma, Member:	P
Sharon Dear, Member:	P	Michael Pendleton, Consultant:	P
Nancy Roberts, Staff	P		

*(Absent = A, Present = P, E = Excused, U = Unexcused, * = Present by Phone)*

Guest(s): Hilary Stern, Casa Latina; Kathryn Olson and Kate Pflaumer, OPA

Old Business/Administrative:

The meeting was convened at 6:04 p.m. The minutes of the March 4, 2009 meeting were approved as written.

Hilary Stern of Casa Latina discussed their agency's most recent move to a new location, which she considers much safer than their former Belltown location. Most of her agency's interaction with SPD has stemmed from the area in which they have been located. They have not in the past had a secure building. Operating a day labor workforce center primarily out of a parking lot created some difficulties for the program. Hilary shared several incidents which resulted in calls to the Seattle Police Department.

About 90% of their day laborers are new immigrants who do not yet have contacts in the area. Approximately 5 – 10% of their clients have been in the area a long time, but have not become secure and established in regular jobs.

In general, SPD has been very, very responsive. Latinos generally feel that Seattle's police officers are the nicest they've ever met; are respectful, and treat them "too well". They comment that SPD is "too respectful" of criminals.

It is sometimes frustrating to work with SPD. Ms. Stern feels that she works very closely with precinct commanders and beat officers, but SPD needs to hire more Spanish-speaking police. The Latino population is growing, but the number of Spanish-speaking officers is not keeping up. If there has been an increase in hiring of Spanish-speaking officers, it has not been enough.

There seems to be a perception among police officers that undocumented aliens will not report crimes, step forward to witness, and/or follow through with cases. Many of her clients know about Seattle's strong law that was established to protect undocumented aliens and encourage them to report crimes, but fear still exists. Some of her clientele interact with police in other cities where they have no such protective laws.

Ms. Stern feels that SPD needs to do more outreach to advertise that law and encourage people to report. She cited a couple examples of Latino workers who did want to report crimes, but the officers in both cases discouraged them. Officers grill the Latino workers, asking if they're sure they'll follow through, 'don't want to fill out a report if you're not going to follow through', and 'are you going to take this seriously'. They are often pessimistic and discouraging and are often successful in deterring a Latino worker from reporting a crime. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy – they don't believe they'll follow



Office of Professional Accountability Review Board (OPARB)
through, and indeed, they don't, after discouragement from officers. In one case where a Latino worker was deterred from reporting a crime, the offender went on to stab someone the next week.

More outreach is needed, as well as encouragement, not discouragement, from officers for witnesses and victims to report crimes.

Ms. Stern clarified that any negative experiences she's had has been with street officers; commanders are responsive, easy to get along with, and great to work with.

How did your relationship with officers and command staff start? Answer – Command staff approach her. As commanders changed, each new one would contact her. There were year-long discussions with neighbors before they originally moved into Belltown. Command staff joined the community problem solving group and so police involvement began as they established their center.

What was your sense of officers who were reluctant to take reports? Answer – Officers were frustrated. They didn't want to take reports and then have everything fall apart. They feel that victims, witnesses will not testify.

What is your volume; what is the turnover in clientele? Answer – they serve over 100 clients/day; more than 1,000/year. Many disappear, and she's unable to track them. Many of those have found permanent employment. If they are able to place their clients in permanent jobs directly, they are able to track them. Through those statistics, they are able to verify that 100 – 110 clients each year are placed in permanent jobs. Latino laborers are sometimes victims of crime, but she has no way to know to what degree.

The type of outreach that Officer Adrian Diaz is doing in South Park works well – clone him!

Ms. Stern feels that her agency has a good relationship in her new neighborhood, and with her new (East) precinct. She has received positive feedback, and there are systems in place to allay any fears the neighborhood had about their coming in. One system is Casa Latina bicycle patrols of the neighborhood to insure that an informal day labor site doesn't start up on the street. SPD recognized that the patrols could also be a neighborhood crime watch and helped train the Casa Latina staff.

Kathryn Olson encouraged Ms. Stern to follow through if she has complaints. Systematic changes CAN be effected, and SPD needs to know if there is a disconnect between policies and practices on the street. Complaints may result in increased training, policy changes, witness advocacy programs, increased use of interpreters.

NOTE: OPARB's evening meetings will now be held from 5:30 – 7:30 pm, starting April 16. Please mark your calendars

Disposition of old (often redacted) case files - Kathryn stated that they will soon be reviewing cases that are currently scheduled for destruction. Some of those cases are taser and 180 day cases which OPARB has copies of. There are many legal questions to be answered – it was decided to hold discussion of this issue until OPARB consults with counsel and possibly until the retreat.

City Hall, Floor 2, 600 Fourth Avenue, P.O. Box 34025 Seattle, WA 98124-4025
(206) 684-8888 Fax: (206) 684-8587



Office of Professional Accountability Review Board (OPARB)

Retreat planning – Retreat is scheduled for Saturday, June 27, from 9 – 4, at Martha’s office in the downtown area. Michael wanted to ensure that the board focused on systematically reviewing the data from your outreach efforts. Michael will compile them in advance. Secondly, the board needs to take that data and develop the elements of your work plan. Wordsmithing can come later. Remember to incorporate your interests, as well as those of OPA. Information will be distributed in advance of the meeting in order to make best use of the retreat time.

OPA Brochure – The Auditor’s role as described is mushy, but since it won’t be firmed up for months, the decision was made to not wait to publish it. Send your comments and suggestions to David and Pat, who will then work with John Fowler on a proposed final draft of the brochure.

Report on recent Public Safety Committee Meeting –OPA and Auditor reports were presented to the Committee. There was discussion about the appeal process that can take place after the Chief’s decision. Michael noted that this seems to have become a national “hot” issue where a unified proposal by OPA, the OPA Auditor, and OPARB could be very helpful to the system, the Mayor, and the Council. Both Kate and Kathryn expressed interest in examining appeals of discipline cases. Discipline can be challenged through the Public Safety Civil Service Commission or the Disciplinary Review Board (but not through both). Proposed changes may require legislation and collective bargaining.

Other topics at the committee meeting included whether the chief is required to submit written reasons every time he overturns a ruling by the OPA director, or only upon council request. There were similar questions regarding the requirement that the OPA Director submit written summaries of any case where the 180-day rule prevented discipline. (There was a follow-up e-mail from Council Member Burgess requesting these writings from the Chief and the OPA Director.) There also was discussion about termination for dishonesty, and tracking obstruction charges.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Notes taken by Nancy Roberts

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 1 from 11:30 am – 1:30 pm in the Boards & Commissions Room, City Hall.