



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

Patrick Sainsbury, Chair:	P	Steve Freng, Member:	P
Tina Bueche, Vice Chair	A (E)	Martha Norberg, Member:	A (E)
George Davenport, Member:	P	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): Bill Hobson, Downtown Emergency Services Center; Kay Godefroy, Seattle Neighborhood Group

Old Business/Administrative:

The meeting was convened at 6:05 p.m. The minutes of the February 4, 2009 meeting were approved as written.

Bill Hobson of the Downtown Emergency Services Center (DESC) gave a history of his agency and their relationship with SPD. They are a human services agency with a \$20M/year annual budget and about 315 full time employees. They provide multiple services to adult men and women, primarily homeless, with mental illness, permanent disabilities, and other issues. The majority of their population has mental disorders, and may also have substance abuse issues. They manage shelters totaling 325 emergency beds. They are licensed mental health providers and a licensed drug and alcohol treatment facility.

One of their missions is to develop permanent supported housing for their population. Their Seattle supported home (about 750 units) includes full-time clinicians on at site each building, and one of their goals is to increase their tenants' self sufficiency.

The challenges presented by their clients means that DESC has daily contact with SPD, as well as other law enforcement agencies. Twenty-five years ago, when Mr. Hobson first came to DESC, the relationship between SPD and DESC staff and clients was bad. Both DESC and SPD staff were to blame. Mr. Hobson recognized his agency's need for SPD, to help his clients and protect his staff. He also felt that SPD needed DESC's services as well, to help them spend their time and energy on real criminals, rather than on the homeless and mentally ill. He set about to forge a more functional relationship between DESC and SPD.

Relations between SPD and human services organizations have changed dramatically in 20 years. Both sides know and understand more about each other. Since 1991, senior police staff have served continually on the DESC board. Required Field Officer Training for newly graduated cadets now includes working two days at a DESC facility. SPD also participates at a Homeless Services Provider Forum each month.

Bad cop behavior happens – less often than in the past. When it happens, Mr. Hobson calls his contacts at SPD to follow up. He also requests that his staff inform him of extraordinary services provided by officers, so he can make senior SPD staff aware of that as well. Because of the relationship that has been forged between the two organizations, DESC's issues do get addressed. They achieved this level of cooperation by giving credit where credit is due.

Mr. Hobson feels that the previous OPARB board dealt only with the bad aspects of SPD conduct, while not recognizing the good they do. Compassionate policing should be recognized as well, since it does exist.



Office of Professional Accountability Review Board (OPARB)

Mr. Hobson is impressed with SPD leadership, and feels the SPD organization is much better than many comparable cities with whom he has worked. He feels that SPD's largest chronic problem is understaffing.

Mr. Hobson suggested that we contact other homeless agencies and other involved companies such as Real Change, Lutheran Compass Center, YWCA, Downtown Services Association, Clise Properties, SAMIS and the Catholic Archdiocese. Nancy will follow up with him for more comprehensive contact information.

OPARB Report 9/1/08 – 3/1/09 – Pat has drafted the semiannual report, and Michael and Tina have reviewed it. He will send the draft to other members for their review. The plan is to release the report at the same time as OPA and the OPA Auditor's reports are released. The Board chose not to include OPA's outreach in their report, and will formally suggest that OPA include that as an aspect of each of their reports. Michael emphasized that we want to maintain independence from OPA and allow them to share their own outreach efforts.

Kay Godefroy from Seattle Neighborhood Group (SNG) gave the Board a background on her organization. She is the founder of SNG, and has been in this business for 21 years. Their organization promotes community safety, and their core is to bring the community and SPD together. They are a proponent of community policing. The group focuses their efforts on communities with lower income and higher crime rates. This includes immigrants and low income citizens, for whom they also arrange training. She and her employees have day to day contact with police.

In response to question 1 from OPARB's recent letter, "How do you and your organization get your information/opinions about police conduct, oversight and practices in Seattle?" Ms. Godefroy stated that she gets information from newspapers, blogs, community meetings, and neighbors.

Re question 2, "Overall how do you and your organization view police conduct, oversight and practices in Seattle?" Ms. Godefroy said she sees Seattle's system as solid. Some populations are less comfortable reporting police issues, or don't know how, e.g., youth and immigrants. Our police system is very different from systems familiar to most immigrants. Youth are afraid, and do not know how to navigate the system. She suggested that youth and immigrants as well won't come to meetings; if the Board wants their feedback, they'll need to go to where the youth gather. She suggests having a table at youth or immigrant social events, and is confident that a regular presence among them will build trust. For example, police officers are included whenever SNG reaches out to East African groups.

The group discussed development of OPA/OPARB joint brochure. Ms. Godefroy felt that if it was in several languages it would be helpful, and she volunteered to help distribute them in the community.

She stated that the Neighborhood Policing plan was not staffed adequately. SPD manpower needs to be distributed equitably so the officers have a chance to get to know the neighborhoods. They cannot when they are spread too thin and are expected to cover too much territory.

Referring to a question about use of force, Ms. Godefroy stated that youth complain the most. Information travels very quickly within this group, and information is perceived as fact, so it's hard to know to know what the true picture is.

How does SNG work? A citywide organization, it focuses on highest crime neighborhoods, primarily SE, Central and SW. They have monthly meetings, including policy and community, and they try to work collaboratively towards solutions. Question – Does SPD presence deter attendance and/or participation? No, everyone knows how the group works, and there's always the option to speak to



Office of Professional Accountability Review Board (OPARB)

SNG staff if they're uncomfortable talking directly with police. SNG staff field concerns and educate citizens on the police reporting system.

Ms. Godefroy stated that they call the commander or chief with complaints and commendations, and don't work through OPA. What about concerns about racial profiling? There are conversations about "Driving While Black" or "Walking While Black", but no specific instances of which she's been made aware. She feels that citizens don't report because of ignorance of system and intimidation.

Precincts are more or less progressive on the issues of community policing, community involvement, and focus on outreach vs. a straight "policing" model. It seems to be dependent on command staff.

The suggestion was made to make sure to include immigrant organizations – Nancy to obtain a list from Dept. of Neighborhoods or SNG. Ms. Godefroy strongly suggests contacting Casa Latina.

Outreach Update – The Board has met with four of the 14 "Number 1" groups, leaving ten to go! At a maximum of two per meeting, it's going to take a while...Nancy will schedule one of the groups for the March 4 meeting and contact the remaining ten to schedule them for meetings. Several Board members plan to attend the Citywide Advisory Council on February 23 at the Seattle Vocational Institute. Captain Brown at the W. Precinct invited Pat for speak at their April 8 meeting. Fifteen minutes have been allotted – Pat will share the time with other members who might wish to attend. Julie Nelson, Director of the Seattle Office for Civil Rights, has contacted the group and wants to attend one of our meetings.

Next Meeting – On March 4 Kate and Kathryn are on the agenda. The Board wants to pick Kate's brain before she leaves - future topics and areas of interest, and about a discussion with Jennifer Shaw at ACLU.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Notes taken by Nancy Roberts

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 4 from 11:30 am – 1:30 pm in the Boards & Commissions Room, City Hall.