



Office of Professional Accountability Review Board (OPARB)

**Minutes of Thursday, April 16, 2009 Meeting**  
**5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.**

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

*(Absent = A, Present = P, Excused = E)*

Guest(s): Julie Nelson, Director, Seattle Office for Civil Rights; Alan Lai, Crime Victim Service Director, Chinese Information & Service Center

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The meeting was convened at 5:30 p.m.

The minutes of the 3/19/09 and 4/1/09 meetings were tabled until the next meeting.

**Outreach Update.** The LGBTQ meeting is held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday at the E. Precinct Community Room at 6:00 p.m. David Wilma will attend the April 21 meeting.

The Seattle King County Coalition on Homelessness will meet on May 21 from 9 – 11 a.m. Nancy will send the contact and meeting information to Pat to arrange a time.

The response to the “follow-up” letters has been encouraging. Tina spoke at the W. Precinct meeting recently. They said they may ask OPARB back to their May 13 meeting if they have any questions. George also attended the meeting.

Michael reached out to his contacts and has discussed involving the youth community, perhaps the Mayor’s youth council, in the Board’s outreach. One interesting suggestion was to partner with the Urban League; their outreach workers work with troubled, at risk youth. Sid Sidorowicz suggested that Michael contact Jamila Taylor of the Urban League. It was also suggested that the Atlantic Street Center be contacted for their input. The Board expressed the most interest in talking to the outreach workers and will try to set up a meeting.

**Other Business** It appears that everyone received the NACOLE conference email about the 2009 October conference in Texas.

OPA, OPARB, and Auditor’s reports will be presented at the public safety committee meeting April 21 at 2:00. Pat will present; other members are invited to attend.

**Julie Nelson of the Seattle Office for Civil Rights gave an overview of her agency.** She has worked there for four years, two as the director. She is excited by their focus on the issue of institutionalized racism.

Their traditional purpose has been to enforce discrimination laws. To that end they have eight investigators who interview complainants, review records, and research policies and procedures in order to issue findings. They may settle cases before they reach a conclusive finding. Discrimination has changed over the years - it is now more covert than blatant, and people are willing to learn new ways of doing business. SOCR often negotiates and finds appropriate recompense.



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They also have a policies and outreach staff who provide proactive education and training, both for City departments and in the community.

The third part of their office's charge is RSJI - the Race and Social Justice Initiative, the goal of which is to eliminate racial disparities. This effort started when the mayor realized that resident's views of Seattle varied greatly, depending on their race. Every city department has an RSJI work program, aspects of which are sometimes similar, sometimes unique to the specific workplace.

Ms. Nelson stated that they receive about 200 to 220 complaints a year that result in investigations. They are about 100 calls per month, many of which are screened out for various reasons. Conciliation is done internally by their investigators.

Ms. Nelson stated that SPD and SOCR collaborate in some areas. For example, SPD recently attended an SOCR all-staff meeting to talk about malicious harassment where there was discussion of the overlap in approaches between SPD's work on malicious harassment when someone is a target of a crime due to a protected class and SOCR's work to investigate discrimination based on protected classes. SOCR and SPD have at times done joint community presentations so that residents know recourse for when they are targeted with either a crime or discrimination due to a protected class.

Ms. Nelson attended Tools for Tolerance with SPD. She feels it's important that they have common definitions. Example - SPD recognizes racial profiling if race is the only factor in a situation; the community is more likely to identify it even if it is but one factor in a situation. Tools for Tolerance is a good first step, in her mind, because it's a way to begin to see individual behaviors as part of the bigger picture, and it illustrates how an officer's decision affects the outcome of an interaction. Working on institutionalized racism will be an important next step.

SOCR refers callers to OPA, educates citizens about OPA, and sometimes accompanies or assists a complainant in accessing OPA.

With regard to the questions, Ms. Nelson stated that 1) they get info/opinions through callers and complainants, as well as by working closely with SPD at meetings, with RSJI. They also hear information through media and nonprofit partners.

2) They view SPD as a well trained, professional force. Leadership does good, positive things. SPD does not interfere with immigration services, like in some other areas. The vast majority of officers are honest and good, and she has great respect for them. The few isolated incidents of bad officers can influence perception and bad interactions are passed around, multiplied and magnified, and become even larger.

3) Police behavior is, by and large, progressive and good. However, the few bad cases must be assertively, aggressively pursued. The perception of cases not being dealt with in an appropriate way is increased, harming the view of police overall. The city needs to ensure that consequences are dealt.

4) OPARB should explore the issue of transparency, which the public needs in order to feel confidence in the police force. More information needs to be made available to the public. There is a perception that complaints filed with OPA go into a black hole, and there is no follow-up with regard to status. What is the point of filing a complaint if nothing changes? For



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example, a follow-up that stated what the initial charge was, what was found, and consequences meted out, if any, would help. Objective information can be provided.

Ms. Nelson told the Board that she would like to stay in the loop with regard to the Board's progress, and to learn what is on the workplan.

**Alan Lai, Chinese Information & Service Center.** The center has been serving Seattle for about 40 years. It is located in the International District, and has about 40 professional staff. They have been serving crime victims for ten years, a program that is funded by the federal government.

Victims in the Asian community often do not want to talk to police, and are afraid of law enforcement. The CISC holds community meetings, provide news releases to ethnic papers to advertise meetings. They hold meetings in places familiar to their clients, such as a temple, not in a legal setting. They provide interpreters. Victims usually bring a friend. They make it a point to assure clients that they will be looking into the crime where they were victimized, not into any other issues they might have, to reassure them that their immigration status, etc. won't be an issue.

With regard to the questions, Mr. Lai stated that his clients believe that most police officers are honest and hardworking. They know there is a heavy workload on officers. It is important to most Asians that OPA and OPARB are civilians, so that fact should be emphasized. They are generally distrustful of law enforcement; many come from cultures where law enforcement is corrupt. They are distrustful of government buildings. Their issues vary greatly from one generation to the next as younger generations become more assimilated. Mr. Lai can help with publicity, contacts, and setting up community meetings, including interpreters, to assist the OPA components in their work.

Mr. Lai's clients are concerned about the lack of police patrols. Unfortunately, it's hard to get them to call when suspicious activity happens; they often don't report crimes.

**OPARB Brochure:** David and Pat met with Kate Pflaumer and John Fowler, and will bring the brochure to the group once it is in final draft.

**Retreat** There was discussion about the date of the retreat, and the group decided to change the date of the retreat to Wednesday, June 24 at Martha's office (address and parking information will be forthcoming) at 9:30 a.m. Nancy will release the reservation on the Norm Rice Room. Michael handed out an outline of possible structure for the retreat. He promises a timed agenda will be available in advance of the meeting. He expressed his hope that they work on fewer items, and do those well. Because the retreat is short, they will do as much work as possible in advance – reviewing legislation and past work plans. Perhaps the resulting work plan should be presented to the Public Safety committee.

The group adjourned at approximately 7:30 p.m.

Notes taken by Nancy Roberts

The next meeting will be held on May 6, 11:30 – 1:30 p.m. in the Boards & Commissions Room, City Hall.