



Office of Professional Accountability Review Board (OPARB)

**Minutes of Thursday, May 21, 2009 Meeting  
5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.**

Patrick Sainsbury, Chair:	P	Steve Freng, Member:	P
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): Jamila Taylor, Central Area Outreach Coordinator; Urban League of Seattle; Jerome Welch, Outreach Specialist; Kelly Jefferson, Kevin Strothers, and Carlos Garza, Outreach Team Members; and Ariam Fesaha, Intake Specialist, Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative (SYVPI)

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The meeting was convened at 5:33 p.m.

The minutes of the 3/4/09 and 5/6/09 meetings were approved as circulated.

Camille Monzon of Seattle Indian Center was unable to attend tonight's meeting.

**City Email Use** – A reminder to use only your city email account and not your personal account for OPARB business. If you have not been successful in logging in via the web, or need further assistance, please contact Nancy at 684-8146.

**OPA System Brochure** – No updates; the brochure is being finalized.

**Jamila Taylor and her group from the Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative (SYVPI)** attended the meeting to discuss their youth outreach program. Their outreach includes ongoing engagement with youth (11 – 17 years old) in the community, as well as responding to critical incidents. The team members reflect the diversity of the community they serve, and are trained in youth development issues. They also engage adults from the community as outreach workers in an effort to further link the youth back into community programs that may help them. They are one of three teams assigned by area and are assigned to the Central Area.

Their Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) is called by an SPD liaison (through DOC) when there is an incident involving youth, such as a shooting. The CIRT attempts to de-escalate the situation in order to prevent retaliation. The team may go to the hospital to support the victim's family, provide grief counseling, or provide counseling to peers of the victim as well. This is a new program, and they are currently soliciting various services to be involved in the program, even as they implement other aspects of their program. Ultimately they're trying to gain and provide understanding of conflicts in general. Some conflicts are found to be ongoing from generation to generation.

Their program is new, but the police in general do not appear to believe in it. Chief Diaz, however, is knowledgeable about their program and endorses it.

Their work is separate from SPD, but they are necessarily linked in some ways; a tenuous relationship. What can police do to help them in their work? They can provide more outreach on their own part, not just incident response. The better approach is to build relationships, to be



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proactive at building bridges. They mentioned successful programs from other cities where police officers hand out socks or toothbrushes as a first step in building relationships. This would allow the youth to see the police in a supportive role and not just solely as enforcers. Their clientele often perceives SPD as another type of gang – they close ranks, protect their own, and intimidate others through force and coercion.

There was a discussion of the new School Emphasis Officer (SEO) program, which places an officer in each of five Seattle middle schools. SYVPI plans to reach out to them and build relationships. This group hopes the SEOs will be seen as mentors and will not be involved in any arrests, which would undermine any trust they may have built with the children. SYVPI is working with Director Hayes to establish policy that the SEOs not participate in arrests.

The SEO program could work well or not so well. On the one hand, any child who spends too much time with the SEO may be targeted by gangs as being too close to the police. It works best if the SEOs work with groups and not too closely with any one individual. The SEOs have had some successes. Another recommendation SYVPI is making is that the officers not be clothed in all-black, which is intimidating and evokes the “gang unit” image.

The gangs today appear to be more reckless than in the past, that is, their crimes are more reckless and opportunistic than they are organized. The crimes are minor thefts, residential burglaries, “jacking” people on the street or on the bus. Recently there has been some promoting prostitution. The group also voiced the idea that the gangs today had parents and relatives who grew up in gangs.

The relationship between youth and police is delicate. Officers appear to be a gang unto themselves, and seem dehumanized. Kids are harassed by officers and feel like prey. They have the attitude “why would I help the people who harass me?” Outreach members told of police herding kids like cows with their cars, and then sitting in their cars, watching, intimidating kids who are doing nothing wrong. One officer harasses the same kids daily. They cited a police “rule” that if two kids are wearing the same gang color that gives police reason to detain and search the kids. They mentioned some kids who jaywalked on their way to a program and that an officer drew his weapon and chased one kid to a community center where he fled for witnesses and sanctuary.

The kids fear retaliation if they report the harassment, and are concerned that they wouldn't be believed because it would be kid vs. cop, a notion furthered by some officers. There was a discussion that if there were video and audio recording of interactions between kids and police, the whole subjective aspect would be removed, confrontations would not be as subject to dispute, and the truth could start to emerge. It was mentioned that OPA uses in-car video in investigating complaints. OPARB members encouraged the group to help their clients overcome their fear of reporting, and assured them that OPA will accept anonymous complaints. Nancy will forward the OPA reporting link to Jamila. This is a good place to report positive interactions as well.

The group expressed the wish that officers receive cultural competency training, training in socioeconomic issues, street life, and how to build bridges with individuals in the community.

How can OPARB reach out to the community? Choose a community (south and southeast areas were mentioned), choose a community center, put together a forum and panel, and invite



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the community. DO NOT invite SPD to the initial community meeting. That would be counterproductive. Be sure to have a follow-up meeting, to which SPD may be invited (but not in full uniform or black gang unit garb).

Adrian Diaz's program in SW Seattle and South Park was noted for positive interactions and efficacy, a program they'd like to see expanded.

The group left with the following suggestions for youth outreach programs to contact for additional information: Seattle Young People's Project, <http://www.sypp.org/> Youth 180, The Service Board, <http://www.theserviceboard.org/> Umjoa PEACE Center <http://umojafestpeacecenter.ning.com/>, FOCUS, and the Rainier Beach, SW, and Garfield Community Centers.

Several members reported on OPARB's attendance at the **Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness** meeting today. There was some good interaction with attendees, but there was a large concern about OPA/OPARB dominating the conversation and being defensive. The focus should remain on listening and gathering information.

Concerns were expressed by several members about being seen as being too closely allied with OPA, which they feel undermines OPARB's credibility.

**Retreat Planning** – There are three major focuses for the retreat:

- What is your work plan?
  - Please start doing work on this issue in advance by sending Michael the top three issues you feel should drive the Board's work this year)
- What is OPARB's role?
- What methodologies will you use to accomplish your goals?

Pat reminded the Board members about the Wales Foundation/Seattle City Council-sponsored symposium on June 2 in the Bertha Knight Landes room at 7:00 pm. This event seeks to engage the public in discussing the problem of gang violence. It is the first of five events.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:36 p.m.

Notes taken by Nancy Roberts

The next meeting will be held on June 3, 11:30 – 1:30 p.m. in the Boards & Commissions Room, City Hall.