

OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW BOARD

Semi-Annual Report June 30, 2003

I. INTRODUCTION

The Office of Professional Accountability Review Board (OPARB or the Board) presents its first semi-annual report, in accordance with an amendment to the Seattle Municipal Code changing the frequency of the Board's reports from a quarterly to semi-annual basis.

The Board's establishing mandate, per City of Seattle Ordinance # 120728, has two all-encompassing goals:

- “ to establish independent review of the Office of Professional Accountability (OPA) complaint handling process in a manner that will have the confidence of the general public, police officers, and complainants”; and
- “ to enhance the credibility of the Office of Professional Accountability and the OPA investigation process.”

This report is a comprehensive reflection of work that began in May 2002. The Board has published two prior reports that further detail our work, strategies and goals. See OPARB First Quarterly Report, dated September 30, 2002 and OPARB Second Quarterly Report, dated January 2003.

This report focuses on our central role: to independently review the complaint handling process of the OPA. Much of our work in the last seven months has concentrated on a Strategic Plan that will enable the Board to accomplish its mission under the ordinance in a manner that is accountable to City Council as well as the general public and law enforcement.

II. STRATEGIC PLAN

OPARB's Strategic Plan for 2003 – 2005 (see attachment A) is an accountability tool that will assist the Board in remaining focused around our central mandates. It provides goals as well as planned actions to achieve these goals. For the purposes of this report, we identify the goals and sub-topics. The complete Strategic Plan is posted on our website, and we attach from our Strategic Plan a copy to this report as well.

OPARB's goals are as follows:

- 1) Design and implement an ongoing evaluation process to monitor and report on the Office of Professional Accountability (OPA) system, measuring the overall effectiveness and coordination of operational

procedures among the OPA Director, OPA Auditor and OPA Review Board.

- 2) Increase general awareness of, and confidence in, the OPA complaint and commendation system.
- 3) Foster better communications between civilians and police on emerging issues, including, but without limitation:
 - Use of Force
 - Racial Profiling
 - Community perception vs. police actions
 - Minority community issues.
- 4) Make informed recommendations to the city to enhance public accountability of the Seattle Police Department, addressing such topics as:
 - Training
 - Use of Force
 - Civility (e.g., use of officer name tags)
 - Early intervention system
- 5) Evaluate annually the Board's own performance in light of the above measurable goals and objectives.

III. MONITORING OPA PROCESSES

OPARB remains dedicated to understanding the system for reviewing citizen complaints. Our goal is to develop an oversight program that is straight forward yet capable of examining a system with many variables, so as to create reports that pinpoint both successes and weaknesses.

a. Closed Case Review

The Board has reviewed requested closed and redacted cases this period. This effort has enabled us to create a truly random system for requesting future cases for review. In accordance with our Strategic Plan, we will continue to refine our review process in accordance with our mandate.

b. Review of the Complaint Classification System

OPARB continues to hold regular meetings with the OPA Director and Deputy Director. Our intent is to fully explore the complaint system and the logic behind complaint classifications.

c. Review of Roles and Functions of the OPA Director, the OPA Auditor and Internal Investigations Section Staff

There is a new Auditor for the City of Seattle. The Board reached out to her and is committed to establishing a regular communications link with the Auditor to better coordinate our duties among the Auditor, the Director and the Board.

IV. CONTINUING COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Local Community

OPARB's Strategic Plan requires it to actively engage the community. We are attempting to foster better communications between civilians and the police. We are also attempting to increase general awareness of and confidence in the OPA complaint and commendation system. We aim for open and honest dialogue to enhance police/community relations.

The Board is currently exploring the best format to sponsor a community meeting in the fall, to receive input from, and provide information to, the public at large.

City

The Board continues to meet regularly with the members of City Council to give updates on our work. We have also begun to meet with members of the Mayor's Office to coordinate the City's police accountability initiatives.

Police

OPARB continues its efforts to understand law enforcement operations and tactics. We are continuing our police ride-alongs and have made several presentations at precinct roll calls. In addition, we have received training in Use of Force. One of our members recently completed the Citizen's Police Academy.

National Outreach

The Board continues its association with the National Association for Citizen Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE). We intend to attend this year's NACOLE conference in Los Angeles (September 21 – 24, 2003), to gain further insight into the different police accountability systems used around the country.

V. SPECIAL PROJECT: USE OF FORCE

Working with special consultant, Michael Pendleton, we have begun a comprehensive exploration of law enforcement's inherently coercive underpinnings by studying the use of force within the SPD. A discussion paper on this subject will be presented to OPARB by Dr. Pendleton in the near future. Meanwhile, we attach Dr. Pendleton's initial discussion paper, which we had developed in an effort to take advantage of available scholarly research on the subject while focusing on application uses unique to Seattle (see attachment B).

John C. Ross, Chair
Peter S. Holmes, Member
Lynne B. Iglitzin, Member