

POLICE CITIZEN REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE

**February 12, 2020
Portland High School Library**

Members present: Mike Harris, Chair; Emily West; Maria Testa; Luke Beland; Kaylin Kerina; Reggie Parson

Staff present: Lt. Cliff Strout; Anne Torregrossa

6:00 Call to order.

Chair Harris gave a brief overview of the goals of the Subcommittee meeting in alternative public spaces.

Subcommittee members, staff, and members of the public gave brief introductions.

Ms. Testa gave an overview of the PCRS mission; the process of getting on a City committee; and the conduct of the meeting, including a public portion and executive session portion. Ms. Testa gave a summary of the type of information that the PCRS reviews and the evaluations that the Subcommittee undertakes for each investigation. The PCRS submits a report to the City Manager making suggestions to increase confidence in the complaint process, and holds at least one public meeting to gather public input on that process.

Ms. West gave an overview of the police complaint/feedback form and passed out a sample form. Ms. West also discussed the limitations of the Subcommittee's authority. The complaint process proceeds through the Police Department's Internal Affairs division and Ms. West described that process and the chain of command review process. She outlined the different types of results from an investigation, including whether the allegations are sustained, exonerated, etc. and whether and what discipline is appropriate. Once a decision is final, the PCRS reviews the entire IA file.

Ms. Testa discussed some of the misconceptions about the work of the PCRS, including that the Subcommittee does not meet with complainants. Chair Harris clarified that complainants do get a letter after the conclusion of the PCRS's work on a case.

Chair Harris gave an overview of the number of cases the Subcommittee handles each year. He also shared that other cities have police oversight committees, but Portland is one of the smallest cities with such a committee.

Mr. Parson explained that even though the PCRS does not have the ability to intervene in the disciplinary process, he did think there was value in having a public forum for citizens to voice concerns.

Mr. Beland shared that he thinks that there is value in the Police Department knowing that there is oversight, and that the PCRS provides a check on the IA process.

Ms. Testa explained that she thinks that even though Portland is a smaller city, it plays a key role in the state as the largest city and serves a function within the state similar to many larger cities.

Public comment offered that many people outside of Portland view Portland as a major city.

Lt. Strout shared that it is rare for a police department of Portland's size to have a dedicated IA division. He also shared that two-thirds of the complaints that IA investigates are generated internally.

Mr. Beland emphasized that IA also investigates internal allegations of misconduct, but the PCRS only reviews those generated from the public.

Chair Harris opened the floor up to public questions and comment:

- After public questions, members of the Subcommittee clarified that the PCRS serves an audit function, rather than direct investigation.
- A member of the public shared that, as someone who spends a significant amount of time near Preble Street Resource Center and sees many interactions with the police, he finds almost all of them to be professional.
- A member of the public asked whether the Subcommittee had a focus on particular areas of policing. Chair Harris explained that the PCRS reviews cases where someone has a complaint against the Police Department. Lt. Strout explained that they investigate complaints about police conduct that potentially violates policies, rules, and/or laws. Chair Harris described some of the types of complaints that the Subcommittee reviewed. Ms. Testa further outlined the types of complaints, including lack of respect or poor treatment.
- Members of the public shared that culture can create a barrier to clear interactions between the police and the public. The suggestion was to help the police break down that barrier so that people can see the police as a resource for help and not harm.
- A member of the public also shared that the police brutality issues across the country damages the trust in the police, particularly for immigrants with culture and language differences. A lady on Bishop Street may be a good resource to try to start a program to introduce immigrants to police officers to break down stereotypes. The language barrier is significant.
- A member of the public talked about a concern with the shelter and housing situation where the police were involved. He had concerns about a search of his property. Many immigrants cannot recover from negative interactions with the police. Despite his negative interactions he now has many police that are friends. He also emphasized the language and cultural

barrier. Many immigrants and immigrant children are living in fear and feel inferior. The immigrant community must also engage in the community and become police officers to help bridge that gap. Ms. Testa shared her experiences with children who regularly link racism with policing and there is significant fear. Public comment clarified that the City of Portland is more progressive but outside of Portland is much worse. However, trust between groups takes time.

Chair Harris asked how the PCRS could better get themselves out into the public:

- Direct contact from Subcommittee members was effective.
- Public comment suggested reaching out to other communities to let them know that the PCRS exists and what its role is. Chair Harris shared that is the goal of holding meetings in the schools instead of just in City Hall. A suggestion was to hold meetings in churches and religious centers because they are a place for immigrants to congregate.
- Homeless Voices for Justice goes to religious centers to encourage advocacy.

Additional public comment:

- There are places to reach immigrants, and Chief Craig used to understand how to reach those populations. Then they brought the police to those places to engage in conversations, including Kennedy Park, which helped to reduce problems in those areas.
- A question was posed whether the Subcommittee covered only Portland and it was clarified that it was only for Portland and Portland officers.
- Public comment shared that helping people understand was important to trust.

Ms. Kerina asked about whether the pamphlet and compliant form are in alternative languages. Lt. Strout explained the complaint form is only available in English but people can fill it out in any language. PD is also sure to get interpretation services when needed. Ms. Kerina suggested reviewing what languages the pamphlet and complaint form should be in.

- A member of the public shared that lack of translation services could also create a barrier to attendance and participation.
- Another member shared that there could be similar barriers to participation by homeless individuals.

Chair Harris stated that the next meeting will be on March 11, 2020 at 6:00 in Room 24 in City Hall.

7:32

Motion to adjourn. Seconded. Passed 6-0.