

Citizen Review Committee ♦ Community Forum on Police Accountability
January 26, 2012 ♦ East Portland Community Center

Committee members present: Jamie Troy (chair), Michael Bigham, Loren Eriksson, Hank Miggins, Dr. Rochelle Silver, Steve Yarosh

Independent Police Review staff present: Mary-Beth Baptista, Director; Irene Konev, Community Outreach Coordinator

Community members present: Approximately 33

Facilitators: Teri Pierson, Cassaundra Adams-Murphy, and volunteers, Resolutions Northwest

Acronyms used below:

CRC	Citizen Review Committee
IPR	Independent Police Review

Purpose: The purpose of this forum was for CRC members to hear public input regarding Portland Police accountability.

Note: All notes below reflect the input and perspectives of participants. This summary is not intended to imply agreement or disagreement with any perspective. Also note that other participants were welcomed to show agreement by waving their hands, and CRC members were asked to “listen with their eyes” to note comments that resonated with others beyond the speaker.

Contents of summary:

1. Themes from community input
 2. Notes from individual speakers during public comment
 3. Responses by CRC members
 4. Written input received during the forum
-

1. Themes from community input

- Most of the participants who spoke addressed issues related to the Occupy movement, including Portland Police response to an event the previous evening. Key themes:
 - Loss of trust in police for many participants based on recent experiences
 - Civil rights, right to protest, police used to silence dissent
 - Escalation rather than de-escalation
 - Use of force on unarmed, non-violent protesters, including 15-year-old boy
 - Instructions / demands to move without space to comply, created escalation and injury
 - Concern for welfare of animals (e.g. horses)
 - Fear of animals (e.g. horses) used against people
 - Use of bicycles by officers as weapons, shields, crowd control
 - Use of police resources out of proportion to the level of criminal activity at Occupy events – and not responsive to criminal activity reported by Occupy members
 - Difficulty of identifying individual officers, compounded by incidents of officers obscuring their badges, using horses to shield their activities from witnesses
 - Request for CRC members to review recent City Council testimony (note: Mary-Beth Baptista shared that IPR staff have been reviewing that testimony)
- A few participants spoke about other issues, including shootings by Portland Police and Portland Police response to community members with mental illness. Key themes:
 - Lack of coherence between Portland Police's declared intentions and their behavior / results
 - Police training on mental health issues and de-escalation not reflected in response to people with mental illness
 - Importance of funding and resources for people with mental illness
 - Shootings must stop
- Additional individual experiences and other issues were shared, including:
 - Lack of response by police, which damages trust
 - Lack of understanding of how veterans might respond differently to interactions with police

- Police should be held to a higher standard, as military service members are
 - CRC members and IPR staff strongly encourage people make reports to IPR.
 - Other avenues to affect change include lawsuits, lobbying City Council to increase role of CRC.
 - Having witnesses or video strengthen a report, though not necessary.
-

2. Notes from individual speakers during public comment

The following comments by community members were recorded by facilitators during the open comment session:

- We have these meetings – but we get nowhere unless police follow the rules – and stop shooting people, endangering people, endangering animals.
- Don't use horses against people.
 - The horses' legs are fragile.
 - They are scary for people.
- Too many officers sent to Occupy site.
- Occupy eviction inappropriate, cannot be justified based on allegations of increased criminal activity. Large police presence not justified.
- Occupy crime reports – Camping is not a felony.
- Abusive tactics.
- Last night – arrests for jaywalking.
- Abusive tactics at peaceful protest.
- Note Occupy participants' testimony to City Council.
- Lack of confidence in IPR process.
- City Council wasn't responsive.
- Police targeting perceived leaders of Occupy movement.
- No response to interest in clearing blackberries in neighborhood, so participant acted on his own. Used tool like a machete. Police responded.
 - Poor response to a veteran – police did not acknowledge that his reaction to them was a result of his past experience in the military.
 - Led to 6 months of problems.
- Police were at the Occupy camp, but they were not interested in reports of drug use. They said it was a boundary issue.

- Police officer / infiltrator acting as “religious fanatic” at Occupy event.
- Occupy eviction – fear of police action – police state – right to assemble violated.
- Portland Police working with Occupy protesters unprofessional. Not trained. Using emotions. Taunting.
- Last night, police breaking up march to silence dissent.
- Response to Occupy movement represents oppression of free speech. Weapons, horses, batons, spray – unarmed protestors, not violent.
- Police covered their badges.
- Officers responding to Occupy protests say they are “following orders.” Whose orders?
- Use of officers in riot gear escalates the situation.
- No accountability.
- Narrative about police response to Occupy movement is untrue. Not accurate to say that “police were restrained.” There were violations of human rights and violations of policy.
- IPR is not accountable.
- CRC should be able to hear complaints about shootings.
- Church gave award to police for non-violence.
- Not reconciled: Training in crisis intervention ← → Shoot first.
- No violence at Occupy events until police came.
- Police have an us-versus-them mentality.
- Get officers out of their cars, have them walk the beat to get to know people.
- Want steroid testing for officers.
- Last night, an officer hit a teenager for no reason at an Occupy event.
- There should be a Freedom of Information Act request to find out why police are monitoring social media.
- Corporations are controlling the earth.
- Illegal arrest for jaywalking.
- Liberal / progressive Portland shouldn’t have such police problems.
- Riot police caused violence and endangered people with trampling.
- Viewed as acceptable for police to intimidate.
- CRC needs more outreach.
- 18-month-old son was maced.
- Reported bullying / molestation of 11-year-old son, had to wait 4 hours for response, and no action → Lack of trust in police.
- Daughter kidnapped by ex-partner – police say they can’t do anything.
 - Children are not being protected.

- Has supported police in the past, but abuse experienced last night changed opinion. Police caused escalation, not de-escalation.
- Police pushing protesters when they had nowhere to go.
- Police used horses to block observers' view of how police were treating the people they had taken into custody.
- Not using the training they received regarding de-escalation and people with mental illness.
- Last night's police brutality included officers using their bicycles as weapons.
 - Friends got hurt.
 - Protesters cornered, targeted – not OK.
 - We do not trust police.
- Forcing people to move – nowhere to go.
- Officer slammed door of police car on woman who was partially in the car.
- No trust in the system.
- Officer Steinbrook (sp?) threw a woman to the ground.
- Concern about police using Facebook to track protesters – privacy issue.
- Violence by police will lead to violent response.
- Skeptical about City's complaint about the costs of police response to the Occupy movement, when police were not even responding to problems in the camp.
- Please ask these questions:
 - “What are the police doing?”
 - “Do they have a protocol?”
 - “Are police using protests to refine their tactics?”
- Trust by police will help us trust them.
- Actions by Portland Police are deliberate: Using aggressive officers.
- Need accountability at the top.
- Don't trust IPR: No firewall between IPR and police.
- Consistent escalation.
- Police tactics will not stop the Occupy movement.
- Mayor has made efforts to prevent marching.
- CRC should hold an additional meeting.
- Police dragged a sleeping protester from sleeping bag – not waiting for the person to wake up and be able to respond.
- Justin was assaulted while peaceful.
- Everyone should come to Occupy events and be a witness. Then they will also say “No.”
- Squash media – camera.

- I have realized tonight that the media coverage of the Occupy movement is misleading.
 - The Mayor should move money from the police to cover mental health services.
-

3. Comments by CRC members

The following are notes from the responses CRC members offered to the testimony they had just heard.

- Hear frustration and distrust.
 - The Portland Charter Review Commission has a committee to address police accountability.
 - Acknowledge concern about use of horses, bicycles.
 - CRC role is not to prosecute cases but to review complaints that have been filed with IPR.
 - Court cases are effective at making change.
 - It is sad to hear the lack of trust.
 - Witnesses and evidence are powerful supports for a complaint.
 - Pressure elected officials to expand the power of the CRC.
 - Comments by IPR:
 - If you have video, the source can be anonymous.
 - Need to use the system.
 - Liked the message, “We should love each other.”
 - CRC is pursuing the question about how to identify officers related to complaints.
 - CRC needs to hear community’s concerns. It does help to change policy.
 - Please file complaints. Officers should be disciplined.
 - Use of bicycles and horses are new issues we have not heard in previous forums.
 - IPR documents incidents and discipline.
-

4. Written input received during the forum

The following two comments were submitted:

1. We must trust you. Tell us how you think trust by the police can help us trust you.
2. Last night (1/25/12) I saw cops harass and intimidate a peaceful protest. Cops blocked the road with horses, motorcycles, and bikes with the intention of disrupting the march. Cops arrested individuals for minor traffic violations then blocked the road completely for 10-15 minutes. There is no reason for this other than to silence dissent. Unacceptable!

Facilitator's note: The second comment included personal contact information. IPR staff reports they have been in touch to encourage the person to begin the process for a formal complaint.