



The League of Women Voters of Portland

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Performance Review of the Independent Police Review Division March 19, 2008

The 2001 National Institute of Justice report, *Citizen Review of Police: Approaches and Implementation*, as referenced in Professor Luna-Firebaugh's *Performance Review of the Independent Police Review Division*, explains that civilian oversight benefits communities by providing a window into the police bureau; increasing public understanding of police policies, procedures, and behavior; discouraging misconduct through retraining and discipline; and improving police procedures by recommending policy changes. We are pleased to see council, with the mayor's leadership, considering improvements to the IPR that would move Portland closer to that ideal.

The recommendations outlined by the mayor at yesterday's work session offer an excellent starting point. Because the issues are so complex, we suggest appointing a stakeholder group with representatives from the public, CRC, IPR, and mayor's office to work out the details with council direction.

The League submitted a memo to council with a number of detailed recommendations, most of them taken directly from the performance review. We'd like to highlight a few of those today.

The CRC, in conjunction with the IPR director and the public, should develop criteria spelling out the types of cases that should be investigated routinely by IPR. The report provides examples of types of cases, such as illegal searches and serious bodily harm. This does not mean the CRC would be deciding which individual cases receive investigations independent of the police bureau, but that it sets the criteria determining which categories of cases are subject to them.

The performance review envisions a much more active CRC. In order to manage the workload and enhance effectiveness, we suggest increasing the size of the board to 11 or 13 members, lengthening terms to three years, and dedicating a staff member to support its work. To create a more direct connection between city council and the CRC, each council member should be responsible for appointing one CRC member. We were pleased to hear yesterday that the mayor plans to have staff presence at future CRC meetings.

The IPR has adopted a number of outreach strategies, but had limited success. The public needs to be made aware the system exists and how it works. Hiring a staff person to develop and distribute informational material, schedule presentations to community groups, and facilitate public interaction with CRC members would be a good start. It is especially important for CRC to meet with people who have a high frequency of police contact. Planning Commission and PDC meetings are broadcast on Channel 30; it's time to add CRC to the program schedule.

"To promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government."

We were pleased to hear yesterday that the mayor wants to find a way to give complainants whose cases are declined or classified as service complaints an avenue for appeal. Early in the IPR's history these decisions could be appealed; it makes sense to find a way to give complainants some recourse when they feel a decision is unjustified.

There are a number of other policy issues that need consideration such as how to compel officer testimony in an independent investigation, the standard of review used in appeal hearings, the appropriate findings available in complaint cases, training for staff and CRC members, etc. League recommendations on these topics are included in our memo. Once again, a stakeholder group would be well suited to working out the details for council consideration.