



The League of Women Voters of Portland

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City Council Testimony June 23, 2010

Clarify composition of Police Review Board and applicability of code provisions (Previous Agenda 908; amend Code Section 3.20.140 and amend Ordinance No. 183657)

The League of Women Voters of Portland urges council to consult with the Citizen Review Committee (CRC) and the Police Oversight Stakeholder Committee before making any substantive changes to the make up of the new Police Review Board. We do not have any objection to the housekeeping portion of the ordinance that sunsets the existing review boards on September 1st. Altering the make up of the new Police Review Board in use of force cases, however, should not be done without soliciting the opinions of the CRC and Stakeholder Committee.

The Independent Police Review Division (IPR) is proposing that the involved officer's supervising commander be a voting member of the review board in use of force cases. The Police Assessment Resource Center (PARC), the agency contracted by the city to evaluate closed cases of shootings and deaths in custody, in its 2003 and 2006 reports specifically recommended that the supervising commander serve as a non-voting member of the board reviewing use of force cases. They point out that since that commander is the individual responsible for formulating the findings in the case, there is an inherent conflict of interest when the commanding supervisor is a voting member of the board.

In light of the conflict between the outside expert's recommendations and the IPR proposal, this issue deserves careful consideration by the CRC and the Stakeholder Committee. The CRC's PARC work group reviewed in detail many of the consultant's recommendations, but did not devote any attention to this one. In other words, it has not had the full public airing it deserves.

CRC members have extensive experience reviewing misconduct cases and three of them serve or have served on the existing review boards. Before making a decision on this proposal, IPR and City Council should seek their advice knowing it is based on firsthand experience. Further, council charged the Stakeholder Committee with reviewing the IPR ordinance and recommending additional changes. We urge you to respect the role of that committee and direct IPR to discuss the proposed changes with the committee before bringing them to City Council.