



The League of Women Voters of Portland

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DATE: October 1, 2018

TO: Honorable District Judge Michael Simon

FROM: Doreen Binder, President
Debbie Aiona and Carol Cushman, Action Committee

RE: Interim Status Conference: United States of America v. City of Portland Case No. 3:12-cv-02265-SI

The League of Women Voters of Portland has actively monitored the city's police bureau for years, with a focus on public participation, transparency, policy development, and accountability. We have mixed feelings about supporting the lifting of the court's conditional approval for Section IX of the Settlement Agreement. After reading the transcript from the April 19 hearing, it is our sense that the court expected that the Portland Committee on Community-Engaged Policing (PCCEP) would be up and running by now. The PCCEP has yet to hold its first public meeting. The city has, however, made significant improvements to the PCCEP Plan with community input and has devoted considerable effort to the recruitment and selection of committee members. It appears the city is on the right track, but until we have seen the committee in action, it is hard to know if final approval is merited at this time.

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The League has several items to highlight regarding the PCCEP Plan:

- The updated Plan places a greater emphasis on open public meetings. As an organization that values informed and active participation in government, the League believes this practice is an essential requirement for any public body. We understand that committees quite often prefer to conduct teambuilding and bonding sessions in private, but trainings on the history and content of the Settlement Agreement and the responsibilities of public officials should be open to the public. These provide valuable learning opportunities for community members and benefit the city in the long run by improving the quality of *informed* public participation in the future.
- The Plan does not describe designated committee member alternates. (See PCCEP Plan, Section VI, Removal.) Occasional resignations will occur and if alternates have been identified in advance, they can step in without the need for a new selection process.
- We commend the city for including interactions with the community in settings other than a traditional committee meeting, but encourage the PCCEP to hold regular full committee meetings where policy matters are discussed and deliberated and the public is invited to provide comment.

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

- Staff support for the PCCEP should enable the committee to more effectively carry out its duties. (See PCCEP Plan, Section VII, City Responsibilities) It is our expectation that the support includes staff drafting of reports with PCCEP direction and final approval.

The League is particularly supportive of the following provisions:

- PCCEP subcommittee meetings will be open to the public.
- Public comment will be taken before committee votes.
- PCCEP will meet with the police commissioner, chief, and other key officials at least twice a year.
- PCCEP recommendations will receive a city response within 60 days.
- The mayor's office will produce annual reports on PCCEP's work.
- PCCEP, with mayoral approval and council consultation, will have the authority to review and comment on Police Bureau directives outside the usual two-year cycle. This will give the committee the ability to respond to community concerns.

The monthly Public Safety meetings organized by the mayor's office have been extremely valuable both in terms of information and dialogue. The League encourages their continuation, perhaps on a less frequent basis once the PCCEP is meeting regularly.

Finally, at the April 19 Fairness Hearing, the question of internet access to all the information related to the Settlement Agreement was raised. The court indicated an expectation that the city or Compliance Officer/Community Liaison (COCL) would maintain a website where all the relevant information could be accessed by the public (See April 19 court transcript, p. 48). Our volunteers who worked on this memo can tell you from firsthand experience that we needed to visit several online locations to find the relevant documents. In our view, the Portland COCL website would be the ideal location for all the materials and we encourage more active and comprehensive management of that site.

Thank you for considering the community's perspective as you deliberate on the next steps in this process.