

City of Albany Citizen's Police Review Board

Minutes of Meeting 11/30/2000

Albany Public Library

Present: Rev. Kenneth Cox, Morris Eson, Marilyn Hammond, Judith Mazza, Herman Thomas, Eleanor Thompson, Paul Weafer, Michael Whiteman and Manuel Alguero.

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. with eight of the nine Board members present.

Patricia Salkin of the Government Law Center introduced herself and asked the Board members to introduce themselves. Ms. Salkin announced that pursuant to the law creating the Board, all members had completed the mandatory orientation program and thus were voting members of the Board. In the absence of a Chair, Ms. Salkin distributed a proposed agenda for the meeting based upon comments and suggestions received from some Board members in advance of the meeting.

Michael Whiteman commented that he liked the agenda and that he thought permanent officers should not be elected until Board members got to know each other better. Judith Mazza agreed. Ms. Mazza moved to accept the proposed agenda. The motion was seconded by Paul Weafer. The motion was approved by all present.

A discussion regarding the election of a temporary chair followed. Mr. Whiteman nominated Rev. Kenneth Cox for the position of temporary chair. Eleanor Thompson seconded the nomination. Mr. Weafer nominated Michael Whiteman for temporary chair. Marilyn Hammond seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. Six members voted for Rev. Cox and two members voted for Mr. Whiteman. Rev. Cox was elected as temporary chair.

Ms. Mazza moved that Michael Whiteman be nominated as secretary. Rev. Cox seconded the motion. There were no other nominations. A vote was taken and all approved the election of Michael Whiteman as temporary Secretary.

Rev. Cox chaired the meeting and suggested that the Board consider organizational items.

Morris Eson distributed a suggested organizational structure. Considerable discussion followed including questions regarding the role of each of the tasks listed. Mr. Weafer suggested that the co-chair designation be a vice chair instead.

Mr. Whiteman suggested that it would be helpful if Ms. Hammond agreed to assist with the development of by-laws. Mr. Weafer echoed this, and Ms. Hammond agreed. Ms. Mazza suggested that Herman Thomas serve as liaison to the Common Council and to the Mayor.

Mr. Thomas had no objection. Discussion ensued about the length of the appointments/assignments. It was agreed to use this perhaps for the next couple of meetings until the by-laws are in place.

Mr. Weafer moved to accept the assignments suggested by Mr. Eson subject to the discussed amendments. Rev. Cox seconded. All approved the following:

Chair - Rev. Kenneth Cox
Vice Chair - Herman Thomas
Secretary - Michael Whiteman
By-Laws - Paul Weafer, Michael Whiteman, Marilyn Hammond
Complaint Processing - Manuel Alguero, Morris Eson, Eleanor Thompson
Spokesperson w/ Media - Judith Mazza
Liaison w/ Police - Marilyn Hammond
Liaison w/Mayor and Common Council - Herman Thomas

Rev. Cox suggested that the Board discuss the issue of by-laws. He inquired whether Board members had experience in drafting by-laws. Rev. Cox asked Ms. Salkin about by-laws from other review boards. She explained that the Government Law Center had prepared and distributed sample by-laws from eight other review boards across the country as well as rules and regulations from eleven other city review boards.

Ms. Hammond asked if the GLC would get by-laws from the former Community Police Relations Board. Ms. Salkin said yes.

Mr. Weafer moved that he, Mr. Whiteman and Ms. Hammond work on draft by-laws for the next meeting. Rev. Cox seconded the motion. All approved.

Rev. Cox asked the Board about scheduling their next meeting. Mr. Weafer asked Mr. Whiteman how long it would take to draft by-laws. Mr. Whiteman thought perhaps two weeks. Mr. Weafer pointed out that the Common Council had to approve the by-laws. Mr. Eson suggested that the by-laws committee work on a draft and distribute the draft in about two weeks.

Mr. Eson moved that the next CPRB meeting take place on December 14th from 7pm to 9pm. Rev. Cox seconded the motion. Mr. Weafer expressed a question about meeting at the library, however he agreed that if the library is available for the next meeting it would be fine. All approved the meeting date and time. The Government Law Center will notify the Board of the meeting location.

Rev. Cox brought up the need to schedule training for the Citizens Police Academy. Detective Anthony Bruno from the Office of Professional Standards proposed four possible dates in December. Considerable discussion ensued about whether all Board members needed to go at the same time, the length of time necessary to complete the program, and the difficulty of coordinating schedules. Board members agreed to start on December

11th. The Government Law Center will communicate location information to the Board. The Government Law Center will also send out a calendar for Board members to note availability for future Police Training Academy sessions.

Mr. Whiteman asked whether the Board should have members working a review of the complaint form and the in-take procedure. Rev. Cox suggested that Mr. Eson and Mr. Alguero do this. Mr. Whiteman agreed and Ms. Mazza suggested that Ms. Thompson assist in this task as well. Ms. Salkin handed out binders to Board members with sample complaint forms from other review boards.

Mr. Weafer asked Mr. Whiteman whether he wanted to raise any other issues. Mr. Whiteman asked Rev. Cox whether he wanted to discuss operations matters including how the Board will function as a group. Rev. Cox expressed that all Board members should respect one another at all times, even though they may disagree at times.

Ms. Mazza stated that there should be time set aside at each meeting for statements of comments from the public. She was uncertain as to whether this was a matter for by-laws. The length of the meeting was discussed, and it was noted that if meetings went beyond 9pm the library could not be used. Discussion ensued about the placement of the public comment period, and there was consensus that it will occur at the start of the meeting, but the by-laws committee should determine whether this is a by-laws matter.

Mr. Whiteman raised the issue of community outreach. Rev. Cox said it was important to be proactive with the community and that he would work with Ms. Mazza on that. Ms. Mazza said it could be an opportunity for public input, and that outreach was an ongoing process. There was discussion about developing a public education plan, and reaching consensus about what individual Board members would be expected to say when participating in the outreach. Mr. Weafer reminded the Board that they need to outreach to the police officers as well. Ms. Hammond said that the former Board used to do this. Mr. Weafer suggested that Board members consider ride-a-longs shift changes and other opportunities to observe policing and police work.

Mr. Whiteman suggested that at some point the Board might consider exploring their role, if any, in critical incidents. He questioned whether the Board had a role in intra-departmental complaints. He also raised the question of situations where there may be no formal complaint filed, yet the community may have expressed concern about an incident. Discussion took place on the appropriate level of outreach and assistance the Board should recommend or participate in with respect to assisting people in the complaint process. It was suggested that consideration be given to an assistance or support program for citizens who may need assistance in the filing of complaints. Board members also discussed the need to identify places where the forms could be available in the community as well as where they ought to be filed. Mr. Weafer suggested that the complaint form needs to be amended to reflect the fact that there is a review board in place, and suggested that the Board work with the Corporation Counsel's Office and with the Police Department on recommended changes.

Rev. Cox thanked Mr. Whiteman for all of his efforts in bringing these issues to the Board's attention.

Mr. Weafer asked Ms. Salkin about the status of the Government Law Center's efforts to establish the mediation program and to develop the list of investigators. Ms. Salkin responded that the first list of mediators is being readied for the Mayor and the Common Council. She reported that a press release was sent out regarding the need to identify qualified and interested investigators. Mr. Weafer asked if the mediators and investigators would be in place for January. Ms. Salkin responded that the Government Law Center would do its best.

Mr. Whiteman asked if there could be public comment time at this time. Rev. Cox agreed it was a good idea. Rev. Cox asked if any member of the public wanted to make a statement. One woman present said she was glad to see the Board functioning and she suggested that the Board look into how the police question their officers who are subject of a citizen complaint. Specifically, she asked whether the officers were questioned in-person, face-to-face as opposed to through a departmental memo. Rev. Joyce Hartwell said that on the subject of police sensitivity, the sooner the Board goes through the Police Academy, the better. Rev. Cox asked Detective Bruno whether he wished to say anything. He replied that the Office of Professional Standards was ready to work with the Board's liaison, assist with the forms and training, and anything else that could assist the Board. Rev. Cox invited other public comment. Hearing none, Mr. Weafer moved to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Ms. Mazza. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Whiteman
Temporary Secretary