

City of Albany Citizen's Police Review Board

Minutes of Meeting 2/14/2001
Community Room
200 Henry Johnson Boulevard

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm by Vice-Chairman Herman Thomas.

Vice Chairman Thomas reviewed the proposed meeting agenda. Manuel Alguero moved to accept the agenda; the motion was seconded by Judith Mazza. Michael Whiteman pointed out that under the heading of "old business" the Board needs to approve the minutes of the 1/11/01 meeting, as well as the draft first quarter report. Morris Eson added that the Board also needs to approve the revised complaint form. Chairman Cox then called for a vote on the agenda. All approved.

Chairman Cox moved to approve the minutes of the meeting on 1/11/01. Herman Thomas seconded the motion. All approved.

Michael Whiteman moved to approve the draft quarterly report prepared by the Government Law Center. Manuel Alguero seconded the motion. All approved.

Patty Salkin asked the Board for guidance on distribution of the First Quarterly Report. The sense of the Board was that the document should be widely distributed to the media and to the community.

Paul Weafer commented that it was disheartening that the media is not showing up on a regular basis to Board meetings. Eleanor Thompson remarked that perhaps the public knows that the Board is busy working on organizational matters. Chairman Cox noted that the Public Outreach Committee is working on this issue. Paul Weafer said that he hoped the draft by-laws would be reported by the media. Patty Salkin indicated that the Government Law Center would send out a press release announcing the availability of the document.

Manuel Alguero moved to approve the minutes of the 1/31/01 meeting. Paul Weafer seconded the motion and all approved.

Discussion turned to the revised draft complaint form. Michael Whiteman noted that two forms had been circulated to Board members, and that the primary difference between the two was that one had space for optional demographic information on the top and the other form requested the information at the bottom. He indicated he preferred the form with the request for information at the top. Judith Mazza agreed with this. Morris Eson also concurred, adding that it is better to request the information as complainants start the

process of completing the form. Morris Eson moved that the revised form be approved, subject to the translation of the form in Spanish on the other side of the form. Judith Mazza seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of seven members, with one dissent.

Morris Eson reviewed the revised cover letter to accompany the form. He reported that there is space on the form to list the organizations that respond affirmatively to the letters sent to approximately 16 community organizations who may make copies of the form available and who may provide assistance in completing the form. He announced that four organizations have responded so far. He asked how long the Board should wait for responses. Manuel Alguero suggested that follow-up calls be made. Michael Whiteman suggested that the cover letter not contain the list of organizations, but rather that the form reference a separate list of organizations that could be updated as needed. Morris Eson noted that the cover letter would have to be changed to accommodate that. Paul Weafer noted that there is still time to receive responses from these organizations since the by-laws have to go through the formal adoption process. Judith Mazza said it was okay to make follow-up calls, but that some of these organizations may be waiting for board meetings to discuss what they may be able to do. Patty Salkin asked Morris to send her an electronic copy of the cover letter.

Chairman Cox moved approval of the cover letter subject to the change previously discussed. Judith Mazza seconded the motion. All approved.

Chairman Cox reported on the Board's training mandate. He announced that the final four hours of classroom instruction for the Citizens' Police Training Academy will be held on February 22, 2001 at 5:30pm. He urged Board members to continue to make arrangements for ride-alongs.

Chairman Cox commended the By-Laws Committee for all of their hard work and for a job well done. Michael Whiteman thanked Chairman Cox, Judith Mazza and Morris Eson for their comments on the earlier draft. Michael Whiteman reported that essentially, the changes made in the draft dated February 12, 2001 were done to simplify the document, make it shorter and to remove language that could be viewed as editorial comment. He offered to share a red-lined version of the document comparing the old and new versions. Paul Weafer agreed with the changes that were made. He offered minor comments including adding an "a" on page 8, changing the word "discussion" to "comment" on page 13, on page 29 clarifying that it is the committee on by-laws and adding the word "such" on page 30.

Michael Whiteman moved that the draft by-laws, as amended, be approved for public comment. Judith Mazza seconded the motion. Paul Weafer asked for clarification on where the draft by-laws would be sent. It was the sense of the Board that copies of the minutes should be sent to the City Administration, the Common Council, the Chief of Police, the Police Union, all interested community groups and individuals that have been identified to date as well as to the press. The motion was adopted unanimously.

Under new business the Board discussed the next meeting where the public hearing on the draft by-laws would occur. The meeting has been scheduled for Monday, March 5, 2001 at the Albany Public Library. It was reported that the Common Council meets at that time. Discussion ensued about whether to change the meeting date, location and/or time. Common Council member Richard Conti suggested that the Board consider meeting at 7:30pm instead of 7:00pm, which change could enable interested Council members to attend both meetings. Paul Weafer asked whether it was possible for the library to stay open until 9:30pm if needed. Joseph Granich from the Corporation Counsel's Office agreed to check. The Board agreed that the meeting would start at 7:30pm.

Patty Salkin asked the Board whether they wanted to put time limits on public comment, and whether the Board wanted to use any sign-up procedures. Chairman Cox said yes to both aspects of the inquiry. Judith Mazza suggested a five minute limit per person, and that if time permitted people might be offered additional time. Morris Eson asked when the Board would convene to deliberate on the public comment. It was agreed that the Board would convene a formal meeting on March 5, 2001, as doing such would allow for the option of considering comments at that time. In the event that comments received require further consideration, the Board agreed to meet on March 8, 2001 at 7:30pm for this purpose. Joseph Granitch asked whether the Board would go into Executive Session to discuss potential by-laws revisions. Michael Whiteman responded that he foresaw no legal basis for an executive session for that purpose.

Chairman Cox opened the floor for public comment.

Richard Conti suggested that a place be established where written comments could be forwarded, as well as locations identified where people can obtain a copy of the by-laws.

Louise Robach commented that she thought after the last meeting that the public would have an opportunity to comment on the revised complaint form. Morris Eson said that was the Board's intention and that the form would be distributed with the draft by-laws for public comment. Patty Salkin asked whether the Board would like the cover letter to accompany the complaint form. The Board said yes. Judith noted that the public should be made aware that the form will be translated into Spanish.

Chairman Cox moved to adjourn the meeting. Herman Thomas seconded. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Whiteman
Interim Secretary