

INDEPENDENT REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

January 24, 2008

LOCATION: 140 West Flagler Street, Conference Room 908
Miami, Florida 33130

PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT

Julia Dawson, Esq., Chairperson
Jean-Robert Lafortune, 2nd Vice-Chairperson
Doris Shellow
Julia Ferguson, Esq.
Glenn Falk, Esq.
Moeiz Tapia, Ph.D.
Josie Perez Velis, Esq.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Jorge Reynardus, Esq.
Michael Band, Esq., 1st Vice-Chairperson

PANEL STAFF PRESENT

Eduardo I. Diaz, Ph.D., Executive Director
Carol Boersma, Executive Assistant to the Director
Kristin Anderson, Conflict Resolution Specialist
Anna Sidan, Conflict Resolution Specialist

AUDIENCE:

MDPD: Carlos Garcia, Police Major, Cutler Ridge District; Carlos Naranjo, Lieutenant, Cutler Ridge District; Veronica Ferguson, Major, Northside District; Raul J. Nunez, Lieutenant, Northside District

Community Advocacy: Dr. Larry Capp, Executive Director; Amy Carswell; Program Officer

Civilian Investigative Panel (CIP): Don March

General Public: Lamont Missick, Professor of English, St. Thomas University

Agenda Item #1) Call to Order. Julia Dawson called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. and asked staff to call roll.

Agenda Item #2) Approval and adoption of the minutes from December 20, 2007.

Dr. Tapia requested that staff indicate in the minutes, Panel Members who are present, absent, and excused. Julia Dawson stated that agenda item #2 on page 1, the second line, should read, "Doris Shellow moved to adopt....." In addition, the last sentence on last page should read, "The motion was passed unanimously," rather than "made unanimously." Dr. Tapia moved to adopt the minutes as amended. Ms. Shellow seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Agenda Item #3) Ratification of minutes from November 29, 2007.

Ms. Shellow commented that agenda item #7 on page 3, should read, "The motion was passed unanimously." Dr. Tapia moved that the minutes be ratified as amended. Ms. Shellow seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item #4) MDPD Presentation: How MDPD Implements Community Oriented Policing.

Major Garcia gave a brief description of community policing, which MDPD implements through Neighborhood Resource Units (NRU). Both the Cutler Ridge District and the Northside District have NRUs. The NRU focuses on the cause of crime, rather the results of crime. According to Major Garcia, NRUs accomplish their goals through four key community policing strategies. Those are as follows:

1. Crime Prevention and Citizen Involvement.
2. Orientation of Patrol Activities.
3. Increased Police Accountability.
4. Decentralization of Command.

The NRU consists of highly trained officers serving in a variety of specialized squads such as:

Team Police – The Team concept consists of a group of officers that are assigned to a specific community. They walk the streets and become familiar with the community and community leaders. Their responsibilities include: implementing pro-active crime prevention strategies such as high visibility, saturation patrol and conducting follow-up investigations on crimes committed within the community.

Community Service Officers - These officers maintain liaisons with other agencies to address a variety of concerns such as county ordinance violations, illegal dumping, trancies and homelessness.

Community Response Team (CRT) - Major Garcia commented Cutler Ridge uses the CRT. Cutler Ridge is the largest MDPD police district, encompassing 842 sq. miles. The Cutler Ridge Team has 1 lieutenant, 3 sergeants and 17 officers. Every month the general public is invited to attend a Citizen Advisory Committee meeting, where citizens can voice their concerns. These concerns are reported to the Community Response Team for action. CRT also deals with quality of life issues such as the homeless. Major Garcia reported that this team is a coordinated effort of local law enforcement, community leaders and social services. It is designed to help partner agencies and empower the citizens of troubled areas to stabilize and reclaim their community.

Community Empowerment Team (CET) – The CET differs from regular policing in that it has a fixed location for the team which is comprised of Social Services, Team Metro and MDPD. If a citizen has a multitude of problems, he/she can go to CET for assistance.

Mr. Lafortune reported that there have been several shootings in the North Dade area and those communities are begging for better community policing. Mr. Lafortune also stated that the community believes that, if there had been better community policing at the time of the shootings, lives may have been saved.

Major Garcia reported that the police department deploys its resources according to needs. The department does not have the resources to establish a community policing program in every community.

Dr. Diaz asked Major Ferguson what would be the ideal size of an NRU for her District. Major Ferguson responded that she would like to have community policing in the entire district. Unfortunately the department doesn't have sufficient resources.

Ms. Dawson asked that staff provide a list of the acronyms used by MDPD in its presentation, along with what the acronyms stand for.

Agenda Item # 4) Joint IRP and CRB Community Meeting. Dr. Diaz reported Independent Review Panel (IRP) members and the Community Relations Board (CRB) members represent the community, therefore they will be asked to respond to a survey that pertains to the kind of police they want for their community. This will provide a baseline. After the community meetings, IRP and CRB members will be asked to repeat the survey. The survey is done online through a site called “monkey survey.” Later a survey will be created for community members.

Dr. Diaz recommended that the first community meetings be held in the Northside District and the Cutler Ridge District, because the Majors from those two districts addressed the Panel today.

Dr. Capp invited the Panel members to attend the CRB’s next meeting on February 20, 2008, at 2:00 p.m., in the County Commission Chambers. Mr. Laroy, Federal Administrator for HUD, will be the guest speaker.

Ms. Dawson asked Ms. Boersma if she would send notification to the Panel Members. Dr. Capp asked Dr. Diaz to give a brief report about the IRP at this meeting. Dr. Diaz agreed to do so.

Agenda Item # 5) Discussion of IRP Subpoena Power. Dr. Diaz advised that Commissioner Jordan did not place an item about subpoena power for the IRP on the January agenda for the Public Safety Committee. Dr. Diaz stated that after he met with the Commissioner in December, Assistant County Attorney Ron Bernstein prepared a draft ordinance. Dr. Diaz reported that the current draft reflects language that would have a process similar to the City of Miami CIP. Ms. Dawson asked Panel staff to provide the Panel members with a copy of the CIP ordinance.

Dr. Capp stated that he met with Commissioner Jordan’s assistant, and the commissioner wants to move forward with the subpoena power issue as soon as possible.

Dr. Diaz advised that the record reflects that the Panel supported subpoena power in 2002. He recommended that the current Panel state whether or not it is in favor of subpoena power for the IRP. Dr. Tapia made a motion that the Panel supports the principle of subpoena power. Mr. Lafortune seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Agenda Item # 7) Executive Director’s Report Dr. Diaz reported that a study of the effects of tasers on humans was shared with the Public Safety Committee on January 17, 2008; however, it has not gone before the full Board of County Commissioners. He reported that Commissioner Moss wanted to have a community gathering in order to address the report.

Ms. Dawson asked that the letter sent to the Panel by Cathy Peel, Director of the Consumer Services Department, be placed on the next agenda. Ms. Peel made suggestions for Panel protocol in its public complaint review.

Agenda Item #8) Adjourn Dr. Tapia made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Perez Velis seconded. The motion passed unanimously.