

Law Enforcement Review Advisory Committee  
22 July 2008, noon  
Conference Room B, County Courthouse,

Attendance: Neal I. Sanders, Byrd Lochtie, Gary Philp, Christina Allbright, Larry Miller, Bonnie Neely, Garr Nielsen, Larry Glass, Rick Botzler

Neal called the meeting to order.

Rick gave a brief summary of the Committee goals, which he drew from the Purposes of the Program on the "First Draft Proposal." A major emphasis on the goals is developing greater confidence and trust between the general public and law enforcement personnel.

Neal asked for each member's expectations of the Committee.

Byrd emphasized the need for clear and good communication at all levels

Gary had presented a letter to Neal earlier summarizing a number of his views. Gary noted that a key issue would be selling the credibility of any new program to his staff. He expressed support for an Advisory Committee of open minded individuals and thought such a committee could be generally acceptable to his staff. He thought he could be OK with a qualified auditor reviewing the policies and procedures of the Sheriff's Department. He noted that the issue of cost is very important, and that his staff probably would prefer having extra funds spent for more staff or other critical needs that diverted to a law enforcement review committee. Responding to a query from Byrd, Gary thought he could work in concept with a two-component system if there were adequate funds available.

Christina liked the First Draft Proposal. She thought that cost-sharing among governmental bodies in the community could help address the concern with costs. She later added that additional funds could come as part of settlements of some court cases.

Larry M is favorable for more citizen involvement. He also noted that litigation costs can be many thousands of dollars for a community and part of the funds for a law enforcement review program could be justified by the savings resulting from reduced litigation.

Bonnie thought that the First Draft Proposal was a good document with which to start. She proposed that reference to an "advisory" committee was preferable to that of an "oversight" committee. There appeared to be general agreement to this idea and Byrd emphasized that communication and choice of words in matters like these were of considerable importance.

Garr said his views were similar to Gary's. Garr favors advisory groups but emphasized that he does not want outside groups usurping his management decisions, including his responsibility for any disciplining of his staff. He saw some value in the hybrid approach. Garr thought that having a professional auditor could provide greater credibility for the work of his Department and that it could be good to have periodic professional reviews of the department's policies and protocols. Both Garr and Gary affirmed the professional skills of Bob Aaronson as an auditor, and both said they would be comfortable working with an auditor having his professional caliber. Garr later estimated that fees for a community using a professional like Bob Aaronson could be in the neighborhood of \$50,000 to \$60,000 per year.

Larry G emphasized that buy-in by the law enforcement community is essential. He thought that an advisory committee alone or an auditor alone would likely not be successful, but that a hybrid combination could work.

Rick supported Larry's idea that support from the law enforcement community is essential, as is the public's sense of confidence that there also is independent accountability of law enforcement decisions and actions. Both the law enforcement community and the general public should see any resulting model as workable and helpful.

A more general discussion followed, covering a number of ideas. Some general ideas proposed for further discussion were that

a. the advisory committee could recommend to a governing body (e.g., City Council) that an auditor should review a controversial law enforcement action.

b. a recommendation by the advisory committee was not a mandate for action

c. an advisory committee must have members well educated in law enforcement issues

d. an auditor contracted to review specific law enforcement actions would review those actions and summarize the review with the chief officer of the law enforcement agency.

Constraints on how the findings are treated are important to consider. While the auditor would not report his/her findings to the general public or to the advisory committee, the auditor could report key findings to a closed session of the governing body for the law enforcement agency in question.

Neal reported that the Commission is hoping to make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors by October; the group decided to meet regularly.