

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

Attendance: Neal I. Sanders (chair), Byrd Lochtie, Larry Miller, Christina Allbright, Gary Philp, Garr Nielsen, Sheila Nitzel, Larry Glass, Rick Botzler

Neal called the meeting to order and Sheila was introduced to the group.

Larry M. contacted the Humboldt Area Foundation (HAF) for possible grants. The HAF Community Building Grant Program is a very close match to the goals of the committee. HAF offers grants of up to \$10,000; these have June 1 and December 1 deadlines. Larry proposed using HAF grants for 1 or 2 years to develop a community law enforcement model involving an auditor that could demonstrate the money saved by this technique and that could become attractive to other communities.

Garr contacted Bob Aaronson and received a copy of Bob's contract with the City of Davis (CA). Briefly Bob is contracted by the Davis City Council for \$5,000 per month (\$60,000/year) to work 23 to 28 hours per month; he is paid extra if his assigned time requires more than 28 hours per month. Garr thought such a program could be applicable to the City of Eureka. A key concern is to have someone with the credibility of Aaronson because both the police staff and the City Council must be confident in the auditor for such a program to be successful.

In response to the inquiry on how a program involving an auditor might apply to the Sheriff's office, Gary acknowledged that the unique County relationship between the Sheriff's Office and the Supervisors raised some complications. He has sent out some inquiries to a state-wide Sheriff's association to determine if any others have engaged in such a program and how it was operated.

The question of whom or what would trigger an auditor's evaluation of the Sheriff's Department is complicated, and was discussed. It was proposed that the Supervisors might recommend but could not direct an auditor to make an investigation. The role of the County Council also is complex since the County Council can support the Sheriff as a county employee, but would not do so if that support came in conflict with the Supervisors' positions. It was acknowledged that if the Board absorbed the costs for an auditor, they would have to be agreeable to requesting the auditor's involvement.

Byrd proposed establishing \$20,000 to \$30,000 fund to contract with an auditor to meet with the Sheriff's Office, and perhaps chiefs from some municipal departments, to review their respective current policies and practices.

Some benefits proposed for such an approach were that

1. it might facilitate local law enforcement staff gaining confidence in an auditor and the auditing process;
2. an auditor could gain direct information on the specific nature of this community, including variation among various law enforcement departments;
3. it could begin the process of educating a local citizen advisory committee; and
4. media coverage and news releases also could begin the process of educating the general public on such issues

Reservations for the process stemmed from possible redundancy with other groups.

1. The Risk Manager already evaluates the Sheriff's procedures and also provides recommendations when applicable laws are added or changed.
2. Likewise, some review of policies and procedures might be conducted by a local, informed citizen advisory committee.

Larry G thought that an auditor program such as the one being discussed could be adaptable for a city like Eureka.

Several noted that any program proposed should be useful for and applicable to the Sheriff's Department. Christina will check with Barbara Attard and NACOLE (National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement), and Neal will check with Bob Aaronson, to determine if other counties have established relationships with auditors and to determine their nature.

Garr agrees that an auditor system could work for municipalities like Eureka, but expressed concern about a county-wide citizen advisory committee because of the distinct differences between the communities and their law enforcement programs. A discussion of the nature and role of a citizen's advisory committee followed.

Several points were raised for discussion in response

1. A county-wide advisory committee can take a larger view of all law enforcement programs and make recommendations to specific departments, the County, or specific municipalities.
2. A county-wide committee can take complaints and collect county-wide data
3. On the citizen's advisory committee, there could be a specific liaison for each of the major law enforcement agencies in the county to facilitate closer relationships between the public and that agency. Such liaisons also would establish continuity for the work of an advisory committee over a period of time.
4. Some municipalities might be very resistant to recommendations to their city council or police chief if it came from a committee composed of members not associated with that city.
5. Alternatively, a citizen's advisory committee could be focused primarily on county concerns. However, as other municipalities saw information of value, they would be welcome to draw on it.

6. Individual municipalities might develop their own advisory committees that, in turn, could work with the county-level advisory committee.

Gary proposed that exploring the nature of the citizen advisory committee might be an important next step. Neal asked each committee member to be prepared to discuss their expectations for such a committee, and to consider what sort of a committee structure might work for the community.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, August 6, in Conference Room B of the County Courthouse.