

Law Enforcement Review Advisory Committee (LERAC)  
20 August 2008, noon  
Conference Room B, County Courthouse,

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

Neal called the meeting to order

Minutes of 6 August 2008 were approved as presented and will be entered onto the Human Rights Commission website.

Christina did not contact Barbara Attard directly, but will read the relevant portions of the NACOLE website. Christina also pursued possible sources of funds and found that the MacArthur Foundation might be a good potential source of funds, as well as PARC (Police Assessment Resource Center).

Neal facilitated a discussion of the activities and goals of the Citizen's Advisory Committee on Law Enforcement as proposed in the "First Draft Proposal on a Public Oversight Program on Law Enforcement in Humboldt County."

1. The first item, that the committee will "be local community members appointed by the Board of Supervisors, after consultation with the law enforcement community and appropriate public interest groups" generated considerable discussion.

Byrd inquired on whether the Board of Supervisors would make all appointments. Since her Supervisorial district covers primarily Eureka, Bonnie said she would look to recommendations from the Eureka City Council for membership on the advisory committee. Larry G. emphasized that a citizen advisory committee on law enforcement for Eureka likely would need to be composed completely of Eureka citizens if it were to be acceptable to the City Council. The question was raised on whether Eureka wanted to stand alone, since there already is a mutual aid program among all law enforcement agencies in the area. Larry M. proposed that the City Councils might be given the option of making appointments.

Larry G. said he pictured the overall program comprising an auditor serving every law enforcement agency in the County, but having each of the cities establishing their own, autonomous citizen advisory committee. Neal proposed the structure of having one large, overall committee, with a subcommittee from Eureka that also reported to the Eureka City Council; other interested cities might have a similar relationship to the county-wide citizen committee. Each municipal advisory group might have two of five members, for example, serving on the County-wide committee.

Christina also suggested having the Supervisors make the appointments after taking nominations from the city councils, and having two of five municipal members serve on the larger committee.

The value of having larger community-wide advisory committee was raised. Bonnie thought that a county-wide committee was good, but that individual cities could also have their own independent committee; the auditor could be helpful and available for everyone. Neal noted that county and city interests often overlap, and Garr thought that Eureka would benefit from being represented on a county-wide citizen advisory board for areas of common interests and concerns.

Garr thought that an individual city should be able to trigger an auditor's review.

It was proposed that some cities such as Eureka may be amenable to an auditor and working with citizen advisory committees. However, some of the smaller law enforcement agencies might be resistant to outside groups or interests intruding on their internal affairs.

One general theme that seemed to emerge was to propose a county-wide citizen advisory committee that was directed primarily to county law enforcement. Other individual cities then could form their own municipal advisory committees. These municipal advisory committees could be entirely independent of the county-wide committee, or could enter into an MOU with the County committee to determine a more specific relationship of mutual cooperation, including cost-sharing and shared funding sources. Some cities may wish to have representatives appointed to serve on this county-wide committee

When the Human Rights Commission (HRC) finally makes a proposal to the Board of Supervisors, Byrd saw the value of having representatives from the Eureka City Council and Police Department attend and affirm their also developing a program similar to the one being proposed by the HRC.

2. The item that the committee will "be unpaid volunteers, lack investigative powers of law enforcement internal investigation cases, and be constrained by the Brown Act and other relevant laws" appeared agreeable to all.
3. The item that committee members "become familiar with key laws, policies, practices, and procedures of law enforcement agencies" was addressed. Bonnie thought it important to define the key education issues and to bring professionals to the area for training sessions on these matters. Garr noted that the Eureka Police Department was developing a citizen educational academy on a model that has been successful in other communities. Byrd mentioned the College of the Redwoods law enforcement training program as a possible resource. Larry M. thought that having consultants such as the auditor conduct training sessions might be helpful, as well as having committee members ride along with police officers for more practical training.
4. For the issue that the committee will "provide public education designed to help interpret law enforcement policies and procedures to the public prior to the onset of crisis situations," there was some discussion on having municipalities contribute to the curricula as a way of increasing their interest in the citizen advisory committee

program. There also was some discussion on the most practical roles of a law enforcement information officer, compared to a citizen advisory committee.

5. The item that the advisory committee will “work with law enforcement agencies and members of the public to address potential public concerns and how best to address them prior to the onset of problems” appeared agreeable to all.
6. The item that the committee will “provide a conduit for enhancing meaningful and constructive dialogue between members of the general public and the law enforcement community” led to a discussion that such an outlet was of greatest benefit for the mainstream citizenry who had concerns about a controversial matter. It was pointed out that some of the more radical critics of police will never be satisfied and it is important to not allow those minority interests to dominate or detract from the concerns of the larger community.
7. The item that the committee will “recommend improvements to law enforcement agencies about their current policies and issues” appeared agreeable to all.
8. The item that the committee will “recommend improvements to the governing body about current policies and issues regarding law enforcement” led to the proposal that the county committee would make recommendations directly to the Sheriff’s office. If a municipal citizen advisory committee was in place, the county committee would make recommendations to them. If no municipal committee was established, the county committee would make any recommendations directly to the respective city council.
9. The item that the committee will “review citizen complaints, if requested” generated some discussion on the role and purview of the committee. There was some concern that “review” implied a capacity to make a judgment of a case, but all agreed that this was not intended. Other terms and phrases proposed included, “listen to,” “air,” “refer to auditor,” or “help the citizen file a complaint.” An emerging view appeared to be that the advisory committee could hear specific complaints, could follow up with the specific agency (as was done by HRC liaisons), and/or could recommend that they be reviewed by the auditor when the auditor makes his/her annual or semi-annual assessment of a law enforcement agency.
- 10-14. These five additional items will be addressed at the next meeting.

The next meeting will be at 12 noon on Wednesday, August 27, in Conference Room B of the County Courthouse.

Rick