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Two Sections

Harrington under fire again over police actions

by Lanita Duke

GRASSROOT NEWS, N.W. — Police Chief Penny Harrington has had one turbulent breaking-in as her new administration met crisis after crisis in its first 90 days.

This latest tragedy involving the death of a mentally impaired adult and an innocent 86-year-old woman illustrates the lack of a police procedure to deal effectively with mentally ill adults who become violent.

But Harrington inherited a police bureaucracy without these procedures. She is and wants to be held accountable for the actions or non-actions of her predecessors.

"I accept a certain amount of responsibility as I try to find out what's wrong and correct it. Blaming the prior administration does not accomplish anything," she noted.

Harrington was hired by a mayor whom the rank and file of the police bureau did not endorse. And Mayor Bud Clark's citizenry approach to government runs counter to the leadership style officers had become accustomed to.

"I have to do what's right overall for the City. Officers feel that I should come down on the side that's



Bud Clark and Penny Harrington address City Hall meeting.

(Photo: Kristine Altucher)

best for the bureau. I understand their sentiments. But they have to understand their needs are second to the needs of the City as a whole," Harrington added.

She said she believes the resentment to this new administrative attitude and leadership style will dissipate

with time. "In time they will see it's good to have citizens come in and help us. It will create more support for them,"

Harrington noted and responded to those who regard the police as oppressors.

"We will always have the image of being the oppressor because we are the visible symbols of government. However, we can make certain that officers understand the people they are policing," Harrington added.

Although she is a 21-year veteran of the bureau, Harrington said she had not worked with a lot of the rank and file. Has she experienced any sexism during these last few months?

"I experienced some sexism from some people. Some of them find it very difficult to work for a woman," replied Harrington.

Beyond her sex, Harrington has implemented personnel changes that created resentment among some officers when she transferred Vice and Intelligence to detectives. "Those officers were unhappy because they were put back out in uniform," said Harrington.

But this rank and file disapproval of her leadership is not perceived as mutiny. "The good thing about a paramilitary organization is when you give orders they are followed. I don't

like to give orders. I hope to get people to want to do things my way without being told. We want to train people to make good decisions," she said.

Among the initial procedural changes Harrington has implemented since the Graves situation is to dispatch the Special Emergency Response Team (SERT) every time the hostage negotiation team is called. Also, Harrington will bring back Night Commanders.

She plans to get an outside, professional opinion of SERT procedures after the Graves incident. "I wonder why it took them (SERT) until 5 a.m. to find Graves' body. And why they didn't get Mrs. Tate's body off the porch sooner," Harrington added.

Among the recommendations advanced by the community last Wednesday at a Black United Front community meeting was one dealing with establishing a Black home for officers in each neighborhood. "There will be people in the community that they know. And the message will be that Portland Police Officers are dedicated professionals trying to help people," Harrington concluded.

People question police actions

by Lanita Duke

GRASSROOT NEWS, N.W. — More than 300 Portlanders attended a Black United Front community meeting July 10th. The meeting was attended by Police Chief Penny Harrington and Mayor Bud Clark to question and probe and advance recommendations to avoid police actions that result in the death of Afro-Americans in the Afro-American community.

Questions sometimes were politely combative while others were statements regarding attitudes of officers who patrol Northeast Portland. The Graves/Tate deaths occurred on the heels of the Tony Stevenson tragedy, in which an officer applied a sleeper hold resulting in his death. Graves was a mentally impaired adult who became violent. Tate was the innocent hostage. Both were shot by police.

One participant stated, "I'm concerned about recent events. My children no longer look at police as protectors. They are regarded as the oppressor."

Harrington withstood the sharpness of their questions and endured boos only once when residents responded to an answer regarding Mrs. Tate, an 86-year-old woman.



Woman asks question at community meeting.

(Photo: Kristine Altucher)

Harrington indicated that after the officer shot her, thinking it was Graves and violent.

Herndon also questioned the qualifications of one of Graves' negotiators, R. L. Anderson. When Harrington called him a "Reverend," a choir of chuckles arose from the audience. It has been reported that Anderson just walked upon the scene without prior knowledge of Graves or the Tate family.

Other recommendations advanced by the audience were:

- More cultural training for officers.
- More respect of the Black community by police.
- A change in police attitudes.
- More police accountability to the community for their behavior while on duty.
- Annual psychological tests on officers.
- Involvement and input into the budget advisory committee of the police bureau.
- More effective implementation of existing police procedures.
- A police block home in every neighborhood.
- More money for mental health.
- Better training for officers.

Harrington received a standing ovation and Mayor Bud Clark sat quietly writing down comments from participants.

paired when they become threatening retreating out the back door, he thought he heard her moan.

"I can't tell you what's inside the officer's head. I can only tell you what he thought he saw. And he thought he saw Graves coming out the back door," responded Harrington to a question regarding the physical differences between an 86-year-old woman and a 37-year-old man.

Other questions from the audience related to differences in police response in the Black community. Why did officers not move in on Graves earlier and why were back-up lights not available?

Harrington said she was not in the position nor did she have the information to compare police responses. She said officers on the scene thought they could disarm and control Graves, and any type of lighting aggravated Graves and made officers targets.

Ronnie Herndon, co-chair of the BUF, gathered recommendations from the audience. The BUF said the Graves/Tate incident highlighted the need for more Black officers. The Front requested a national blue ribbon panel to review Portland police procedures and policies. They also called for the city and the police to meet and formulate procedures on how to deal with the mentally im-

Mental Health Service delivery crazy

by Lanita Duke

GRASSROOT NEWS, N.W. — Mental Health Service delivery in Multnomah County is "schizophrenic" and mental health providers are "paranoid."

Tommy Graves, the mentally impaired adult who snapped July 6, causing the death of an innocent 86-year-old woman and himself, was one of many mentally ill patients who fall through the holes in the current mental health system.

Graves was going through a revolving door of involuntary commitment proceedings, the state mental hospital and the community. His case highlights what the community and the patients have suffered in the state's rush to deinstitutionalize mental patients.

In 1962 Oregon passed community mental health care legislation and in 1973 they passed legislation that encouraged counties to have community mental health programs. In 1981 the Legislature passed a Mental Health Service Act which targeted the chronically mentally disabled population.

Multnomah County participated in the Dammash Bed Reduction (DBR) project which reduced the population at the state hospital. While all this transition was occurring, the County subcontracted all programs to private non-profit agencies. There are four core service agencies who provide medication and case management, crisis service and residential case management. In Northeast Portland the agency is North/Northeast Community Mental Health, Inc.

But it's the city and the community who bore the brunt of the questionable effectiveness of private community mental health agencies. Former institutionalized patients walk the street, live under bridges, eat out of garbage cans and engage in a variety of irrational behavior in the urban area.

In and out, up and down

Graves recently was released from Holiday Park Hospital's psychiatric ward, but he's a statistic when it comes to the recidivism of mentally ill adults who go through Oregon's commitment process.

Most commitment proceedings are

initiated by police officers, as in Graves' case, and signed by a hospital physician. The alleged mentally ill person is detained until released or taken to the hearing.

Multnomah County Judge William S. McLennan has presided over commitment hearings for 12 years. He conducts an average of 600 commitment hearings per year.

He said evidence constraints and limitations in the system prevent him from getting information to make an informed decision.

"When these people come back three or four times, I cannot look at their file from past commitment hearings. Because of the patient/physician privilege I can't find out how the person behaved while hospitalized. I can't get husband and wife to testify. And I don't think those rules should apply in these hearings," said McLennan.

He also added that the District Attorney is required by law to assist him. "But the D.A. refuses. I have no way of finding out what's in these cases until the hearing is conducted," McLennan said, and since the D.A. refuses to help, there is no way to subpoena witnesses. "The D.A. said these kinds of cases are not important," he added.

Deinstitutionalization was created on the premise that mentally ill adults would continue on their medication to control their thoughts and behavior. "But the people feel better, so they stop taking their medication. When this happens they wind up here," McLennan noted.

When clients refuse or discontinue their medication, or when they mix their medication with drugs or alcohol, they "decompensate," or go off.

Inverse relationships

Michael Benjamin, Executive Director of North/N.E. Community Mental Health, said they are between a rock and a hard place when it comes to servicing clients whom they are

funded to serve.

The County required these mental health providers to terminate clients who do not meet new eligibility requirements. So his agency services a more severely disabled population with limited funds and questionable follow-up.

One observer, who asked not to be identified, said N/NE does not provide leadership when it comes to servicing this population. "If they have a good case manager, the patient gets excellent care. But if not, the patient is rarely seen or followed up. It's a 40/40 proposition and the real losers are the patients."

Sharon Slattery, director of the Mental Health Association, said there is little accountability when it comes to these private agencies. Her observations were also echoed in an audit of Mental and Emotional Disabilities Residential services conducted by the county auditor.

The auditor found a lack of clear management objectives, fragmented residential services and no long-term strategy.

Also, investigators from N/NE are required to make a recommendation regarding the mental state of those involved in commitment hearings. But every time a patient goes back to the state hospital, the agency loses dollars.

"Rather than send them back, the patient drops out until they become dangerous and the police have them committed. The incentive is to keep them out of the hospital and it's their investigator who makes that decision to commit or not to commit," Slattery added.

She called residential care facilities a "landfill."

"They take their money and food stamps. There are no laws on upkeep or accountability. And there is very little monitoring done. So, we have moved patients from a horrible hospital into a horrible community,"

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Ron Herndon addresses community meeting. (Photo: Kristine Altucher)

Correction:

In the July 10th headline we said "83-year-old woman murdered by police." It should have read: "86-year-old woman shot by police."