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Public Have Wrong Impression of PIIAC's Authority

by Jerry Garner

Citizens first began to participate in policing during the 1950's when the St. Louis, Missouri police implemented a community relations program. The plan met little resistance from the rank and file officers, because these programs were image-building endeavors for the police, in that community relations programs were a "one way" selling job in which police organizations tried to educate the public about their agency and improve their image. However, due to the behavior of police officers against minorities and civil rights protesters during the civil rights revolution of the 60's, the demand for greater citizen involvement in policing became a political issue.

Civil rights organizations, minority leaders and the general public began to call for the creation of citizen review boards. These boards, while solely advisory in nature, nonetheless raised fundamental issues about the nature of police authority and their behavior in public, especially when they interacted with minorities.

Citizens' cries for review boards have met sharp resistance from police organizations, particularly from police unions. A classic example of police disfavor toward citizens' participation in the internal affairs of police can be seen in the Portland Police Bureau resistance and conflicts with the Police Internal Investigation Auditing Committee (PIIAC). PIIAC was established by the voters of Portland in November, 1982, after much debate and controversy; the aftermath of two serious incidents which caused distrust and dissatisfaction with the Portland Police Bureau.

The duties of PIIAC are to:

- Monitor the Internal Investigation Division (IID) process of resolving allegations of police officers' misconduct to ensure that such investigations are effectively completed in an efficient, fair, thorough and timely manner showing equal concern for the rights of both citizens and police officers.
- Assist the Bureau in regaining and maintaining community credibility in its IID process by reporting its findings, conclusions and recommendations about such processes in writing to the commissioner in charge and/or the Council; making such reports available to the public, as well, for review.
- Provide an appeal process for either officer's or citizen's complaints who are dissatisfied with IID investigations or related decisions.

Past and present PIIAC members have accused the Police Bureau and individual officers of trying to circumvent the PIIAC's mandate. They've also alleged that Ballot Measure 51, the measure that was passed creating PIIAC, is misleading. Dr. Annette Jolin, former chair of the PIIAC PANEL, SAID THIS ABOUT PIIAC: "The Audit Committee (PIIAC) was portrayed as a panel of citizens who would decide whether an officer had acted appropriately or inappropriately in a given encounter with a citizen. Citizens who had failed to get satisfaction from the police investigation of their complaint were given the impression that they could bring their complaint to the citizens' panel, which would fully re-investigate the matter and arrive at its own decisions regarding the officer's behavior."

Sandy Herman, PIIAC's first and only full-time staff person, can attest to the misconceptions the citizens seem to have regarding the PIIAC. Shortly after Herman set up the PIIAC office, she realized the need to educate the public regarding PIIAC's authority.

"Calls to the PIIAC office requesting assistance are usually from citizens who think that a full blown 'citizen review board' exists. They think that we can take a complaint, conduct an investigation, and give them some results. PIIAC can not do that," Herman said.

Since Herman's office receives so many requests for assistance, she has set up a record-keeping system that identifies the reasons citizens make contact with the PIIAC office, also noting referrals.

One example of calls for a citizen's investigation was the Lloyd "Tony" Stevenson incident. Stevenson died April 20, 1985, after police officers applied a carotid-artery or "sleeper hold" to him. Although an inquest jury ruled that Stevenson's death was the result of negligence, a grand jury de-

clined to bring charges against the policemen. Herman said after Stevenson's death, her office received 37 requests from citizens calling for an investigation of his death.

"I referred each of the 37 citizens to the Police Bureau's Internal Investigations Unit to have the matter investigated. Yet, in this case, a review of the Internal Investigation records notes that there were no citizen's complaints filed and no internal investigation," recalls Herman.

"What did occur after Stevenson's death was a public inquest which made certain findings, and a Grand Jury which made differing findings about the officers' alleged criminal misconduct. This resulted in the officers being cleared of any wrongdoing. The citizens group that convened to consider the incident only addressed the Bureau's "Use of Force" policies. To this day, no one has addressed the allegation of racism and the role it was alleged to have played in what occurred on that day and the other allegations of misconduct that were considered non-criminal in nature. For PIIAC, what this means is that there is nothing from that tragic incident which comes under its authority, because there was no "internal investigation."

Although it sometimes seems that the PIIAC is a one-person operation, Herman is quick to give credit to 20 citizen volunteer members who have served on the PIIAC since 1982. She especially speaks highly of PIIAC's first chair, Dr. Annette Jolin; the late Rev. John Garlington, PIIAC's second chair; and current chair and vice-chair, John S. Ransom and Vassar Jean Vessup.

She expressed sadness at the recent departure of member Susan Mandberg. Mandberg recently resigned out of frustration, declaring that the PIIAC was nothing more than an "illusion of citizen review". Herman said the history of the PIIAC has been for many members to depart after experiencing very similar frustrations. "Some choose to never look back, others are quick to say that they will be a resource when the time comes for the PIIAC to establish its purpose and authority."

John Ransom and Vassar Jean Vessup are very familiar with the frustration Mandberg cites. Ransom, a prominent Portland attorney, and Vessup, a diligent civil rights investigator, recognize the importance of the PIIAC and have chosen to tackle the problems that it has been plagued with, believing that the PIIAC Ordinance does contain language which gives the members the power to review Bureau decisions in cases on appeal. That commitment is shown by the PIIAC's recent announcement that it plans to go to court to seek enforcement of subpoenas. In 1985, three Portland police officers were subpoenaed to testify before the PIIAC and refused to do so.

Somehow, Herman also remains committed, although, in four years, she has seen 28 policy recommendations for change made to the Police Commissioner and Chief meet with little response. Of these, 18 were not implemented, 8 have only been partially implemented, and only 2 were responded to. Her records also indicate that almost half of PIIAC appeals were referred back to the Bureau for further investigation with twenty-four percent resulting in a determination that the investigation was inadequate and were referred to the Chief for review, and the remaining appeals were withdrawn or failed to be filed within PIIAC's time limit.

Herman said people who seek the help of the PIIAC also experience a great deal of frustration. She said, "For many of them it means pursuing something for two or more years with very little in the way of results. Sometimes it's amazing that people find the time and energy to pursue the matter given all the obstacles. When I see that sort of commitment, I get enthused by people's inner strength and motivation to seek the truth and have that truth acknowledged."

She recalls many meetings when the outcomes were less than some of the members had called for, saying that she finds consolation in a state-



Sandy Herman—Police Internal Investigation Auditing Committee, Staff Assistant. Photo by Richard J. Brown

ment made by Dr. Jolin which she holds very close to her: "It is a phenomenon that we exist, and by existing, we have an effort." Another former PIIAC member, Andrew Hay, reinforces the need for the PIIAC by having
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(L-R) Randy Winston, Mako Cons. Co.; John Brown, Brofam; James Hall, Pres., Sabin Neighborhood Association; and Ray Hanson, Vice Pres., Sabin Neighbor Association, discuss what they view as inequities in the process used in letting contracts to rebuild at the

N.E. 10th Ave. & Beech St. location. Homes at the site were destroyed or damaged by the Jan. 1, 1986 explosion that killed one person. Photo by Richard J. Brown

City Charged With Not Following Guidelines in Regards to Federal Funds

by Jerry Garner

Some Sabin neighborhood residents have charged city officials with not following guidelines and regulations in regard to citizens' participation in the way federal funds are used for neighborhood development.

Ray Hansen, Vice President of Sabin Community Neighborhood Association, charged that Sabin residents were never provided with sufficient information, asked for input, or invited to any meetings by the city's Inter-agency Task Force while it planned the Beech Street proposal. Hansen, who is facing a recall election that was started by some Sabin board members, called the omission "deliberate".

Hansen's views are shared by James Hall, President of Sabin Community Association. In a letter to William Hunter, Executive Director of the Housing Authority of Portland, dated January 29, 1987, Hall said, "To my knowledge, an official relationship between Housing Authority of Portland (HAP) and the Sabin Community Association has never been established. As 1987 President of SCA, I do not, therefore, recognize your 'Beech Street Design Review Committee' as legitimate. I have established a new SCA committee called 'Housing and Economic Development' and appointed Ray Hansen chair. This committee will review the Beech St. Project. Hansen will serve as liaison between SCA and HAP. Once approved, the recommendations will be sent to HAP. I hereby request HAP to stop implementation of the Beech Street Project until an official relationship can be established between SCA and HAP."

In his letter to Hunter, Hall listed concerns he received from the community. Chief among them were lack of citizen participation on the plan through SCA; lack of consultation with SCA on zoning and land use issues, including exploration of alternative uses for the land; and use of 50' x 50' lot size; and the resultant congestion, to name a few. Hall said Hunter never responded to his letter.

Hunter was reached by the Observer to answer the criticism. He said the reason he hasn't responded to Hall's letter at this time is because he

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