

*Albina Ministerial Alliance Ad Hoc Coalition for Community Justice
c/o Dr. LeRoy Haynes,
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Mayor Vera Katz
1221 SW 4th Ave
Portland, OR 97204

By postal mail and e-mail (signature on postal copies)

Re: Resolutions on improving community-police relations

October 6, 2004

Dear Mayor Katz:

The two resolutions you presented which were adopted unanimously by City Council on August 4th (numbers 925 and 926) were a good start, but did not go far enough. Participating groups in the AMA Ad Hoc Coalition for Community Justice continue to push for further changes as outlined in the resolution we presented to Council on June 16.

A) POSITIVE ASPECTS

First, to be fair, we will review some of the positive aspects of the resolutions:

A1) The resolutions publicly reaffirm a commitment to community policing, which was never done under Chief Kroeker.

A2) The resolutions call for in-service training to include “communication skills, crisis intervention, cultural competency and de-escalation training.” (In-service training is for all current officers, as opposed to academy training which is only for new recruits.)

A3) The resolutions “reaffirm that violations of the use of force policies will result in appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.”

A4) The resolutions state that the Bureau will “investigate, research with the community and adopt training practices and technology to reduce the incidence of deadly force.”

A5) The resolutions state that the Bureau will “monitor and enforce policies that prohibit discrimination and racial profiling.”

A6) The resolutions call for expanding basic academy training from 10 to 16 weeks, and advanced academy from 14 to 16 weeks, with a “report to City Council on how Police Bureau training meets and/or exceeds current professional standards.” Additionally, they state that “The Police Bureau will also re-institute 40 hours of in-service training for 2004-05 with a focus on communication skills, crisis intervention, cultural competency and de-escalation training.”

A7) The resolutions call for improving diversity in “recruitment, hiring, selection, mentoring and retention.”

B) SHORTCOMINGS

There are shortcomings in these same seven areas, which are:

B1) Community policing is narrowly defined, and does not emphasize community involvement in setting police priorities, nor is the word “accountability” used in either resolution. “Accountability” as defined in the 2004-06 Community Policing plan is mostly about fiscal accountability, not about officers acting within agreed upon community standards or being disciplined. The Community Policing plan should be modified to reflect these concerns.

(The five cornerstones of Community Policing introduced in 1990 and re-confirmed in 2004 are: service, partnership, empowerment, problem solving and accountability. Chief Moose apparently removed “accountability” in 1994 and Chief Kroeker did not put it back in.)

B2) In-service training: The AMA Ad Hoc. asked that the community be involved in identifying and choosing the trainers for cultural competency, which is not included in the Mayor’s resolution. The community should also be involved in identification and selection for training in the other areas outlined in the resolution. We are also disappointed that the in-service training will only include four total hours per officer combined in Crisis Intervention, cultural competency, communication and de-escalation training (see below).

B3) The AMA’s resolution asked for officers who “unnecessarily and unwisely” use deadly force to be severely disciplined, and/or encouraged not to work for the police bureau. It is critical that this language be included in the Bureau Directives and any future Council resolution.

B4) New technologies and strategies such as use of “beanbag” shotguns and Tasers should be presented to the community at large for consideration and input before they are adopted.

B5) The City defines racial profiling as “the use of race as the sole basis for justifying stops or other police action.” The Portland Police Bureau should adopt the definition by the US Department of Justice: “Any police-initiated action that relies on the race, ethnicity, or national origin rather than the behavior of an individual or information that leads the police to a particular individual who has been identified as being, or having been, engaged in criminal activity.”

B6) The Council requests a “report” on whether the Portland Police meet or exceed the “professional standards” on training. The AMA Ad Hoc calls for “no less than the national average amount of training, as a combination of field, classroom and consultant training, prior to the 14-week on the job training that the Bureau now gives.”

This year, only 3 hours of the 40 hours of in-service training are allotted for cultural competency, de-escalation, and communication combined, with one hour for Crisis Intervention Training, and 5 hours for lunch. More time is set aside for lunch than for cultural competency training, which we believe should be given for a minimum of 8 hours each year. This is crucial if there is to be a change in the culture of the Bureau. In-service hours should be increased to 45 to allow 5 hours for lunch and a full 40 hours of training.

B7) Improving diversity within the Bureau is an admirable goal, but until the culture of the police is changed, people of color will either be unwilling to join the force or become indoctrinated in the current culture. This culture reinforces “us vs. them” attitudes and perpetuates the “blue wall of silence”—with few exceptions, officers do not speak out against other officers’ misconduct.

Furthermore, the Council resolutions completely eliminated recommendations by the AMA Ad Hoc in the following areas:

- A) Actively promoting recommendations from the community on issues of police training and policy
- B) Adopting an ordinance against police use of unnecessary, unreasonable force
- C) Calling for a public inquest for any death at the hands of the police
- D) Urging the State of Oregon to
 - i) Change the deadly force law to create objective standards defining a threat to public safety, rather than an officer's belief that their life or another's is in danger; and
 - ii) Open up the grand jury process

and

- E) Strengthening and expanding the police review board by
 - i) Giving the board the power to compel officer testimony
 - ii) Increasing the board from 9 to 13 members
 - iii) Allowing the board to order independent investigations
 - iv) Allowing the staff and the review board to review shootings, serious injury and death cases, immediately after the criminal investigative process is complete, not two years after the fact, and
 - v) Giving the board the ability to recommend discipline.

We look forward to the City and the Police Bureau's responses to the resolutions by October, 2004, as requested by Council on August 4.

Sincerely,

Dr. LeRoy Haynes
Chair, Albina Ministerial Alliance Ad Hoc Coalition for Community Justice

and others

cc: City Commissioner Erik Sten
City Commissioner Dan Saltzman
City Commissioner Randy Leonard
City Commissioner Jim Francesconi
City Auditor Gary Blackmer

Chief Derrick Foxworth, Portland Police Bureau
Charlie Makinney, Mayor's Police Liaison

Sam Adams
Nick Fish
Tom Potter

Members of the press
Members of the community