

# City Of Syracuse Citizen's Review Board

## Meeting Minutes 02/02/2012

### Those Present:

#### CRB Members:

Jarrood Bentley (absent)  
Tafara Timmons  
Crystal Collette, *Chair*  
Demetria Gammage (absent)  
Carole Horan  
Timothy Jennings-Bey

Louis Levine  
Sarah McIlvain  
Donna Oppedisano  
Rachel Smith  
Diane Turner  
*Quorum Present*

The third meeting of the Citizens Review Board, held in the Common Council Chambers at City Hall, was called to order: 6:08 p.m.

### Minutes: Motion to APPROVE Minutes Carole/seconded by Sarah and passed with one abstention

#### New Business:

- Newest Board members were welcomed and introduced
  - Timothy Jennings/Bey
  - Diane Turner
  - Rachel Smith
- Mayor Miner has signed the legislation and I has been sent along to the NYS Attorney General's Office

#### Budget Discussion:

- Sarah met with Mary Vosler to get information and accounting of the budget for the 2011-02 fiscal year. She then shared the following:
  - Although she had accounting of the money spent to date, she would not be able to release it to us without the approval of Corporation Council
    - Much frustration about freedom of information was expressed
    - Lance said that he had been assured by the Chief of Staff on Monday (1/30) that the information would be made available to Sarah on the next day. That info was not delivered
  - The Board needs specifics related to the budget (i.e. the 415 line item lists "Rental, Professional, Contractual Services and it is unclear what this means)

- Crystal discussed a budget summary dated 11/30 that she was given in Dec. Discussion of that summary raised the following concerns:
  - \$25,617 spent to date with \$19,000 recorded as 415 item. It is assumed that this money was spent on legal fees and on the salary of the typist
    - With the firing of the administrator and the cessation of operations, the typist was re-assigned to different offices in the city. Therefore, the question of why she would continue to have been paid out of the CRB budget, rather than the budget of the new dept.
- The lion's share of the budget (\$74,233) should be still available for our use in hiring an administrator
- The suggestion was made that we invite Bill Ryan and Mary Vosler to one of our next meetings for a budget discussion
- Sarah will stay on top of this

### **Committee Reports:**

#### **Administrative Search Committee:**

- **Job Description**

- The draft of the new job description was passed out. One mistake was noticed, this will be corrected by Crystal
- Some discussion ensued about the changed role of the administrator and his/her relationship to the board and as such how hands-on the board would be after the admin is hired
- Motion to accept the job description with agreed upon changes - Lou and seconded by Rachel **Passed Unanimously**
- Crystal and the search committee will get the job posted ASAP and will keep the board updated

#### **Ongoing Business:**

- **Dealing with registered complaints**

- Crystal has received 2 complaints that she has forwarded on to the office of professional standards (I think this is the name of the office)
  - According to the law, the board has only 60 days to conduct an investigation and to bring preliminary findings to the board
  - These reports were filed 1/24 and 1/27
  - Lou made the point that without an admin. We would need to use board members to do the investigations.
  - Crystal characterized the complaints as one relatively uncomplicated and one complex
  - The time frame is sensitive and we need to be aware of the impacts on complainants if we do not deal with these reports quickly

- Teams of 2 were assigned to investigate complaints and bring a recommendation to the board
- The point was made that the board should not begin by creating an atmosphere of “us against them”
  - In response to a comment from the community about the role of CRB as an independent oversight board, Lou commented that one of the means of settlement is mediation/conciliation and we want to promote positive relations; the law states that the following hierarchy of settlement: conciliation; investigation; recommendation of the board
  - The concern was raised that a lack of previous police participation was a factor in the past, which brought up the question of whether or not the new law allowed for subpoena power
    - Barrie Gewanter (one of the committee members that drafted the legislation) said that the board does have subpoena power... ***this is an example of why the board needs to be trained on the legislation ASAP so that citizens are best represented.***
    - According to the law we will have the full police file on each case as well
- The question was raised about who is opening the CRB mail at this point
  - The mail has been opened and reviewed by Shirley Rowser, who has been contacting Crystal
- We will continue to use the old complaint form until the new one has been approved
- Next meeting will be Thursday, February 16 with a 6:00 training session (on the law itself) and a 7:00 general meeting
- Sarah motioned to adjourn at 7:30 and Carole seconded **Passed Unanimously**
- Crystal and the search committee will get the job posted ASAP and will keep the board updated

**Public Comment Period:**

- In response to a citizen question about whether a situation that occurred in August could still be addressed, the board answered that there is no time limit to file a complaint with CRB, however there may be a window for filing a notice of claim (not under the prevue of the CRB). Rachel took the complaint after the meeting
- One citizen expressed concern the length of time it has taken to hire an admin and inquired about the timeline
  - The board commented that we are starting from scratch and just getting up and running (the law is only a few months old)

Next Meeting: **Feb. 16**

**Minutes Respectfully  
Submitted;  
Donna M. Oppedisano  
2/02/2012**