

KING COUNTY SHERIFF'S BLUE RIBBON PANEL

Panel Meeting Summary: April 26, 2006, 6-9 PM

Seattle City Council Chambers

600 Fourth Avenue, Second Floor, Seattle, WA

Panel Members Present: Randy Revelle (chair), Faith Ireland (vice-chair), Tony Anderson, Dave Boerner, Wilson Edward Reed, Jennifer Shaw, Richard Smith, Pat Stell and D. Gene Wilson

Panel Member Absent: Michael O'Mahony

Proceedings:

Meeting convened at 6:00 PM by Randy Revelle, chair.

Panel Introductions and Agenda Overview

- Panel members introduced themselves. Panel chair presented an overview of the meeting agenda.

Overview of Agenda Materials

- Morgan Shook (Berk & Associates) provided a brief description of the meeting materials.

Presentation: King County Sheriff's 100-Day Plan

- Sheriff Sue Rahr described her recent accomplishments as Sheriff and presented her 100-Day Plan to the panel. The 100-Day Plan has three focus areas: neighborhood safety, accountability, and professionalism.

Presentation: Training and Hiring

- Virginia Kirk (King County Sheriff's Office) presented an overview of the current hiring practices and training programs of the King County Sheriff's Office.

Preliminary Findings: Comparable Agencies

- Marty Wine, Morgan Shook, and Erica Natali (Berk & Associates) presented findings to date on the comparable agencies research. The agencies profiled are the Seattle Police Department, Washington State Patrol, Portland Police Bureau, Boise Police Department, San Jose Police Department, and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Preliminary findings are that each agency has specific structures and processes to address transparency (public trust), independence, and authority for oversight functions.

Discussion: Preliminary Identification of Concerns

- The panel chair led a brainstorming discussion where the panel began to identify preliminary areas of concern that relate to the misconduct and discipline processes of the King County Sheriff's Office (see the attached Summary of Concerns).

Work Program

- The panel approved an updated work program.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM by Randy Revelle, chair

Summary: Berk & Associates

Blue Ribbon Panel's Preliminary Concerns

Discussed at April 26, 2006 Blue Ribbon Panel Meeting

Panel Question: Given what you have learned and know today, what are your concerns, reactions, and suggestions about the misconduct, discipline, and management systems in the King County Sheriff's Office? What are your preliminary ideas to address those concerns? (Panel members may have only voiced a concern, without noting ideas to address it.)

- **Concern:** lack of follow-up on discipline with line officers by line supervisors: it is not clear how it is done and tracked, if at all.
- **Concern:** complaint tracking is done for only the most serious complaints that are investigated by the Internal Investigations unit; no tracking is done at the line level; responses to citizen complaints are inconsistent; and no record is kept of patterns of problems.
- **Concern:** complaint intake process does not address responsibility or consistency of persons who take complaints (whether at Internal Investigations Unit or precinct); attention is not given to how that influences the image of the agency. **To address it:** more outreach so people know how and where to make complaints, and more training for complaint takers.
- **Concern:** Recruiting. A high dropout rate after academy graduation and during the field training program.
- **Concern:** Attitude of management: labor-management philosophy of not losing, versus winning. Perception of being hamstrung by contract. The structure for effective approaches to labor-management issues, especially misconduct and discipline, may be there, but it is insufficient. **To address it:** a proactive attitude to do the right thing in spite of the risks of losing. Encouragement to understand employee rights and see the bargaining process as a discussion process.
- **Concern:** lack of performance standards. **To address it:** set ethical and disciplinary performance standards, and if past precedent is binding, set clear expectations in writing to signify a change.
- **Concern:** low level of support by the community. **To address it:** better communication practices to allow the public to see into the discipline process. Report to the citizens about how issues reported in the paper are being handled. Have meetings to instill public confidence. Implement an early intervention system to ensure that patterns of problems are identified.
- **Concern:** little or no citizen oversight of police actions. **To address it:** more public participation in the discipline process; develop an effective form of citizen

oversight; communicate to the public, and build public confidence in the department.

- **Concern:** hard to see into police culture and what it really is at the Sheriff's Office. Cannot identify whether a code of silence or covering up issues exists. **To address it:** a cultural audit to gain an understanding of attitudes and beliefs that influence behavior.
- **Concern:** supervisors are asking for help to be good managers; some investigations and due process steps have gone awry in the past; supervisors need to learn to avoid these problems. **To address it:** how can supervisors be encouraged and empowered to take the right corrective actions and be supported to do so.
- **Concern:** delegation of supervision and discipline to line supervisors is not being carried out effectively. **To address it:** identify the risks that exist or barriers that prevent first-line supervisors from being able to fully take on their management role. Identify supports needed to identify and address conduct issues early.
- **Concern:** it is not clear if there is a pattern underlying discipline trends that led to misconduct problems now being reported. **To address it:** Panel needs to dig into these cases to understand what went wrong, and whether the contributors were burnout, supervision, investigation, length of time to resolve, or something else.
- **Concern:** who watches the watchers? **To address it:** the Panel must make a clear statement of the need for better conduct, performance, and oversight. Our recommendations need to focus on the influential factors 5-8: complaint process, internal oversight, external oversight.
- **Concern:** content and administration of the collective bargaining agreement over time. It is very unusual to have no change in the agreement over a decade, when changes in agreement happen because of changes in law, society, budget, and leadership. **To address it:** more attention to the labor agreement.
- **Concern:** the influence of the Field Training Officer program on the conduct of officers.
- **Concern:** Difficulty hiring and retaining people who possess the right characteristics to serve the public. **To address it:** Focus on resolving problems early in their experience with the department, including conflicts with the FTO, or other issues that can be resolved, without having good employees leave the Sheriff's Office.
- **Concern:** Testing for characteristics and values such as integrity and ethical behavior. **To address it:** encouragement for regional officer testing, oral board

testing that emphasizes desired characteristics. This is difficult but should be encouraged.