



## CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY?

We all know what always rolls downhill! With the recent announcements of the retirement of City Manager Steve Mermell and the Police Chief John Perez, the finger pointing and scapegoating has already begun. But, do not be fooled by this ploy which is intended to obfuscate the real culprits here.. the representatives you elected, the Mayor and city council. The City Manager & Chief work for the Council, who work for the people (we think)!

We heard over and over again that the city would not even consider civilian oversight of the PPD. Chief Sanchez and then Perez were said to be leading the city (along with the police union) through the no oversight mandate. Though in Pasadena we have had numerous 'Rodney King and George Floyd moments it was the nationwide outcry regarding George Floyd that brought the Mayor and council to the front to hammer out a civilian oversight commission with limited subpoena power and a Police Auditor. One year later the Oversight Commission has yet to meet for the first time. In fact they were not included in the selection of the Police Auditor as the Council decided that the position reported to the council and the commissions input was secondary at best. Though the Auditor proclaimed to the community and the commissioners "if I am not the right person I will step down", he has yet to set a meeting with the commission to discuss their respective roles. At a recent event members of the commission stated basically they had no idea of their charge or how they would actually work together (commissioner Ibanez did talk about policy change). The only training they had received was 30 hours from the Police Dept. About the Police dept. No training whatsoever on being a commissioner for the city of Pasadena. Are we off to a good start? Is this a breakdown in communication with the city council, public safety committee, city manager or just an insincere hollow commission created to quell the anger of the community while accomplishing nothing.

More recently the Council voted to institute a gunfire early notice application with a cost of over \$600,000 without a thought of moving this discussion to the newly created commission for community input. Then the public safety committee has a training on police policy and procedures which appropriately should have included the Civilian Oversight Commission.

We know there are some out there who will blame the commissioners, the council, the city manager and anyone else they can throw under the bus for the lackluster start of the oversight commission. Sorry!!! It is the community that must take responsibility for this lackluster response. It is the community that must give the commissioners support, direction and power.

Here are a few items to give us a start. Immediately convene the commission with the following agenda items:

1. Election of a Chair and Vice Chair
2. A Meeting with Auditor to discuss his perceived role and reporting relationship with the commission and the Council.
3. A vote of confidence (or non-confidence) on the preliminary outlined relationship with the auditor
4. Immediately become engaged in the process of the PPD/City committing to spend \$674,000 dollars for an early warning gunshot program in lieu of funding of community programs for jobs, training, housing, economic development & food assistance.
5. A review and analysis of the effectiveness of the early warning program (including stop & frisk risk).
6. The entire commission & the auditor Immediately review the Christopher Ballew case /video. (The purpose is not to rehash the incident but, decide if the commission believes there are

policy changes in the police code of conduct that can prevent another similar incident). Under the current policies as laid out by the district attorney and Chief of Police John Perez, this beating was and still is within Pasadena Police Dept. Policy. To be clear, you could get a similar beating by the Police in Pasadena tomorrow and it would be ok. Hopefully, during your training you learned about value policing. This type of review by the commission is a first step in evaluating policy change.

7. Immediately discuss and clarify the limitations of the commission to review and make recommendations in the Anthony McClain shooting, to include, when, where and how we may impact “policy change” that will prevent the reoccurring killing of our citizens.
8. The development of a short and long range work plan is appropriate but, there are current issues and policies which can be addressed now without infringing upon any ongoing investigations.
9. Discussion of campaign contributions from Police entities as they relate to potential conflicts of interest.
10. Subpoena power - (subpoenas ignored by sheriff’s dept. and others, what’s the point?)

Do you have something to add?

This is of course a short preliminary suggested agenda. We are sure there are other priorities. The point is let’s get to work. This is no time for analysis paralysis. There is no progress without action. We know what happens when we do nothing!! That’s how we got here!

The power is in the people! Let’s use it!

Martin A. Gordon, Chair, CEO  
Pasadena Community Coalition  
55 E. Villa St.  
Pasadena, Ca 91103  
626 786-5204  
[fubulegal@hotmail.com](mailto:fubulegal@hotmail.com)  
Google:[pasadenacommunitycoalition.com](http://pasadenacommunitycoalition.com)

