

## NORTH PRECINCT ADVISORY COUNCIL

## Expanding Communication Between the Police and Community

## MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES

February 6, 2008

The February Meeting started on a high note. Officer David Sullivan and three civilians have been awarded the "Chief's Award" for their heroic action in extracting a passenger from a burning car in one of our local neighborhoods. Accolades all around!

Next, we heard from one of the two newest members of the city council, Tim Burgess. Tim is on the Public Safety Committee and that makes him VERY important to us. Tim is a former police officer and fully understands the need for more officers on the streets, as well as the issues about police accountability. He has only been on the Council for a few weeks, but already it begins to look like he might just be the right guy for the job. There have been issues raised about the way accountability has been handled in the past and we now have a list of 29 recommendations to improve that situation. These recommendations were presented to the Mayor and he is reviewing them. Mr. Burgess seems to be in agreement with the recommendations, as long as there is some degree of "fine tuning." When adopted, these 29 points should greatly reduce the time to reach a conclusion in any complaint about SPD officers. Tim also noted that most complaints against officers are NOT upheld. Some of the issues recommended included expanding the role of the auditor to review cases and recommend policy changes. That recommendation will need to be discussed with the union.

The Mayor will also discuss with the Guild the following recommendations from the panel:

- The Police Department should presume that officers who are dishonest in their official duties will be terminated.
- Officers should not be allowed to use overtime or vacation pay when they have been suspended without pay.
- Internal investigation records should be made public, under public disclosure law.
- The OPA director should have the ability to hire the panel's deputy director and the OPA investigators.
- The Police Chief should explain in writing when he or she disagrees with recommendations made by the OPA director on internal investigations.

The Mayor has said 15 recommendations would be implemented immediately by the City, including proposals for the OPA Office to have its own budget, for the two oversight agencies to work more closely together, and providing more training to staff who conduct

internal investigations.

Three of the recommendations fall under the City Council's authority, two of which the Mayor believes will require discussion with the Guild.

On a more "Local" level, you can find out what is going on in our own Precinct and neighborhood by going on line to: <http://www.seattle.gov/police/precincts/North/>, and there we are! There is plenty of information on this site and it is being updated on a regular basis.

Another issue brought up by Ed McKenna, of the City Attorney's Office, was something our neighborhood should be concerned about.

The Seattle Housing Authority is considering a substantial change to its screening of applicants who may have a criminal background. The proposed change will apply to the Housing Choice Voucher Program, meaning it will apply to anyone applying for Section 8 housing assistance. Under the Section 8 Tenant-based program, SHA issues a voucher for a monthly rental subsidy that allows participants to rent privately-owned units, including houses and apartments within the community. A voucher-holder may rent a unit from any owner willing to participate in the Program. Currently, SHA administers in excess of 6,500 vouchers.

The current eligibility criteria deny assistance to persons with varying criminal histories. For example, persons convicted of selling drugs are excluded for five years. Armed Robbery convictions result in a 10-year exclusion. Homicide conviction is 20 years and Prostitution is two years. The primary change to the screening process will reduce the exclusion time from multiple years down to 12 months. SHA states this is to increase housing access to persons who have been turned down in the past, and to increase consistency with the King County Housing Authority.

The effect of the proposed changes would be: persons recently convicted of various crimes will now either be immediately eligible for the Housing Choice Voucher Program, or eligible within a much shorter time. The new proposal only allows for the exclusion of persons convicted of a Class A felony (the most serious crimes). All other persons with lesser convictions may apply unless the conviction history indicates "habitual criminal behavior."

This proposal will have no impact on private landlords who may continue to screen prospective tenants and implement their own tenant criteria. Private landlords will continue to be required to comply with requirements of the Washington State Residential Landlord Tenant Act as well as Seattle's "Just Cause" eviction Ordinance. (Once they're in, it takes YEARS to get them out!)

The public comment period has been extended to February 29, '08. Comments may be sent to: [white@seattlehousing.org](mailto:white@seattlehousing.org) or [ExecDirector@seattlehousing.org](mailto:ExecDirector@seattlehousing.org).

A complete copy of the SHA changes may be obtained through Seattle Housing Authority or the City Attorney's Office. Send to Ed McKenna [Edward.McKenna@seattle.gov](mailto:Edward.McKenna@seattle.gov)

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