Minutes - Police Diversity Board Meeting September 14, 2011, 5:30 p.m.

Attendees:  
Valentin Rodriguez - Chair  
John Kramer - Board Member  
Rafael Nunez - Board Member  
Sunilda Tejada - Board Member  
Elizabeth Briseno - Board Member  
Teresa Riquelme - Alternate Board Member  
Nicholas Noel, III - Solicitor for the PDB

Absent:  
Yvonne Stroman - Secretary  
Yvette Santiago - Board Member

Other Attendees:  
Captain Stephen Powell - on behalf of Chief Heim  
John Carrasquilo - Criminal Investigator, Reading Police Dept.  
and candidate for Police Diversity Officer  
Bradley Dengler - Member, Reading Chamber of Commerce

1. At 5:35 p.m. the Chair recognized a quorum and called the meeting to order.

2. The Minutes of the July 19, 2011, Meeting of the Police Diversity Board were approved on motion of Member Briseno and seconded by Member Tejada, all approving 5-0.

3. Regarding the Police Diversity Officer vacancy, Mr. Carrasquilo a 10-year member of the RPD and currently a criminal investigator appeared as a candidate as nominated by Chief Heim. CI Carrasquilo gave a background as to his law enforcement history and then submitted to questioning from the panel. [It should be noted that Mr. Carrasquilo requested the interview process to be held in public session as opposed to Executive Session.]

Discussion centered on anticipated compensation and duties to be performed and the extent of his involvement with the Hispanic community. Carrasquilo expressed his interest in wanting to improve relations between the RPD and the community and have the public realize that the police are not “the bad guys” and are there for their assistance. While expressing his interest in giving back to the community and not seeking specific
compensation amount, Captain Powell indicated that he had been informed that there is an overtime budgetary item for this position; however, he could not give specifics. This needs to be clarified with the Chief and/or City.

Questions were raised concerning Mr. Carrasquilo’s bi-lingual abilities in English and Spanish and he indicated that while he thinks he is “street fluent” in Spanish he does not read or write Spanish very well. He indicated that he was born in the Bronx, NYC and moved to the Reading area as a young boy in 1979. Therefore, English is his native language. He is aware that fluency in Spanish and English is a requisite for the position and is willing to submit to a bi-lingual testing procedure if required of all candidates. The basic job duties of the Diversity Officer as contained in the Settlement Agreement were discussed with the Officer Carrasquilo and he believed that he would be able to carry out those duties.

Member Tejada raised a question to Mr. Carrasquilo in Spanish and he indicated that he had difficulty in understanding exactly what the question was about. Some discussion occurred with regard to the problem of different dialogues, i.e. Puerto Rican v. Cuban v. Mexican v. Dominican etc.

Member Nunez also inquired as to his comfort level in going on the electronic media, i.e. television and radio with Spanish speaking broadcasts to help promote the police department as did Sgt. Mateo. Mr. Carrasquilo expressed some reluctance about his ability to engage in that type of public relations work due to the limitations of his Spanish speaking abilities.

Member Kramer asked how he anticipated reaching out to the community and Mr. Carrasquilo indicated that he would focus on going to schools as well as other community based organizations. His view is that dealing with the children at a young age and reinforcing positive image of the police is very important. He also indicated that, in terms of recruiting, the need to communicate the demands and stresses of the job are very important and that people need to know up front what is anticipated and expected of a police officer. He indicated that positive contact between the police and the community is needed and that he has always attempted to leave any situation on as much of a positive note as possible despite the fact that the particular situation may have resulted in someone being arrested. He did express a willingness to take additional Spanish courses if that would assist in his ability to handle the position.

Chair Rodriguez questioned Mr. Carrasquilo’s ability to handle the duties
considering the short staffing of criminal investigators currently on the RPD. It is recognized that there are significant time demands of the officers beyond their typical 8-hour shifts with regard to court appearances, extensive criminal investigations and the need for assisting other officers. Concern was expressed about the load that would be placed upon him and whether it would impact his ability to aggressively promote recruitment for the police department. The Chair also expressed some concern about the Diversity Officer being independent from the command structure in that choices as to how time was going to be spent on one task verses another was a concern.

With the questioning ended, an Executive Session was called by the Chair to discuss the submitted interest by Daniel Cedeno who was not in attendance as well as a discussion over the comparative skills of Johnny Diaz who appeared at the July hearing and CI Carrasquilo. **Executive Session was called at 6:30 p.m.**

Public Session restarted at 6:45 p.m. at which time CI Carrasquilo was advised that the Board would recommend him as a candidate for the Police Diversity Officer conditioned upon approval by both the City and the PSLC as well as passing the ALTA bilingual test that has been administered to the police candidates. **Motion was made by Member Briseno, seconded by Member Kramer, all in favor 5-0. The Solicitor was requested to follow-up with the City to determine what the salary/benefit schedule would be for this position as opposed to using existing overtime. Request will be sent to the City to provide the budget for 2011 and in the past as to how Sgt. Mateo's time was compensated.**

3(b). **Bradley Dengler of the Reading Chamber of Commerce gave an interesting presentation on Hispanic police recruitment program recommendations.** Mr. Dengler, as a member of the Chamber of Commerce, has high interest in seeing that diversity is increased in their police department so as to provide better communication and interfacing between the community and the police. He provided an outline from the International Association of Chiefs of Police that has been viewed as a model for minority recruitment and that document is attached to these Minutes. Mr. Dengler described the various actions that the model creates and stressed that he has learned that the "social networks" of the Internet, i.e. Facebook and Twitter are now being used by some departments to raise awareness with their communities about the police department as well as its recruitment potential.
The keys are community involvement and a "top down" approach in being visible with the community. Connections with community-based organizations is an emphasis. Hence, the need for a Diversity Officer who is going to be available to meet with various community organizations and be the "face" of the department in the community.

4. Captain Powell distributed the financial report for the preceding eight (8) months showing expenses to date in the amount of $6,712.63. He also reported that the test results from the May bi-lingual examinations resulted in three (3) candidates moving up on the list of eligibles as a result of their scores and two (2) who will be hired. One of the candidates is also a female which makes her the first "Latina" police candidate in over 10-years. He stressed that but for the bi-lingual testing these two (2) candidates would not have been hired so quickly. Unfortunately, the third candidate who scored well on the test failed his background check. A fourth candidate who took the test, but did not score as well, is still on the list, is further down. Currently, there is a class of 15 in the academy and another class that is getting on the street training. The next civil service exam is scheduled for December and the subsequent bi-lingual exam would likely be given a couple months after that once candidates had cleared not only the civil exam, but the physical agility and other subsequent exams. The Chair noted that with the candidacy of Diaz and Carrasquilo for the Diversity Officer that it would be good to have the ALTA test administered to them within the next 30 to 60-days. Member Nunez also wished that Captain Powell would communicate to Officer Frey accolades for his excellent work in community outreach.

4(a). Members of the Board were asked to comment on their observations of the ALTA test that was administered in May. Some felt that some of the questions were not adequately phrased and there was concern about what dialect is being used, as well as more focus on police work. There was consensus that a dialogue that focuses primarily on Puerto Rican and Dominican be used since that would be the primary or majority of the Hispanic community in Reading.

The Solicitor was requested to follow-up with Lt. Widener who is now believed to be the contact for ALTA so that these concerns are communicated and perhaps a conference call with an ALTA representative can be scheduled for the next meeting of the PDB so that there can be direct concerns expressed about adapting the test to more local needs.
4(b). The quarterly report is past due, however, the Chair indicated that he wanted to be able to provide the Court with the most up to date information based upon the bi-lingual testing and now that we have received the first positive impacts of that testing, as reported by Captain Powell, this can be updated and he will circulate for finalization.

5. Public Comment - none.

The next scheduled meeting of the PDB is November 9, 2011, at 5:30 p.m. Secretary Yvonne Stroman will be requested to reserve the Penn Room. Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

NOEL, KOVACS & McGUIRE, P.C.

s/ Nicholas Noel, III
By: ______________________
Nicholas Noel, III

NN:sh
Attachment