



Riverside Police Officers' Association

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February 10th, 2010

Council Members and Mayor,

We at the Riverside Police Officers' Association have not addressed the Community Police Review Commission (CPRC) since its inception. Police officers are in a unique position of authority and entrusted with the difficult job of investigating crime while bearing in mind the rights of those it serves. We have respected the community's desire to review police actions, citizen's complaints, and police department policies. We must, however, draw the line with parallel investigations. Officer involved shootings, in-custody deaths, and other critical incidents are some of the most important and often the most sensitive investigations our personnel can become involved in. They involve physical evidence, witness statements, criminal statutes and civil liability.

Why not parallel investigations? These are critical incidents requiring complex, sensitive investigations. Physical evidence is often an important component of the case and cannot have even the perception of having been compromised. Why not let CPRC and/or its investigators go out to the scene the next day? Our personnel do not always find every piece of evidence the day of the incident. Sometimes witness statements or additional information could lead investigators to new evidence which, again, must not be compromised. Why not let CPRC and/or its investigators question witnesses? Statements are considered evidence in court. Evidence, again, that must not be compromised. We are not saying that it would be the CPRC's intention to influence a witness but how the person is questioned can unwittingly affect the interview. By no means are we perfect, but our detectives are well-trained investigators who are fact finders for the truth. Any of those who have reviewed critical incidents, including officer-involved shootings, knows that interviews are recorded and transcribed, physical evidence is often analyzed by outside labs, and all of the reports are given to the CPRC with the case.

Incidents such as officer-involved shootings are reviewed by the D.A.'s office for criminal prosecution and every critical incident involves civil liability. Giving the CPRC the right to have a parallel investigation, and what that entails, is giving a defense attorney ammunition to create reasonable doubt in a jury.

Our involved officers hate to have the investigation hanging over their head. The CPRC might want to start their investigation right away. People watch TV shows and expect results in less than an hour. In real life, cases like this take time. Crime labs



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detectives handle officer-involved shootings, in-custody deaths, and other critical incident investigations. They also handle other murders, death investigations, robberies, and serious assaults so with our staffing they have to balance these important critical incidents with their other cases. Our homicide detectives have a difficult job, go as fast as they can, but know that everyone expects a comprehensive investigation.

We all want the results quickly, but in criminal investigations thoroughness trumps expediency. We value the community's review of police actions; however, the criminal case takes precedent over everything else. Be patient and let the investigation take its course.

Sincerely,

Cliff Mason
President

Brian Smith
Vice-President

Kevin Townsend
Political Action Committee Chair