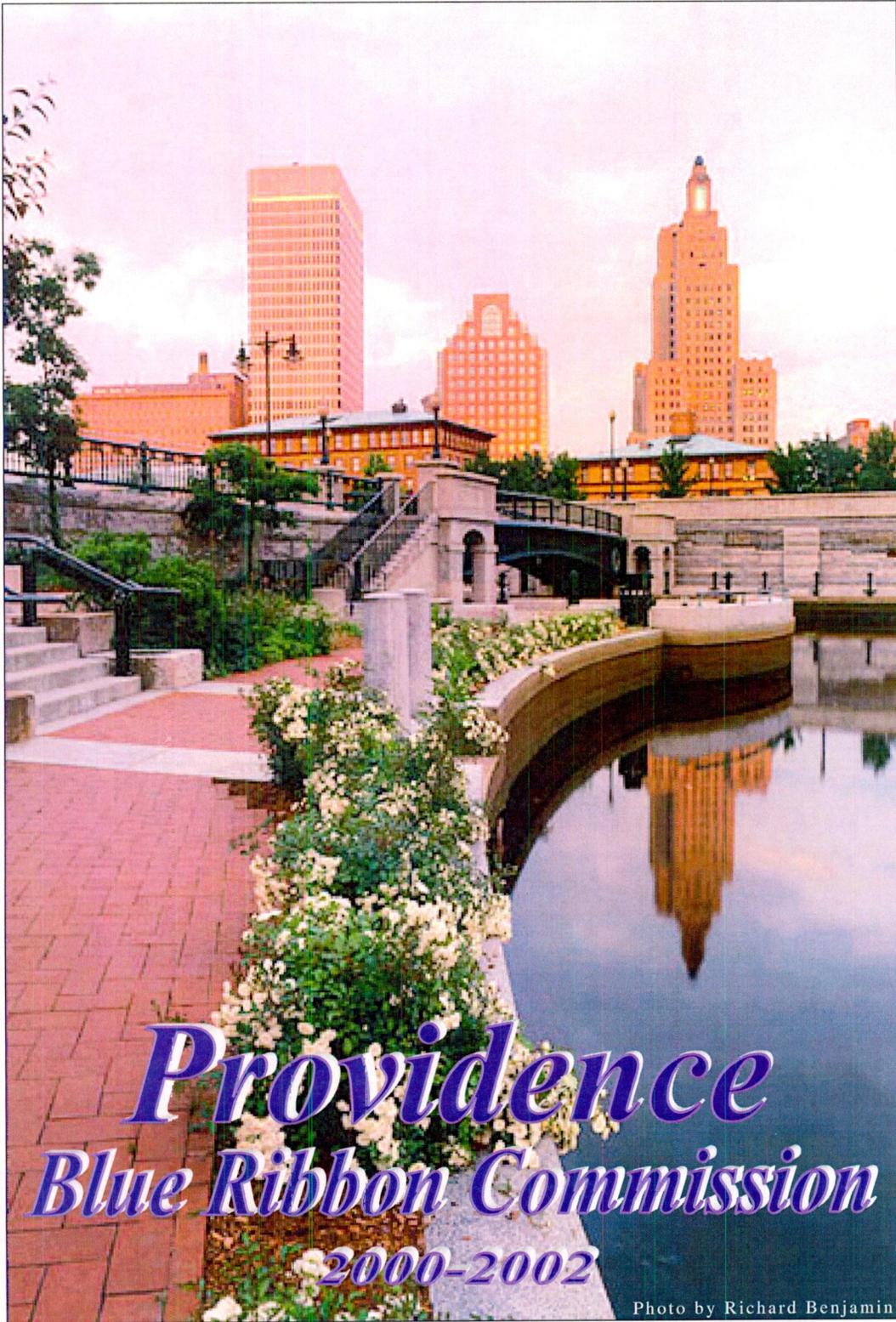


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*Providence*  
*Blue Ribbon Commission*  
*2000-2002*

Photo by Richard Benjamin



PROVIDENCE  
BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION  
2000-2002

# FINAL REPORT

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# **PROVIDENCE BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION**

December 2002

**Beverly J. Wiley, Chairwoman**  
*Blue Ribbon Commission*  
National Conference for  
Community and Justice

### **Commission Members**

Kenneth L. Brown  
Vice Chair

Diana Burdett  
Rhode Island State  
Council of Churches

Ernesto Figueroa  
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Melvin Graham &  
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Arthur Sweeney  
Retired Providence Police Officer

Mary Kay Harris &  
Monique Williams  
DARE

Reverend Dr. Virgil Wood  
Former President, Ministerial Alliance

Balbina A. Young  
Council President  
Providence City Council

On April 24, 2000, Resolution 248 was passed by the members of the Providence City Council to empanel and create a Blue Ribbon Commission to “review and investigate any and all aspects of the Providence Police Department.”

It was resolved by the council that the purpose and said creation of the Blue Ribbon Commission was to “study and advise the City Council on the practicability of implementing a plan of how to address” improvements within the Providence Police Department.

To reach that goal, the Blue Ribbon Commission met a total of 55 times, including five public hearings, over the past two and half years. In addition, the Commission invited guest speakers to Rhode Island to discuss initiatives in cities such as New Haven and Minneapolis. As a result of these combined efforts, the Commission developed six key recommendations:

1. National Accreditation for the Providence Police Department
2. Department-Wide Management Study
3. Community Policing
4. Continuing Education and Legal Training for Police Officers
5. Creation of a Civilian Review Board
6. Establishment and Implementation of a Minority Recruitment Plan

To expound on these recommendations, the members of the Blue Ribbon Commission respectfully submit the following final report to Providence City Council.

On behalf of the Blue Ribbon Commission, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mayor John J. Lombardi who, while serving as City Council President, sponsored the resolution establishing the Blue Ribbon Commission. I would also like to recognize and thank the entire Providence City Council for supporting the creation of this Commission. It has been a pleasure to serve the City of Providence in such a meaningful way.

Sincerely,

Beverly J. Wiley  
Chairwoman

# RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 248

Approved April 24, 2000

WHEREAS, The President of the Providence City Council is hereby requested to empanel and create a Blue Ribbon Commission to review and investigate any and all aspects of the Providence Police Department; and

WHEREAS, This newly created Blue Ribbon Commission would meet in order that some concrete discussion would be made relative to the ongoing Police problems that we have here within the City of Providence; and

WHEREAS, These problems have overflowed into our neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, With the creation of such a Blue Ribbon Commission it could address numerous problems that have been reported to the Providence Police; and

WHEREAS, The Blue Ribbon Commission is hereby requested to host and conduct many meetings with neighborhood groups and any other organizations or groups which could be helpful to the Blue Ribbon Commission.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the purpose and creation of said Commission is to study and advise the City Council on the practicability of implementing a plan of how to address this very serious problem we have here in the City of Providence.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That any and all reports from the Blue Ribbon Commission shall be submitted to the City Council by filing said reports with the City Clerk within a timely fashion.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the said Commission shall consist of Thirteen (13) members to be appointed by the President of the City Council.

This Commission shall have the following membership:

Commissioner of Public Safety or his or designee;  
President of the RI Council of Churches or his or her designee;  
President of the N.A.A.C.P. or his or her designee;  
Executive Director of the National Committee for Community Justice or his or her designee;  
President of the Roger Williams Law School or his or her designee;  
Member of Providence Community Organization or his or her designee;  
President of the Ministerial Alliance or his or her designee;  
Retired Providence Police Officer;  
Mayor or his designee;  
Council President or his designee;  
Member of the Providence Juvenile Hearing Board;  
Member of a Latino Organization;  
Providence Business Person.

CITY COUNCIL  
APR 18 2000  
READ AND PASSED

*[Signature]*  
PRES.  
*[Signature]*

APPROVED

APR 24 2000

*[Signature]*  
MAYOR

MAYOR

APR 24 2000

APPROVED

## BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Providence Blue Ribbon Commission is to research, study, develop and make concrete recommendations to the Providence City Council for the implementation of improved policies and procedures which will be embraced by all public safety officials in service to the people of the city of Providence.

These proposals will include a comprehensive set of short- and long-term objectives that will improve and foster an enhanced community relationship between our citizens and our public safety officers.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the 24th day of April 2000, the Providence Blue Ribbon Commission was created to address any and all aspects of the Providence Police Department.

The Providence Blue Ribbon Commission has worked diligently over the past two years in an attempt to learn what the community desires of its police department. In the process, the Commission became well informed on the best law enforcement models nationwide. Together, citizen outreach and hands-on research provided the Commission with a framework for an improved relationship between the Providence Police Department and the community it is sworn to serve.

The Commission met with state and local officials in Rhode Island, New Orleans and New Haven; held numerous community meetings to hear the voices of citizens; and met with the Providence Fraternal Order of Police to gain a better perspective on policy from police officers themselves.

In addition, the Commission invited professionals in the field of law enforcement, civilian review, and community policing to Rhode Island for intensive meetings, and Commission members attended seminars conducted by the Performance Institute Conference Center on subjects ranging from racial profiling to use of force.

During the course of the Commission's work, several themes emerged relating to organizational structure within the Providence Police Department. The Commission determined that six key areas were crucial to substantive change within the departments.

As such, the Providence Blue Ribbon Commission prepared this final report to outline the following six recommendations:

- I. National Accreditation for the Providence Police Department
- II. Department-Wide Management Study
- III. Community Policing
- IV. Continuing Education and Legal Training for Police Officers
- V. Creation of a Civilian Review Board
- VI. Establishment and Implementation of a Minority Recruitment Plan

# I. NATIONAL ACCREDITATION FOR THE PROVIDENCE POLICE DEPARTMENT

## RECOMMENDATION

Accreditation of the Providence Police Department will enhance the administration of justice by meeting standards for leadership, resource management and service delivery. The Blue Ribbon Commission recommends that the Providence Police Department apply for accreditation with the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA).

## COMMENTARY

As voiced by the majority of citizens who attended the Blue Ribbon Commission's hearings, the public appears to have lost confidence in the ability of the police to service their need for protection. Too often, the public stated that the police were opponents. Other issues, which were delineated in the Interim Report of the Blue Ribbon Commission, are:

- the lack of minority representation in the Providence Police Department, especially since Providence, according to the 2000 census, is a majority-minority city
- the need for continuing education and legal training for police officers (on-the-job training)
- the creation of a civilian review board
- a department-wide management audit, i.e. reports to whom and what they are responsible for

The Blue Ribbon Commission found that accreditation would address all of the above issues in a manner which would restore community confidence in the Providence Police Department. Accreditation also gives the department a set of standards by which all personnel are measured equally and enables employees to have pride in their department, knowing it represents the very best in law enforcement.

## BENEFITS

1. Greater Accountability within the Agency – Accreditation standards give the Chief Executive Officer a proven management system of written directives, sound training, clearly defined lines of authority, and routine reports that support decision making and resource allocation.
2. Increased Community Involvement - Accreditation embodies the precept of community-oriented policing. It creates a forum in which police and citizens work together to prevent and control challenges confronting law enforcement, and provides clear direction about community expectations.

3. Improved Employee Morale – Accreditation symbolizes professionalism, excellence and competence. It requires written directives and training to inform employees about policies and practices, facilities, and equipment to ensure employee safety, as well as processes to safeguard employee rights. Employees know that the directives apply to everyone equally, and promotions are based on merit.
4. Improved Recruitment and Selection – The benefits of effective recruitment and selection policies are manifested in a lower rate of personnel turnover, fewer disciplinary problems, higher morale, better community relations, and more efficient and effective services.
  - A. The first concept is the expectation that an accredited agency will be an Equal Opportunity Employer. EEO understands equal opportunity as the removal of barriers that prevent people from being treated fairly for employment purposes.
  - B. The second concept is the expectation that the agency's sworn work force will be representative of the available workforce in the agency's service community relative to its ethnic and gender composition. If any group is underrepresented, the recruitment plan will provide proactive steps to encourage members of that group to seek employment opportunities. No agency is ever expected to hire an individual who is not qualified to perform the duties of the job involved, however, the above two standards (EEO and underrepresented recruitment plans) are operative for all agencies regardless of whether there are job vacancies. {31-1 }
5. Control Liability Insurance Cost – At present, the City of Providence is self-insured, but with rising costs related to civil suits, Providence, like other large cities, will undoubtedly need to seek outside insurance. Once accredited, it will be easier to purchase affordable police liability insurance.

In addition, accreditation provides a stronger defense against lawsuits and citizen complaints. Accredited agencies are better able to defend themselves against lawsuits and citizen complaints, and many accredited agencies report a decline in these areas.

6. Support from Government Officials – Accreditation provides objective evidence of the agency's commitment to excellence in leadership, resource management and service delivery. Government officials can be more confident in the agency's ability to operate efficiently and meet community needs.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

At present, there is an interim chief of police. Until a permanent chief is named, it will be difficult to implement the accreditation process. The former Commissioner of Public Safety is a member of the Blue Ribbon Commission, and states that some policies, especially in regard to the new public safety complex, have been put in place, laying the groundwork for accreditation.

The accreditation program with CALEA is a voluntary program, and is a joint effort of CALEA and the four major law enforcement membership associations:

- International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)
- National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)
- National Sheriff's Association (NSA) and the
- Police Executive Research Forum (PERF)

CALEA was formed in 1979 to establish a body of standards designed to:

- (1) increase law enforcement agency capabilities to prevent and control crime
- (2) increase agency effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of law enforcement services
- (3) increase cooperation and coordination with other law enforcement agencies and with other agencies of the criminal justice system
- (4) increase citizen and employee confidence in the goals, objectives, policies, and practices of the agency.

The Standards Manual contains 439 standards, each of which is composed of three parts: the standard statement, the commentary, and the levels of compliance.

The standards reflect the best professional requirements and practices for a law enforcement agency. The standards statement is binding on the agency. The commentary supports the standards statement, but is not binding. The levels of compliance denote the relative importance assigned to each standard and, based upon agency size, are denoted mandatory (M), other-than-mandatory (O) or not applicable due to size (N/A).

The agency applying for accreditation is expected to comply with all applicable mandatory (M) standards (except in rare instances when the Commission grants a waiver) and at least 80% of the applicable other-than-mandatory (O) standards.

The accreditation process consists of five general phases or steps:

1. Application – The accreditation process begins when an agency applies to CALEA for applicant status. The application form requires the signature of the agency's chief executive officer. Once agency eligibility has been confirmed, the agency and the Commission sign an accreditation agreement that identifies what is expected of each party. The agency completes and returns an "Agency Profile Questionnaire" (APQ).
2. Self Assessment – The return of the APQ triggers the delivery of all necessary materials for the accreditation manager to use in conducting the agency's assessment. With instructional guidance from Commission staff, the agency conducts a self-assessment to comply with all applicable standards and gathers proofs of compliance for later verification by the on-site assessment team. The time needed to finish self-assessment varies depending on the number of personnel assigned to the project, and the extent of work required to bring the agency into compliance. In most agencies, self-assessment takes up to 24 months. When the agency is satisfied that it has completed all compliance,

preparation, and planning tasks, it notifies the Commission that is ready to become a candidate for accreditation.

3. On-Site Assessment – The Commission approves the agency’s candidate status and selects and trains a team of assessors who do the on-site review. During the on-site visit, the assessors review all the standards, and, in particular, verify the agency’s compliance with all applicable standards in a non-adversarial fashion by checking its proofs and interviewing operations and management personnel. The assessors also conduct a public hearing to elicit citizens’ comments. If the final report reflects compliance with all the applicable standards and with required on-site activities, the agency is scheduled for a Commission review.
4. Commission Review – The lead assessor writes a report of the team’s findings, which is forwarded through staff to the Board of Commissioners. During hearings conducted at its three annual meetings, the Commission evaluates assessment reports, receives testimony, and either awards or defers accreditation. The agency and its CEO are invited to the hearing, but attendance is not required. If it defers an agency’s accreditation, the Commission provides an outline of the deficiencies that must be corrected in order to gain full compliance with applicable standards. If, after the review, the Commission is satisfied that the agency has met all compliance requirements, the Commission awards the agency accredited status. Accreditation is good for a **three-year period**.
5. Maintaining Compliance and Re-Accreditation – The agency submits annual reports to the Commission attesting to continued compliance and actions taken to resolve non-compliance. At the conclusion of the three-year period, the Commission offers the agency an opportunity to repeat the process and continue accredited status into the future.

## STAFFING

Personnel would be needed to review all standards to identify those that are not applicable to its responsibilities. The Chief Executive Officer signs the accreditation application, and then the agency would need personnel to do the self-assessment and to complete all the compliance, preparation and planning tasks before notifying CALEA that the department is ready to become a candidate for accreditation.

## BUDGET

1. Application Fee – The initial application package from CALEA has a cost of \$250.00. This includes Commission publications, application forms, and accreditation contracts. This fee is non-refundable unless the agency is ruled ineligible to participate in the program. The fee will be credited towards the agency’s accreditation fee if a contract is signed within six months.
2. Self-Assessment and On-Site Fees – The accreditation fee is due when the agency signs its accreditation contract, and may be paid in a lump sum or in two installments: at contract execution, and at the 18<sup>th</sup> month of self-assessment. The self-assessment fees are based on

the number of employees (the Providence Police Department fits within the 200-999 employee range, and would be responsible for a fee of \$12,325.00, or two installments of \$6,470).

3. Contract Extension Fees – Most agencies take 24 months to complete self-assessment. There is a three-year limit on the accreditation contract. If an agency reaches the 36<sup>th</sup> month of self-assessment and has not become accredited, its contract may be extended annually for 35% of its original fee.
4. Unexpected Fees – It is not possible to determine the costs that would be incurred in bringing the department in line with CALEA standards.

### MEASURABLE GOALS/EVALUATION TOOLS

When a police department becomes accredited, they have developed written policies and procedures for every aspect of policing. Sworn and civilian personnel are made aware of the actions and attitudes expected of them, and can therefore act without hesitation in consonance with the agency's values and policies.

Secondly, members of the public are provided a general standard by which they can measure the performance of the agency. The policy statement would also specify that the agency intends to be responsive to, and protect the constitutional rights of, the community.

To maintain its accreditation, the agency must remain in compliance with applicable standards. The agency submits annual reports, and, if necessary, the accreditation commission reserves the right to schedule interim hearings to consider continuing accredited status if noncompliance becomes a serious issue. At the conclusion of the three-year period, the Commission offers the agency an opportunity to repeat the process and continue accredited status into the future.

(Source: CALEA Handbook)

## II. DEPARTMENT-WIDE MANAGEMENT STUDY

### RECOMMENDATION

The Blue Ribbon Commission agrees that the police department needs a management system that measures crime rate, community integration and neighborhood problem areas. The regular review and evaluation of these issues is necessary for continued growth and improvement in service delivery to the community.

### COMMENTARY

A department-wide management study will work to assess the overall structure and functionality of the Providence Police Department. The study will help identify areas that are working well and those areas that are in need of improvement. The basic elements of a management study are:

- Crime and Public Safety
- Department Efficiency
- Public Perceptions
- Organizational Structure
- Patrol Operation
- Criminal Investigations
- Technical Services
- Criminal Justice Systems
- Racial Profiling
- Handling of Complaints
- Human Resources
- Organizational Culture

Management studies are common practice for law enforcement agencies throughout the country. Below is a list of some cities that have engaged consultants to perform evaluations of their police departments:

1. Philadelphia, PA
2. Annapolis, MD
3. Salt Lake City, UT
4. Fort Lauderdale, FL
5. Hartford, CT
6. Chandler, AZ
7. Oxnard, CA
8. Allentown, PA
9. Olathe, KS

The organizational structure of the department is the starting point for any management analysis. As evidenced by organizational charts from other cities' police departments, there are many models for law enforcement agencies. A close study of all organizational options must be conducted to ensure that the Providence Police Department is utilizing a structure that coincides with the department's goals and mission.

## **BENEFITS**

A management study will bring higher levels of efficiency and professionalism to the Providence Police Department. In addition, the following long-term objectives will be achieved:

- Higher level of trust by police officers and the community of the department's of the organizational format
- Improved working relationship with the community to prevent and/or decrease crime
- Greater protection of civil rights for those in the community

## **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The Providence Police Department must first identify its goals in a management study. Then, department administration must create an RFP (Request for Proposals) and hire a consultant to conduct the study.

Two national organizations that conduct management studies are:

**Institute for Law and Justice**  
1018 Duke Street  
Alexandria, Virginia  
Phone: 703-684-5300  
Fax: 703-739-5533  
Email: [ilj@ilj.org](mailto:ilj@ilj.org)

**Carroll Buracker & Associates**  
1881 College Avenue, Suite 100  
Harrisonburg, Virginia 22802  
Phone: (540) 564-1500  
Fax: (540) 564-1538  
Email: [buracker@shentel.net](mailto:buracker@shentel.net)

## **STAFFING**

An administrative study of the department will examine staffing needs, along with a review and analysis of areas in the department that have shortfalls. The study will objectively and quantitatively measure these areas and provide recommendations for improvement.

## **BUDGET**

The range of cost for a management study is still being determined.

## **MEASURABLE GOALS/EVALUATION TOOLS**

The emphasis on performance in the community must be top priority. The department needs a focus on the goals of improved community relations, increased visibility and integration of officers with the members of the community.

Evaluation tools include:

- Documentation for improved service delivery
  - Cultural and ethnic sensitivity
  - Using data to improve community service by the department
  - Ongoing reassessment of needs and targeting problem areas for improvement
  - Continuous evaluation of long- and short-term goals
-

### **III. COMMUNITY POLICING**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

Community Policing creates partnership through the civilian perspective. Cities throughout the nation, including New Haven, Boston, Portland, Oregon and Washington, D.C. have implemented department-wide community policing models. The Providence Police Department must adopt a department-wide community policing program that takes into account best practices, i.e. walking patrols.

#### **COMMENTARY**

Community Policing provides a way for law enforcement agencies to improve community relations by supporting communities that are invested in their future. The Providence Police Department must use the talents of the residents and business owners in an effort to understand the function of the community and improve relations.

Police officers are the providers of safety in the community. Community policing reduces neighborhood crime and teen pregnancy and decreases truancy in schools. The police department needs to combine its effort with local government and residents to carry forward the mission of a safe community.

#### **BENEFITS**

As mentioned previously, New Haven, Connecticut has implemented a successful community policing model. Benefits to the Providence Police Department and the Providence community would be similar to those noted by Kay D. Codish, Director, Training and Education on Diversity of the New Haven Police Academy, as follows:

- Improved community and police relations
- Exchange of information
- Creation of a cohesive relationship between the police department and other city departments to solve neighborhood problems
- Neighborhood empowerment
- Promotes a problem-solving partnership between the police and the community
- Officers become responsible and take ownership
- Communities work together to create solutions

#### **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

At the core of successful community policing is community engagement and lasting partnerships. One of the greatest challenges a law enforcement leader faces is creating an environment that fosters community involvement. There are a number of important steps and

conditions that have bearing on whether a law enforcement agency will succeed in this kind of community policing. The police department must:

- Know all the communities of Providence
- Create a liaison with community leaders
- Educate officers on cultural issues
- Offer training opportunities for the community

In addition, the Providence Police Department may wish to follow the model utilized by the Washington, D.C. police department by involving the following six core groups in the establishment of community policing:

1. The Police Agency – all department personnel, from the chief executive to the line officer, civilian and sworn officers.
2. The Community – formal and informal community leaders, boards of directors, ministers, educators, organizers, citizens on the street
3. Elected Civic Officials – local, regional, state and national officials
4. Business Community – all businesses from large corporations to small neighborhood shops
5. Agencies – non-profits, senior citizen, youth groups, volunteer and charitable groups
6. Media- both electronic and print media.

Most importantly, community police officers should not be housed in outside agencies or organizations because they lose the fundamental and visible elements of police work—patrol and investigations—which are the public’s first measure of service delivery.

## **STAFFING**

No new staffing will be required for community policing, just re-training of existing staff.

## **BUDGET**

There will be minimal cost to implement community policing, outside of training.

## **MEASURABLE GOALS/EVALUATION TOOLS**

The Blue Ribbon Commission recommends community surveys on a twice-yearly basis, as well as regular community forums to determine the efficacy of community policing. In addition, the community will be asked to evaluate the department’s progress. A community oversight board may also be considered to evaluate the department as it pertains to the department’s efforts in community policing.

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## IV. CONTINUING EDUCATION AND LEGAL TRAINING FOR POLICE OFFICERS

### RECOMMENDATION

Continuing training and education of law enforcement officers is critical to the promotion of justice. The Blue Ribbon Commission recommends the establishment of a Police Officers' Education and Training Program with specific training and educational requirements for all officers and law enforcement personnel.

### COMMENTARY

Continuing education and in-service training must be mandatory for all sworn officers, as well as full-time staff of the Providence Police Department, with appropriate requirements for each.

Currently, the Providence Police Department has no established training/education program for its officers and staff. There is no police academy staff when a training academy is not in session, and no one assigned to oversee training programs. All courses, seminars and in-service training are currently done on an ad-hoc basis, and determined individually. No short- or long-term goals or strategies exist for a department-wide approach to education and training. The only ongoing training for officers is in the areas of firearms and domestic violence, which are required by law. In addition, some officers do take advantage of the State of Rhode Island's education incentive, which allows sworn officers to take courses in law enforcement at area colleges and universities. Finally, and most surprisingly, there is no budget line item for training in the police department budget.

Most mid- and large-sized cities throughout the country have a training and education division within their police departments, and at least one staff member who oversees such a division.

There are many important areas of learning that Providence police officers are not being exposed to, and about which they are not being encouraged to learn. The adage "knowledge is power" is particularly important in reference to a law enforcement agency. Officers acting without proper knowledge can create increased liability for their department and the entire city. The danger and seriousness of police work mandates proactive steps to gain greater understanding of best practices in the field.

In addition, in-service training may place officers in learning environments with those from other cities and states and offer a broader perspective on policing approaches.

## **BENEFITS**

Continuing education and training provides a range of personal and professional benefits, for the individual officer, the entire department, and the larger community. In general, ongoing, in-service training enhances skills, improves the quality of police service, and increases community confidence in the department.

## **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

A director or staff member must be hired to head the Police Officers' Education and Training Program. Such a director would devise a plan that includes the following:

1. Minimum courses of study for basic and in-service training for police officers and establish basic in-service training requirements
2. Approve or revoke the approval of any school, seminar or training facility which may be utilized to comply with the educational and training requirements as established by the department
3. Establish the minimum qualifications for instructors
4. Promote the most efficient and economically-sound program for police training by utilizing existing facilities, programs and qualified Federal, State and local police personnel.

National organizations such as the Police Foundation and the International Association of Police Chiefs offer training in the following areas:

Police Liability, Integrity for Leadership, Policing Diverse Communities, Ethics, Leadership Development, Strategic Planning, Strategies for Neighborhood and Community Policing, Arson Control Strategies, Reducing School Violence, Less Lethal Use of Force, Racial and Criminal Profiling, and others.

## **STAFFING**

One staff member must be assigned to oversee the education and training division, while a minimum of two support staff will be necessary to research training opportunities, make arrangements for facilitators and officers participating in training, and other administrative duties.

## **BUDGET**

There should be no cost for staffing, as staff may be shifted from other departments. However, a minimum budget for the first year for training and educational costs must be allocated in the budget. This figure will need to be revised after the implementation plan is established.

Many of the courses mentioned above are available as nearby as Boston, at a cost of under \$300, with special group rates.

## MEASURABLE GOALS/EVALUATION TOOLS

The department must create realizable goals, such as every officer obtaining a minimal level of training in the next two years.

Ongoing evaluation tools include:

- Feedback from officers and staff after training
  - Feedback from the community on police interaction and understanding
  - Officers' knowledge of national standards for ethics and professionalism.
-

## V. CIVILIAN REVIEW BOARD

### RECOMMENDATION

The Blue Ribbon Commission, in both its interim and final report, has recommended the adoption of a police civilian review board for the City of Providence. The civilian review board would be responsible (a) for investigating and hearing complaints involving local law enforcement officers, and (b) for providing additional citizen oversight regarding local law enforcement policies, practices and procedures.

### COMMENTARY

This Commission's recommendation that the City Council adopt a police civilian review board was first made to the City Council in the interim report of the Blue Ribbon Commission previously submitted to the City Council. The Blue Ribbon Commission is gratified by the action taken by the Providence City Council in proceeding expeditiously with its adoption of the Commission's recommendation even before our submission of a final report. With the adoption of the Providence External Review Authority (PERA) on November 8, 2002, the City Council has taken the necessary first step in restoring confidence in the Providence Police Department.

The Blue Ribbon Commission has been a consistent advocate for a civilian review board. In fact, the Commission worked closely with those stakeholders involved in the drafting of the final version of Providence External Review Authority ordinance passed by the City Council. This process provided a forum within which both the concerns of Commission members and the needs of a deserving citizenry could be addressed.

The Blue Ribbon Commission conducted an exhaustive study of the various civilian review boards in place throughout the country. Among the cities reviewed, were: Minneapolis, Minnesota; Miami, Florida; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and San Francisco, California. In addition, the Commission reviewed a variety of state statutes and local ordinances addressing both police officer rights generally, and specific protections afforded police officers. With City Council passage of PERA, Providence joins over 80 cities nationwide that have instituted similar boards. The Blue Ribbon Commission understands and appreciates the great demands placed upon police officers by its citizens, while also recognizing that police officers cannot do their jobs in an overly political environment. Nevertheless, the Commission believes that the overwhelming majority of police officers in the Providence Police Department need not fear a civilian review board.

The Blue Ribbon Commission also is sensitive to the need for the Providence External Review Authority to co-exist with the State of Rhode Island's Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights' (R.I.G.L. 42-28.6). In both the State of California and the State of Florida, for example, there are local civilian review boards that co-exist with state statutes defining a bill of rights for law enforcement officers.

We believe that such a case can be made here also. Indeed, one distinction between the Rhode Island statute and that of other states is in the specific area of police officer discipline. While the Commission found other state statutes that addressed disciplinary issues, the Rhode Island statute, however, is very specific regarding the actual length and type of suspension police chiefs and/or commanding officers are permitted to dispense to their line officers.

In addressing this issue in some detail, the Blue Ribbon Commission is grateful for the contributions made by Professor Andrew Horwitz, Associate Professor of Law and Director of the Criminal Defense Clinic at the Roger Williams University School of Law. To assist the Commission in its deliberations over the recommendation for adoption of the Providence External Review Authority, Professor Horwitz provided the Commission with a written opinion regarding the compatibility of PERA and the State of Rhode Island's Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights. In his opinion, Professor Horwitz indicates that there appears to be no conflict between the Providence External Review Authority and the State of Rhode Island's Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights. Professor Horwitz asserts that state law, which governs the initial investigatory stage, is limited on its face to investigations or interrogations conducted by a law enforcement agency, and, for that reason, the state law would not conflict with any investigation or hearing conducted by the Providence External Review Authority.

In addition, while the Commission also has expressed concern regarding the effect of both the Providence Home Rule Charter and a 1973 federal court consent decree involving the City of Providence and the Providence Police Department, Professor Horwitz also concludes in his opinion letter that the PERA ordinance is not in conflict with either the Providence Home Rule Charter or federal court consent decree.

## **BENEFITS**

The City of Providence will benefit from improved relations between the police department and its citizens. A process that is both open and fair will provide accountability and give complainants an opportunity to be heard in a non-threatening environment. Further, a properly functioning civilian review board can address both legitimate and frivolous claims, thereby affording police officers the protections that non-public proceedings do not. Indeed, all police officers are affected adversely by a system in which the citizens of the city of Providence have no confidence. The Commission believes that a civilian review board can change that unfortunate perception and create an environment in which police officers gain a renewed respect from the people they serve.

Indeed, as stated by Ms. Patricia J. Hughes, Director of the Minneapolis Civilian Police Review Authority, and an expert with whom the Commission consulted, their civilian review board improved relations between officers and civilians in unexpected ways. Much of the work of the Minneapolis reviewing authority involves mediation between the two parties, thereby not only reducing the need for disciplinary action, but also giving complainants and police officers the support they deserve in securing a satisfactory resolution to complaints.

## **STAFFING**

As outlined in the Providence External Review Board ordinance, an Executive Director and Legal Counsel will be hired. In addition, staff investigators will be retained as necessary.

## **BUDGET**

The Commission estimates that the annual budget for the Providence External Review Authority will be \$250,000.

## **MEASURABLE GOALS/EVALUATION TOOLS**

The Blue Ribbon Commission recommends, consistent with its overall recommendation regarding oversight, the establishment of a citizen oversight committee to ensure that the Providence External Review Board is functioning in accordance with the goals and the performance standards set forth in the Providence External Review Authority ordinance.

Finally, in order to ensure the highest standards of accountability and ethics, the Blue Ribbon Commission encourages the members of the Providence External Review Board to prescribe the qualifications and establish the responsibilities of its members.

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## VI. ESTABLISHMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A MINORITY RECRUITMENT & PROMOTION PLAN

### RECOMMENDATION

Plans for minority and women recruitment and advancement must be established and implemented to promote a diverse department. Given the current imbalance within the Providence Police Department, the Blue Ribbon Commission advocates a recruitment plan weighted towards minorities and women until the police force mirrors the profile of the city of Providence. The Commission strongly recommends implementation of steps for minority and female advancement within the police department.

### COMMENTARY

The Blue Ribbon Commission supports a creative and innovative approach to the recruitment and hiring of minorities and women. This approach will address the current unequal representation within the Providence Police Department and ensure that the police force represents the diversity of the city of Providence.

A diverse police department is an imperative first step in addressing critical issues in police and community relations. *Miscommunication, bias based on gender, race or sexual orientation, abrasive behavior and remarks, and excessive use of force were among the most frequently cited complaints from residents during the Commission's community forums in the fall of 2000.* Nearly all of these can be resolved by recruiting members to the force who share similar backgrounds with the people they serve. Such officers will have a better understanding of the cultural and social context of an urban population.

Minorities and women have different life experiences than the traditional officer, and bring with them new ideas and perspectives. An excellent example of this is provided in "*Recruiting and Retaining Women: A Self-Assessment Guide for Law Enforcement*" prepared by the National Center for Women and Policing. The guide points out that, traditionally, women who had been physically or sexually abused were eliminated during the psychological element of the recruitment exams. It was believed such an event would hinder their ability to perform law enforcement abilities. In fact, as the guide points out, women who are victims of such crimes have the potential for greater compassion, knowledge and understanding when dealing with these crimes, and for recognizing them.

According to the most recent Affirmative Action Plan for the Providence Police Department (still based on 1990 Census figures; this must be updated as soon as possible), the City should have the following numbers of individuals in entry level patrol positions in the police department:

- Females: 207
- Blacks: 17

- Hispanics: 23
- Asians/Pacific Islanders: 9
- Native Americans: 2

To reach those goals, the department would have to hire **176** more women; **4** more Hispanics and **1** more Native American. However, the 2000 Census figures indicate that the demographics of Providence have changed dramatically in the last 10 years, and accordingly, the above numbers would be much higher.

Elements of the advancement and recruitment plans should include:

- Committees made up of civilians and community leaders to help implement the recruitment plan
- Mentoring for minorities and women in the department to ensure advancement into leadership roles. Mentoring also helps with retention.
- Improved promotional strategies
- Recruitment flyers and all material must state the department's clear intention to hire women and minorities
- Race- and gender-biased language must be removed from all training and recruitment materials

## BENEFITS

The benefits of establishing a minority recruitment plan are many. Some include:

- Greater proportion of minorities and women on the force will benefit the department, not only in working with the community, but also in how it functions internally. Balanced representation on a police force may translate directly into ***reduced gender and race discrimination and harassment within*** the department, as all officers and employees are exposed to learn about people from many kinds of backgrounds.
- Minorities, particularly women, possess skills that are beneficial to the ***implementation of department wide community policing***, such as communication and verbal skills. In fact, according to both the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Center for Women & Policing, female officers are viewed as more likely to diffuse situations without the use of force.
- Minority and female representation in the police department is a necessary element in ***national accreditation*** of the police department—the first recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Commission, discussed previously in this report.
- Improved police-community relations

## STAFFING

Devising and implementing a minority recruitment plan must go hand-in-hand with a reorganization and overhaul of the training academy.

At least half of academy instructors must be minorities or women. Additionally, female instructors must be used to teach defense and firearms classes, so as to eliminate stereotypes of women not being able to perform such functions. Careful screening of instructors is imperative to eliminate the possibility of bias in the academy. Each instructor should be trained in civil rights, discrimination and sexual harassment laws.

As recommended by the Center for Women & Policing, and implemented in the New Haven Police Department, the Academy director should have a solid understanding of “issues of diversity, discrimination and police culture.” A civilian director should be considered.

## **BUDGET**

A preliminary budget of \$100,000 would help in designing appropriate recruitment material, as well as training and re-organization costs.

## **MEASURABLE GOALS/EVALUATION TOOLS**

In New Haven the results of the restructured academy and department were evident over a period of several years. After nine years, the New Haven police department saw an increase of women from 2% to 15.5%. Currently, 22 percent are black males and 10 percent are Hispanic males. Compare that with Providence—6.4% female; 5.5% black male and 3.9% Hispanic male—and it is clear that the Providence Police Department is far behind.

The most significant evaluation tool will be the increase of minorities and women serving both as entry level patrol officers and among the higher ranks of the department.

The Providence Police Department, with community leaders and elected officials must create realistic goals regarding the timeline for implementation of these plans.

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# CONCLUSION

The focus areas outlined in this report can serve as the foundation for an organizational shift in the Providence Police Department that will foster an enhanced working relationship between the citizens and the public safety officers of the City of Providence.

The Blue Ribbon Commission respectfully submits to the Providence City Council recommendations, as summarized below, with anticipation that the council will adopt legislation to provide for implementation thereof.

## **1. National Accreditation for the Providence Police Department**

*The Blue Ribbon Commission recommends that the council adopt an ordinance requiring that the police department be accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), a national accrediting institution. The ordinance should include a requirement that the police department prepare a timeline for implementation and status reports every six months to the city council and mayor.*

## **2. Department-Wide Management Study**

*The Blue Ribbon Commission recommends that the council pass a resolution requesting that the Providence Police Department engage in a department-wide management study as soon as possible. The consultant who completes the study should be experienced with management studies of similarly sized law enforcement agencies. A special commission should be established by the council to oversee the management study.*

## **3. Community Policing**

*The Blue Ribbon Commission recommends that the police department adopt department-wide community policing, and that the city council approve the appointment of the Commissioner of Public Safety contingent on that individual's commitment to establishing said community policing effort.*

## **4. Continuing Education and Legal Training for Police Officers**

*The Blue Ribbon Commission recommends the establishment of a Police Officers' Education and Training Program, with a full-time director assigned to head the program. The Commission supports appropriate amendments to the Providence Home Rule Charter relating to departmental structure.*

## **5. Civilian Review Board**

*The Commission supports the recently adopted ordinance creating the Providence External Review Authority and urges council members to support any necessary amendments to the Rhode Island Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights to allow PERA to be more effective. Secondly, the Commission recommends that the council initiate an oversight board to ensure the efficacy of PERA.*

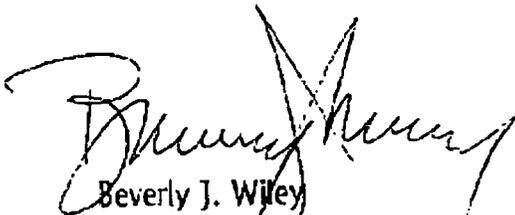
**6. Establishment & Implementation of a Minority Recruitment and Promotion Plan**

*The Blue Ribbon Commission recommends the immediate adoption of a hiring and promotion plan for women and minorities. The plan must be geared towards police department staffing that represents the gender and racial make-up of the city's population. In addition, the plan must include not only recruitment goals, but promotion goals as well. Such a plan must be submitted to the City Council and the Office of Mayor for review.*

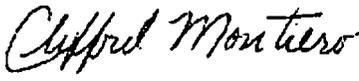
**7. Establishment of a Citizens' Oversight Committee**

*The Blue Ribbon Commission recommends the establishment of a citizens' oversight committee to ensure that the City of Providence implements all of the recommendations of the Final Report of the Blue Ribbon Commission. This oversight committee shall be empowered to request and receive a status report from the police department every six months.*

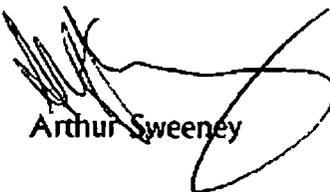
**Respectfully submitted, this day, Wednesday, December 18, 2002 by the members of the Providence Blue Ribbon Commission,**

  
Beverly J. Wiley  
Chairwoman

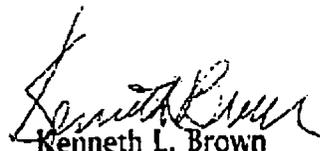
  
Diana Burdett

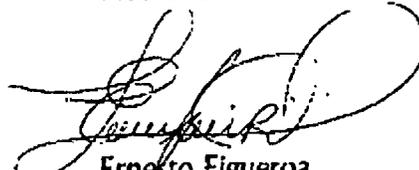
  
Clifford Montiero

  
Professor Harvey Rishikof

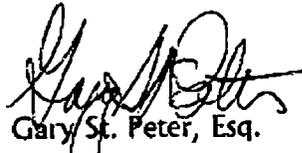
  
Arthur Sweeney

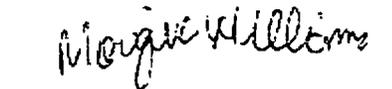
  
Rev. Dr. Virgil Wood

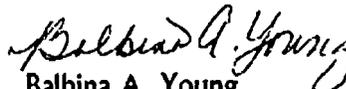
  
Kenneth L. Brown  
Vice Chair

  
Ernesto Figueroa

  
John J. Partington

  
Gary St. Peter, Esq.

  
Monique Williams  
Mary Kay Harris

  
Balbina A. Young  
Council President

## ADDENDUM

The Commission has met on the following dates:

- 1) April 5, 2000 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A." Council President Lombardi, Councilwoman Young and Councilman Jackson were present to discuss the creation of the Commission and the problems in the Providence Police Department.
- 2) April 25, 2000 at Providence City Hall in the City Council Chambers.
- 3) May 16, 2000 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A."
- 4) June 13, 2000 at Providence City Hall in the Conference Room.
- 5) June 29, 2000 at Providence City Hall in the City Council Chambers.
- 6) July 18, 2000 at Providence City Hall in the City Council Chambers. Derek Ellerman from the Center for Police and Community presented information regarding the external review policy for civilian complaints.
- 7) August 8, 2000 a Public Hearing was held at the DaVinci Center, 470 Charles Street, Providence.
- 8) August 9, 2000 a Public Hearing was held at the West End Community Center at 109 Bucklin Street, Providence.
- 9) August 10, 2000 a Public Hearing was held at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. School on Camp Street, Providence.
- 10) August 15, 2000 a Public Hearing was held at the Davey Lopes Center at 227 Dudley Street, Providence.
- 11) September 19, 2000 at Providence City Hall, Committee Room "A" – No Official Quorum but an informal meeting was held.
- 12) October 3, 2000 at Providence City Hall, Committee Room "A."
- 13) October 17, 2000 at Providence City Hall, Committee Room "A." Lois Wims, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Rhode Island Select Commission on Race and Police-Community Relations, was invited to discuss common interests between the Blue Ribbon Commission and the State Commission.
- 14) November 14, 2000 at the University of Rhode Island, Multi-Cultural Center, Room 201, Kingston, RI, Colonel Stephen McCartney, Chief of the Warwick Police Department, and

Colonel Paul Verrecchia, Chief of the Brown University Police Department, were invited to discuss the accreditation process of their departments. Thomas Wilson, Deputy Chief of the Warwick Police Department, was also in attendance to contribute to the discussion.

- 15) December 7, 2000 at the Roger Williams University Law School, Ten Metacom Avenue, Bristol, RI.
- 16) December 11, 2000 a Public Hearing was held at the Lillian Feinstein Senior Center on Chalkstone Avenue.  
Public Hearing was held jointly with the Rhode Island Select Commission on Race and Police-Community Relations.
- 17) January 16, 2001 at Providence City Hall, Committee Room "A."  
Lois Wims, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Rhode Island Select Commission on Race and Police-Community Relations, was in attendance to discuss the public hearing held on December 11, 2000.
- 18) February 6, 2001 at Providence City Hall, Committee Room "A."
- 19) February 20, 2001 at Providence City Hall, Committee Room "A."
- 20) March 20, 2001 at Providence City Hall, Committee Room "A."
- 21) March 27, 2001 at Providence City Hall, Committee Room "A."
- 22) April 3, 2001 at Providence City Hall, Conference Room.
- 23) April 10, 2001 at Providence City Hall, Conference Room.
- 24) April 17, 2001 at Providence City Hall, Committee Room "A."
- 25) Tuesday, April 17, 2001 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"
- 26) Tuesday, May 15, 2001 at Providence City Hall in The Conference Room
- 27) Thursday, May 17, 2001 at Providence City Hall in the Aldermen's Chambers  
\*\*\* The Blue Ribbon Commission presents its Interim Report at a press conference. \*\*\*
- 28) Tuesday, June 19, 2001 at Providence City Hall in the Conference Room  
An official quorum was not present but an informal discussion was held.
- 29) Tuesday, July 10, 2001 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"
- 30) Tuesday, July 24, 2001 at Providence City Hall in The Conference Room  
An official quorum was not present but an informal discussion was held.

- 31) Tuesday, September 4, 2001 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"
- 32) Tuesday, October 2, 2001 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"
- 33) Monday, October 15, 2001 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"  
An official quorum was not present but an informal discussion was held.
- 34) Wednesday, November 14, 2001 at the Whispering Pines Conference Center, W. Alton Jones Campus URI, 401 Victory Highway, West Greenwich, RI  
Patricia Hughes, Executive Director, Minneapolis Civilian Police Review Authority was invited to speak to the Commission about the implementation of a civilian review board.
- 35) Friday, November 16, 2001 at Roger Williams University, The Tiverton Room, Portsmouth, RI Kay D. Codish, Ph. D., Director of the New Haven Police Department Academy & Division of Training and Education was invited to speak to the Commission about recruitment, minority recruitment and training.
- 36) Tuesday, January 15, 2002 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"
- 37) Tuesday, February 19, 2002 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"  
Reverend John Holt the new Executive Minister of the State Council of Churches was present to introduce himself to the Commission and contribute to the discussion.
- 38) Friday, February 22, 2002 at Roger Williams University, Ralph R. Papitto School of Law, The Bay View Room, Ten Metacom Avenue, Bristol, RI.  
Ronald E. Hampton, Executive Director of the National Black Police Association was invited to make a presentation to the Commission on Police Outreach to the Community.
- 39) Monday, March 11, 2002 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"  
Councilwoman Patricia K. Nolan and Mary Kay Harris of DARE were invited to review and discuss the Providence External Review Authority (PERA) with the Commission.  
Councilman Kevin Jackson was also present to contribute to the discussion.
- 40) Tuesday, March 19, 2002 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"  
An official quorum was not present but an informal discussion was held.
- 41) Tuesday, April 2, 2002 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"  
An official quorum was not present but an informal discussion was held.
- 42) Tuesday, April 16, 2002 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"  
Councilman Kevin Jackson was present to contribute to the discussion.
- 43) Tuesday, May 7, 2002 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"  
An official quorum was not present but an informal discussion was held.
- 44) Tuesday, May 28, 2002 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"

- 45) Tuesday, June 4, 2002 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"
- 46) Tuesday, June 18, 2002 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"  
An official quorum was not present but an informal discussion was held.
- 47) Tuesday, July 16, 2002 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"  
An official quorum was not present but an informal discussion was held.
- 48) Tuesday, July 30, 2002 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"
- 49) Wednesday, August 21, 2002 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"  
Elizabeth Kunce, Director of Community Outreach of the Rhode Island Select Commission on Race and Police/Community Relations was present to contribute to the discussion.
- 50) Wednesday, August 28, 2002 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"  
An official quorum was not present but an informal discussion was held.
- 51) Wednesday, September 18, 2002 at The Providence Public Safety Complex, Auditorium, 325 Washington Street, Providence RI.
- 52) Tuesday, October 1, 2002 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"
- 53) Tuesday, November 19, 2002 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"
- 54) Monday, November 25, 2002 at Providence City Hall in Committee Room "A"
- 55) Tuesday, December 10, 2002 at Providence City Hall, Third Floor Conference Room
- 56) Wednesday, December 18, 2002 at Providence City Hall, Aldermen's Chambers  
\*\*The Providence Blue Ribbon Commission presents its Final Report at press conference\*\*

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IN CITY COUNCIL  
DEC 19 2002

READ  
WHEREUPON IT IS ORDERED THAT  
THE SAME BE RECORDED.

*Richard K. Alpert*