

At Last: Council Approves Better Cop Oversight

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City council has tonight finally voted to approve police oversight improvements suggested by City Commissioner Randy Leonard [two weeks ago](#). City Commissioner Amanda Fritz asked for a vote to be delayed so that her human relations committee could [weigh in last week](#). Some feel that Fritz's "public process" concerns were [misplaced](#). Still...

"I want to acknowledge the mother of [Aaron Campbell](#) and the [young lady who was shot with the beanbag](#)," said Joyce Harris with the African American Alliance. "It's for them that we do the work that we do, and it's for the children in our community who we hope are not victims of police violence."

City Commissioner Dan Saltzman said he hoped the ordinance would help to "regain" the community's trust in the police.

"With great power comes great responsibility," said City Commissioner Randy Leonard. "And with great responsibility comes accountability. The accountability part of the police bureau is broken, at the moment, in my opinion." "There are those that do commit acts that cause others to lose their lives that are not held accountable." He encouraged the police bureau to "not put up roadblocks" in the way of the changes, which will be implemented over the next 30 days.

There's more after the jump.

Some concerns have still been raised tonight about the new police review board—most notably that it will be made up of a majority of police bureau personnel, compared to citizens.

"If you really want trust, there needs to be an equal balance between citizen input and bureau input on that board," said TJ Browning, from the cops' citizens' advisory board. She also said that annual performance review for cops as "a basic step to any accountability system."

Saltzman said he plans to do annual performance reviews, and that they're currently allowed in the police bureau contract (see page 52), but that that measure will be pursued through the bureau's budget process. "We have heard you," he said. He also told the *Mercury* two weeks ago that he intends to push for drug testing in the [contract negotiations](#), too. One question will inevitably arise: How much is it going to cost to do annual review for police officers? Answer: A lot. But this appears to be a priority for Saltzman, who was broadly applauded for this move.

Best line of the evening went to Kevin Howard, with the Albina Ministerial Alliance coalition for police reform. "If you continue to shoot us, we can't afford to pay you," he said. "And they're going to be out of a job."

There have also been concerns about letting police internal affairs investigators investigate complaints against the police—raised by Portland Copwatch. Meanwhile Marta Guembes said there are problems with the city attorney's office continuing to advise both the police bureau and the independent police review.

"It's not always allowing the fox to interview the fox. Somebody needs to stand up for the chickens," said the Reverend T.Allen Bethel from the Albina Ministerial Alliance.

There were also ongoing concerns about racial disparities in police mistrust.

"Clearly there is a racial divide in our community, and it is based on experience," said Jo Ann Bowman with Oregon Action. She cited a recent trust poll by Katu that shows 82% of hispanics do not trust the Portland police, 67% of African Americans don't trust the Portland police, and only 30% of whites do

not trust the police.

Attorney Greg Kafoury criticized what he called a "tyranny of silence" imposed on the majority of police officers by the worst officers. Kafoury represented Barbara Weich, the woman whose arm was broken by Officer Gregory Adrian. "She now lives in Idaho because she is so terrified by the police. The officer is doing great," he said.

"When I hear the chief say that complaints are down, that's because nobody has any faith in the system," he said. "Everybody knows the names of the citizens who have been killed by police, but can anybody name one officer who has been fired. What does it mean when the worst of officers know that their job is safe, no matter what? We have to deal with the worst of our officers to make room for the best."

"About four years ago, our [close friend Ray Gwerder](#) was shot in the back by a police officer in our home, and after he was shot, he was then Tasered," said Molly Ayleshire, who is married to city council candidate Jesse Cornett. "I really look at this ordinance as a first step in believing that we as a community can do better.

"Listening to the chief talk this evening was jarring, hearing her try to use the budget as a reason not to go into this. That's one of the most shallow reasons I've ever heard," said Cornett. "I think there's a lot that can and should be done. There's much more that can be done that will stop the need to even get to this point, and in the middle of everything else that I'm doing in my life right now, to be accused of trying to make [political capital out of this situation](#) by someone who could never imagine picking up bloody gloves off your porch after the police have taken your best friend and roommate from the world."

"My daughter was the 12 year old girl who was shot by one of your officers," said the girl's mother. "When you have a grown man punching your daughter in the face, in his police report—that kind of force should not have been used. There was no honesty. There was no respect there."

"I think children and adults should be able to go to the police and ask for help and not feel afraid," said a 12-year-old girl, who had been watching the proceedings on channel 30 and asked her father to drive her down so that she could testify. "It's not just adults who care about this. It's 12-year-olds like me."

"This ordinance is a good first step, but it's also about 10 or 15 years late," said Ed Garren, a family therapist who is running against City Commissioner Dan Saltzman in the upcoming election. "I'll tell you the thing that was most disturbing to me tonight was Chief Sizer saying she didn't understand why all this was going on. It's truly distressing and depressing to me that the chief doesn't understand what's going on in her own community."

Meanwhile, police union boss Scott Westerman didn't show. But there was some defense offered by the cops.

"I've worked in every corner of this city," said Commander Dave Benson, who heads up the bureau's commanding officers' association. "I think it's fair to say that we have a very good police department, and that should not be overshadowed by this ordinance or any of the negative press we've heard in the recent days."