



March 21, 2011

Todd Rent  
Human Relations Officer  
City of Urbana

Re: Civilian Police Review Board Review and Reauthorization Process  
Solicitation for Comment

Dear Mr. Rent,

Please accept the following comments from CUCPJ into the public record. As an active local community organization vested in protecting citizen's rights and securing equal justice under the law for all citizens, we strongly advocate that the following changes be made to the CPRB ordinance. We believe these changes will strengthen and improve the ordinance thus insuring the intent and purpose of the CPRB will be secured and actualized for the benefit of the public.

**1. All citizen complaints involving Urbana police officers made in person at the Human Relations Office and/or Urbana Police Department should be documented and reported monthly to the CPRB.**

Currently only written complaints filed in either office are officially documented and reported. Because some citizens are discouraged from filing a written complain and many others are resolved quietly and informally, these complaints go unreported. Only documenting and reporting written complaints skew the true reality of citizen/police interaction in our community. This is a disservice to both the public and UPD. The information as it is currently collected is simply incomplete, misleading and basically useless; for it fails to accurately convey the reality of citizen/police complaints and interactions in our community.

**2. A person possessing a past felony conviction should not be denied the opportunity to serve his community on the CPRB.**

CUCPJ believes this exclusionary language is discriminatory in nature and thus impedes the opportunity of many Urbana citizens to serve their community. Appointments to any Commission or Board acting on behalf of the City and/or the people of Urbana should be based on the person's merit and commitment to serve the community. Religious belief, race, gender, ethnicity, age or criminal record in and of themselves should not prevent a qualified person from serving his/her city on local boards or commissions.

**3. The CPRB must have the power to subpoena witnesses and collect testimony in the process of conducting its investigation of a complaint.**

CUCPJ believes that without this legal authority, the CPRB is disempowered in its ability to conduct a fair, thorough and comprehensive investigation by denying it the ability to collect all necessary facts and testimony relating to a complaint.

**An Additional Concern:**

CUCPJ is concerned with the apparent undue influence the Office of Human Relations seems to have on the deliberations and decision-making process of the CPRB. Certainly for boards to be functional and to do their work, city staff support is necessary to provide clerical, legal, and consultative assistance. But there is a growing concern that the Office of Human Relations has crossed the fine line of support to one of directing. Because the Office of Human Relations works closely and personally with the Mayor's Office and UPD, there can easily arise a conflict of interest that impedes its ability to address citizen complaints against the police. Whose interest becomes primary in the mind of the Office of Human Relations; the citizen's, the UPD's, or the city's? The CPRB must be encouraged to retain complete autonomy and independence when making decisions and recommendations. Also the Office of Human Relations must be careful not to cross the line of giving support to one of controlling and directing the activities of CPRB.

Committed to peace and justice in our community.

On Behalf of Champaign Urbana Citizens for Peace and Justice,

(Signature)