



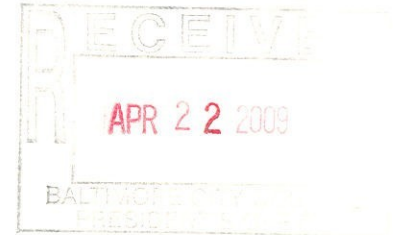
SHEILA DIXON
Mayor

BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



FREDERICK H. BEALEFELD, III
Police Commissioner

April 22, 2009



TO: The Honorable President and Members
of the Baltimore City Council
Room 400 City Hall
Attn. Karen Randle

FROM: Deborah A. Owens, Deputy Commissioner, Administrative Division
James H. Green, Legal Affairs Section
Baltimore Police Department

RE: City Council Bill No. 09-0121R-Baltimore City Police Department-Online
Transparency-Reporting Systems for Officer Related Shootings and
Preliminary Crime Statistics

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) has reviewed City Council Bill No. 09-0121R-Baltimore City Police Department-Online Transparency-Reporting Systems for Officer Related Shootings and Preliminary Crime Statistics which requests the Department to implement online reporting systems for the results of officer related shootings. The resolution also calls for the implementation of online reporting of monthly crime statistics.

First, the resolution requests that the BPD give consideration to an approach adopted by the Chicago Police Department (CPD) in reference to releasing investigations of officer related shootings via the Internet, citing a recent Chicago Tribune article. It is important that the Council understand that the reports involving the release of this information are not in fact released by the CPD but by the Independent Police Review Authority (IPRA) which is a separate entity of Chicago's municipal government. This entity was created in September 2007 and according to the Chicago Tribune, after a series of problems that were exposed in the CPD's handling of these matters.

The IPRA is staffed by the Chief Administrator, Ilana Rosenzweig who is appointed by the Mayor, eleven (11) supervisors, fifty-three (53) investigators, and administrative support. They have an annual operating budget which exceeds \$7 million. The IPRA statutory duties include handling of all complaints of misconduct filed against members of the CPD and to conduct investigations concerning domestic violence, excessive force, coercion and verbal abuse. They are also charged with conducting investigations that involve police-involved matters where the death of a person or injury

Comments

sustained by a person occurs while in police custody and investigations where members discharge a firearm or electronic weapon.

The BPD contacted Ms. Rosenzweig to learn additional information about their responsibilities and how the IPRA works with the CPD. The IPRA screens all complaints filed against officers of the CPD and has primary responsibilities over excessive force/police-involved shootings. Although the IPRA has primary investigative responsibilities in these areas, the agencies work together when there is a criminal aspect to the investigation. The remaining investigations are forwarded to the CPD's Internal Affairs Division for resolution. Baltimore has a completely different system of handling these investigations.

In Baltimore, as in many other jurisdictions, matters involving complaints against officers are handled by the Department's Internal Affairs Section. Depending on the allegation, some matters are handled or referred for Command investigation. Police involved shootings however are investigated by the BPD Homicide Section in conjunction with the Office of the State's Attorney. The current system has been in place for many years and continues to ensure very detailed and complete investigations of these matters. The BPD is also in the process of reviewing its policy of releasing information with respect to police involved shootings, seeking input from the community. We will continue to look at other jurisdictions' best practices, like Chicago, to determine how we can improve our overall communication with the public to ensure that the public trust and confidence in this area remain at the highest level.

Second, the resolution calls for an online reporting of crime statistics. The BPD currently makes crime statistic information available on the BPD website and regularly distributes this information to community groups and the media. The website allows the public to query the BPD database of reported crime by address, neighborhood, school, and police post. We are happy to explore providing additional statistical information monthly that would benefit the public. As the Council is aware, the BPD is also experimenting with a variety of technologies to provide instant information to our communities.

The BPD is pleased to provide to the Council an update of our progress and discuss with the Committee these issues. The Department remains steadfast in its commitment to public safety in Baltimore and will continue to work with the community to enhance their understanding about crime statistic information. We hope to continue to instill confidence in community perception and deliver enhancements to overall public safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

cc: Frederick H. Bealefeld III, Police Commissioner, BPD
Angela Gibson, Mayor's Legislative Liaison