

I and another member of the Westfield State University faculty worked with Mayor Carrie Saxon Perry to write the ordinance on the Hartford Police Civilian Review Board. I have continued to observe the review board at various times since then.

I would like to speak to two points.

First, what about the right to subpoena police officers involved in a complaint to speak before the civilian review board. Of course the effort here was to hear both sides of the story of a complaint, one from the officer involved and the other from the complainant. The idea would be to have members of the board go into the testimonies of both and ask further questions critical to coming to a judgment on the actions of the police officer. It did not work. Why? Because the police officer would only say I stand by my report refusing to go beyond that report. It was a waste of time and money because the officer had to be paid for his time before the review board and because the officer refused to go beyond the report already submitted. Unless a legal means can be found to have the police officer contribute to the investigation beyond his or her report to internal affairs the subpoena is worthless and the cost to the city a waste.

Second the right of the civilian police review board to continue to investigate the case while the case is in jury trial. In personal conversations with Mayor Perry she was concerned that a jury trial could favor a police officer even though the police officer is clearly guilty. This is rampant across the country and cited by the Attorney General in Minnesota as a possibility in the George Floyd case. Here the Hartford Police Civilian Review Board Ordinance allows the right to the complainant to have the board investigate the case while the jury is deciding the case. Why is this so important? It allows the complainant to use the civilian review board testimony (if they find the police officer guilty) to submit that investigation as evidence in civil court and allow the complainant's defense attorney to get damages from the city for allowing such an officer to serve in the police department. I would suggest that civilian review boards allow this right to complainants.

It is a shame that starting in 2005 that Corporation Council denied the rights of complainants to an investigation of their complaint by the Civilian Review Board clearly violating the ordinance. The Hartford Courant Article of Sept 16 2018 describes this violation of the Ordinance. The US Justice Department has also challenged the Hartford corporation council on its denial of this right in the ordinance.

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