

THE AMAC WELCOMES DOJ ASSESSMENT OF CITY COMPLIANCE WITH POLICE REFORM AGREEMENT

The Albina Ministerial Alliance Coalition for Justice and Police Reform (“AMAC”) welcomes the US Department of Justice’s [Compliance Assessment](#) (“Assessment”) of the City of Portland’s progress toward implementing the terms of the Settlement Agreement. The DOJ and the City entered the Settlement Agreement to resolve allegations that the Portland Police Bureau used excessive force particularly against persons with or perceived to have mental health issues. The DOJ’s Assessment of the city’s progress on reforms counters the City’s position over the past year that it has complied with nearly all of the terms of the Settlement Agreement. While the AMAC commends the City on its progress on many issues, there remains much work to be done.

The AMAC’s primary concerns about the City’s compliance, addressed by the DOJ’s Assessment, relate to officer accountability and community engagement.

Foremost, as the DOJ notes, the City has not yet acted on the “48 hour rule” – a provision in the Portland Police Association’s Collective Bargaining Agreement that provides for 48-hour advance notice before an officer is interviewed in an investigation that could lead to disciplinary action. As the City has been told time and time again, this practice departs from national policing best practices by not requiring statements from officers in a timely fashion. The DOJ has found the City has not fully complied on this issue, and the AMAC urges the City to take timely and effective action.

The DOJ’s Assessment notes the City’s shortcomings in several other areas required by the Settlement Agreement. First, although officers are required to report other officers’ constitutionally questionable uses of force, the recent case involving the tasing and beating of teenager Thai Gurule demonstrates that this did not happen. The community awaits accountability regarding that case, specifically whether any officers will be held accountable for their conduct -- a Multnomah County Circuit Court judge found the involved officers had unlawfully stopped the teen and were not credible in describing the incident. Second, the AMAC agrees with the DOJ’s critique of the IPR system, which noted that the PPB’s multi-track system adds to the byzantine structure of administrative investigations. The AMAC has been long advocating what the DOJ’s candid assessment states: that as part of a global assessment of administrative investigations, the City must simplify its system. In so doing, the City should refer to the numerous existing reports and recommendations for reform of this system, including the 2010 Police Oversight Stakeholder Committee Report. Third, the AMAC shares concerns highlighted by the DOJ Assessment about the City’s failure to investigate allegations of intimidation against the PPA President, and the City’s removal of the disciplinary history for Capt. Mark Kroeger. The former was not investigated because of a “special relationship,” and the latter was done despite the fact, as the DOJ put it, that “nowhere ... is there a means to erase past sustained findings from an officer’s record.”

Likewise, the AMAC urges the City to not only strongly heed the DOJ’s recommendation that the City use community members with lived experience of mental health issues in actual training, but also to add community members in other aspects of training. Furthermore, the DOJ highlighted many ways in which the Bureau treats deadly force incidents differently from other force incidents, including allowing officers not to fully fill out paperwork otherwise mandated. The AMAC suggests ensuring deadly force cases be treated the same way, including removing the provision in the PPA contract that limits independent civilian oversight investigations into such incidents. In terms of community outreach, the AMAC has suggested the City publish information about its meetings related to implementation of the Settlement Agreement in the more diverse media and publications, to strengthen outreach and community participation.

“The City has made progress, but the community needs to see more on some key issues of accountability and oversight. We strongly support the DOJ’s Assessment, and hope the City takes the opportunity to improve in these areas, moving towards substantial compliance with all the the reforms set forth in the Agreement,” says Dr. T. Allen Bethel, co-chair of the Albina Ministerial Alliance Coalition for Justice and Police Reform.

CONTACT:

Dr. T. Allen Bethel, 503.288.7241

###