

Roger David Hardesty, Minority Partner

Consult Hardesty 840 SE 166th Place, Portland, OR 97233 - (503) 944-5825

rdh@consulthardesty.com

**Consult
Hardesty**

Producing a
more just &
equitable world.

26 September 2012

Item 1099 (Emergency) - Amend contract with David M. Corey, Ph. D., P.C. to provide additional funds for psychological examinations for the Portland Police Bureau

Testimony, in recommendation of a 'Do Not Pass' vote at Portland City Council.

I had hoped any contract to emerge from such sustained calls for improvements to this procurement process would better reflect that this body recognizes deficiencies in the culture of the Portland Police Bureau, and the role that delivery of psychological evaluation services will play in ameliorating them.

I had hoped for a proactive, 'management style' approach, where sought improvements are identified, and tied to compensation. This contract lacks specifications for targeted improvements.

Officer Lindsay Hunt was hired by the Portland Police Bureau in July, 2006. Presumably she went through Dr. Corey's psych eval in her pre-hire screening. In 2007 Officer Hunt, now styled a 'whistle blower,' tried to influence police culture by reporting the misconduct of her training officer, Quency Ho. It may have been the case of a new initiate, believing in reporting structures and that 'the truth will out,' ran afoul of the entrenched mechanisms that perpetuate a police culture that condones misconduct.

This kind of feedback should be valuable to Bureau Managers. Instead, the City hired forensic psychiatrist Dr. Eugene Klecan to assert Hunt suffered from a life-long disorder that caused her to be hypercritical. Though Ho was disciplined, the Police Commissioner oversaw a police culture that ejected Ms. Hunt, and devalued internal criticism.

Where is the feedback loop? Did Dr. Corey fail to discover Hunt's alleged malady? Does Portland City Council oversee a police culture that seeks to be impervious to criticism? Does City Council use one set of evaluations that allow poor performers onto the force, and then another to discredit them?

For many long years, the public has sought to influence the way police recruits are evaluated. Initially, it was seen by civil rights advocates as a means to have the Bureau more truly represent the racial demographics of the population they serve. We now know the Bureau can increase diversity in hiring, and still prefer white males when offering advancement to command staff.

We have also realized that the delivery of psych eval services, like training, have the potential to positively influence police culture.

Those of you now constituted as Portland City Council – who seek better outcomes than we've been getting from the Police Bureau – will amend the contract Chief Reese has put before you. You'll insert language describing intended outcomes you seek.

You'll not shy away from an open and engaging process, designed to adopt best practices. As City Managers, you'll want not only want reports back (as per Item D, the multicultural competency model) but to establish benchmarks and set performance expectations. Re-contracting with the same provider, and lacking specific reference to a vision of improvement, flies in the face of any who seek to position themselves as engaged in police oversight.

Opening the procurement decisions to hearings ‘all through the process,’ as those of you from Mayor Adams’ administration heard promised, has merit. We can expect a broader, more effective application of psych eval services. We must create the opportunity for best practices to be proposed: a subsequent contract would call for that level of service delivery.

We need to support officers throughout their career track. Public hearings might inform you of how return to duty evaluations are perceived in police culture. We don’t know the role stress plays in inhibiting peak performance. A sincere investment in community policing would contract for services that screen positively for the communication styles and sincerity levels that would foster such.

Opening the process, to see how the public perceives the delivery of these services would, I expect, lead you to the web site where candidates who seek to pass Dr. Corey’s evaluations receive input from those who’ve succeeded. Reading the content, I was astounded to find such value on one’s ability to be deceptive.

Given that we have a long history with this provider of services; it seems wise to tie this contract to the subsequent job performance of those whom Dr. Corey has already deemed appropriate for policing. To do this, of course, would require a holistic approach, and accurate reporting systems of police conduct. The People will be well served when we close feedback loops, to discern the frequency of untruthfulness, anti-social behavior and other performance shortcomings. Contract provisions that get to metrics would be laudable.

I humbly submit language on the order of, “The award of this contract will be revisited if there is not a 20% reduction in road rage incidents, inaccurate accounts when audited, or workplace harassment cases ...” or whatever indicators we feel would address performance deficiencies among those who’ve passed his pre-hire screening in the last 13 years. Heck, you might even tie compensation to performance improvements: for every whistle blower you introduce into police culture, you’ll receive a thousand bucks.

Think of it this way. How many of our ‘million dollar cops,’ those who’ve individually cost us that much in settlements, judgments and jury decisions against the City, came through the gate that Dr. Corey was holding open? How many currently serving officers who fruitlessly stop ‘n frisk people of color came through that gate? Do you want that conduct to change?

What perception should the public take away? After sustained advocacy for performance improvement, this City Council affirms the Chief’s inclination to sustain the status quo. We expect leadership. We expect you to point the way to new practices. We do not expect you to do this alone. I call for a convening where you can obtain in open forum best practices as they are indicated from a broad range of professionals. I then seek to see that language shape a contract for services.