



March 11, 2011

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Chief George Turner
Atlanta Police Department
226 Peachtree Street, S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

RE: Complaint of Bonita Hunt, #10-60

Dear Chief Turner:

The Atlanta Citizen Review Board (“ACRB”) completed its investigation and adjudication of the complaint that was filed by Bonita Hunt alleging excessive force by Officer Tabitha Peterson. The allegations were investigated by Sheena Robertson based on a timely complaint filed by Ms. Hunt.

Ms. Hunt alleged that on August 7, 2010, at approximately 10:00 a.m., she received a telephone call from her sister, Keke Hunt, regarding a vehicle that Keke was driving. According to Ms. Hunt, Keke was visiting a friend at 10 Mt. Zion Road when another sister, Jacqueline Bennett-Costello, arrived and told Keke that she had called the police on her for taking her vehicle. Ms. Hunt said that Keke asked her to come to the location so she could explain the situation to the police to keep them from taking the car. When Ms. Hunt arrived, Officer Peterson asked her for her name and license and she complied. Officer Peterson told her that there was an outstanding warrant for her. Ms. Hunt was handcuffed and told to sit in the back seat of the patrol car. She tried to explain about the dispute between her and her sister regarding the car. Officer Peterson told her to be silent because she needed to talk to the dispatcher. Her left hand began getting numb and she told the officer. Officer Peterson told her not to move because the handcuffs get tight when you move. She asked for Officer Peterson to call her sergeant.

Sergeant Daniels arrived and Ms. Hunt tried to explain the situation to him and she complained about the handcuffs. Ms. Hunt said that Sergeant Daniels told Officer Peterson to remove the cuffs. Ms. Hunt claimed that she was in handcuffs for at least one hour before they were removed. The warrant was confirmed with Clayton County. She was taken to Fulton County Jail. Officer Peterson put the handcuffs back on her during the transport. While Officer Peterson was driving, she received a call to meet an officer to retrieve some documents. Ms. Hunt told Officer Peterson that her hands were becoming numb and asked her to loosen the cuffs and the officer did so. When she arrived at the jail, her hand was completely numb. Ms. Hunt says that she sought medical treatment two weeks after the incident. She continues to experience numbness in her left hand but stated that because she does not have medical insurance, she cannot seek medical treatment. She was asked to produce documentation to show that she received medical treatment but she did not provide any.

Continue ...

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The investigation showed that Officer Peterson served a valid warrant out of Clayton County for theft by deception and forgery. She was examined by medical personnel in both the Fulton County and Clayton County jails. The Fulton County record makes no reference to complaints or injuries. The Clayton County record indicates that Ms. Hunter complained that her arm was numb, but there was no medical treatment.

Sergeant Daniels was interviewed and stated that he responded to the request for a supervisor. When he arrived, Ms. Hunt was in the back of the patrol car and he said that she was not handcuffed. He was quite sure that Ms. Hunt was handcuffed prior to being transported. He said that he had a conversation with Ms. Hunt and she complained that she should not be arrested because she did not do what her sister alleged and the warrants were not valid

Officer Peterson said that she handcuffed Ms. Hunt when she learned of the warrants. Ms. Hunt told her that she had never been arrested and the cuffs were too tight. She requested a supervisor. She claims the sergeant told her to remove the cuffs and she did. When the warrants were confirmed, she placed the handcuffs back on Ms. Hunt so she could be transported. She could not recall if Ms. Hunt complained about the handcuffs. She said that Ms. Hunt was handcuffed for 10 to 15 minutes before the sergeant told her to take them off.

Witnesses at the scene, including Keke Hunt and Roy and Eddie Pruitt, the parents of the complainant, indicated that Bonita Hunt complained several times about the handcuffs. The parents said when the cuffs were eventually removed, about three hours later, they noticed redness and bruising on both of Bonita's wrists.

Handcuffing a person when she is under arrest is not necessarily excessive force. In this case, the absence of documented injury and the statements of the two officers, suggest that the matter should be **not sustained**.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns or if you would like to have a copy of the full investigation. The ordinance requires that the Chief respond in writing regarding which recommendations are accepted, rejected, or will be implemented with modifications within thirty (30) days of the submission of a recommendation for action by the Board to the Chief. See Sec. 2-2211(O) of Ordinance 07-0-0141.

Sincerely,



Joy Morrissey
Board Chair

cc: Mayor Kasim Reed
Council President Ceasar Mitchell
Members of Council
ACRB Board Members