The View of the Executive Director

But it will also be perceived by many others as a time of even greater unrest between citizens and police. This is one of the reasons why our Board periodically convenes its monthly meetings in various neighborhoods. It needs to be accessible to know what local residents are feeling and how they are interacting with law enforcement. It seeks to be a bridge that brings both sides together.

Sometimes an incident can come down to a matter of disrespect. A citizen could feel offended by police and vice versa. A forum that would resolve such incidents might be better in some cases than filing an official complaint requiring one of our seasoned investigators.

And remember, if you ever have a question about the agency and/or a complaint about an Atlanta police or corrections officer’s action, contact the ACRB at 404-865-8622. Email us at acrb@atlantaga.gov. Visit our website at www.acrbgov.org. The Atlanta Citizen Review Board is here to serve you!

Tracee McDaniel Becomes the First Openly Transgender Member of the ACRB

Shortly after 3:12 pm on Tuesday, October 11, 2016, Tracee McDaniel signed official documents, was sworn in by Municipal Clerk Rhonda Dauphin Johnson and made history by becoming the first openly transgender member of the ACRB.

McDaniel was chosen by Mayor Kasim Reed to fill his seat on the board which had been vacant for three years.

McDaniel, who heads the Decatur, GA based Juxtaposed Center for Transformation, Incorporated, completed the confirmation process and was unanimously approved by the Atlanta City Council.

The swearing-in ceremony was attended by her spouse, friends and supporters including Robin Joy Shahar, Mayor Reed’s LGBT Advisor. “It’s so important to members of the Atlanta community to know that they are represented and safe to approach members of the Citizen Review Board. And so, by having an openly transgender of color on the Board will hopefully facilitate people coming forward who are having issues with our public safety officials. And it’s also a symbol of the fact that our community is a large one, and that our diversity is important,” said Shahar.

Tracee McDaniel’s first thoughts upon being sworn in:

“Finally, this day is here. It’s been a long journey. So I’m just happy that we’re here at this point. And now, the real work begins. And I want to thank everybody for supporting me.”

(Continued on Page 4)
Jasmine Guy Promotes the ACRB “Nobody Needs to Know” Campaign

Multi-talented entertainer and Atlanta native Jasmine Guy has become the spokesperson for ACRB’s NOBODY NEEDS TO KNOW Electronic Media Campaign. The purpose of the initiative is to inform citizens that the agency, thanks to an expansion of its ordinance, is now able to investigate anonymous complaints.

Over the years, various segments of the community have refused to come forward out of fear of retaliation or of being publicly exposed. For example, members of the LGBTQ community have publicly spoken about incidents where they were publicly assaulted, harassed and humiliated by law enforcement, yet declined to file a formal complaint.

Up until the ordinance was expanded on March 30, 2016, ACRB required a name with detailed information from anyone who filed a complaint against a sworn officer of the Atlanta Police Department or Atlanta Department of Corrections. But now no name is needed thanks to a provision that allows for anonymous complaints.

The script for the TV and radio public service announcements that Ms. Guy reads says: “Used to be easy to tell the good guys from the bad guys. But now, IT’S A DIFFERENT WORLD. So if you ever feel uncertain or intimidated about filing a complaint against an Atlanta police or corrections officer, remember... You now can file anonymous complaints with the Atlanta Citizen Review Board. NOBODY NEEDS TO KNOW.

Contact ACRB at 404 865 8622 or go online at acrbgov.org.”

The TV spot was shot by City of Atlanta TV26.

Ms. Guy’s motivation to become involved in citizen oversight of law enforcement stems from a few negative incidents she experienced with sworn officers of law enforcement.

“I’m so honored that the Atlanta Citizen Review Board asked me to make this pitch to people because first of all, it’s very scary to make a complaint against a police officer (or) corrections officer. When I was very young, I had a few incidents. I didn’t tell my parents. And I’ve had a few incidents as an adult. And I think that it’s important that we not only tell women, but that our citizens know that if something’s going wrong, we have a place that is safe to make a complaint,” said Ms. Guy. ACRB thanks you!

ACRB honors people and groups that have supported the agency and rendered outstanding service to the community.

Shuntay Renee Pitre was appointed to serve on the ACRB as the representative for the Urban League of Greater Atlanta (ULGA). Ms. Pitre was sworn in by the Municipal Clerk on November 14, 2016 to serve a three year term.

Born in Texas, and reared in Louisiana, Ms. Pitre worked as a Felony/Misdemeanor Adult Probation Officer for the State of Texas. She went on to become a Post Certified Deputy Sheriff for the State of Louisiana. She graduated with honors and attained both a Bachelor’s and Master’s Degree in Criminal Justice from Grambling State University.

Ms. Pitre relocated to Atlanta in 2010 and thereafter worked in the Atlanta Mayor’s Office of Constituent Services as a Constituent/ Human Services Specialist. Her current position in the ULGA’s Youth Services Division assists young and older adults who are re-entering society with obtaining gainful employment, vocational skills, overcoming educational barriers, counseling and business development.

She is an active member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., Alpha Phi Sigma Honor Society, Shreveport Community Development Board, and the International Security Officer Full Gospel Ministries.

Shuntay Pitre from Urban League of Atlanta is Newest Member of the ACRB

Jasmine Guy and a Fan Following the ACRB Video
ACRB did a very thorough investigation.

Steven McDowell is a busy man. He has two jobs and many responsibilities. Nevertheless, he took time to file a complaint more than two years ago following an encounter with a sworn officer of the Atlanta Police Department in the Pittsburgh section where he grew up and where most of his family members live.

An ACRB Investigator assigned to his case determined within weeks of McDowell’s complaint that on August 27, 2014, Atlanta Police Officer Mauricio Castro (Unique ID #2853) did falsely imprison McDowell by illegally detaining him during a traffic stop.

Upon hearing the ACRB staff recommendations, The ACRB Board called for the false imprisonment allegations be assigned a finding of sustained. It recommended a ten (10) day suspension and that Officer Castro receive psychological training due to what it called “Officer Castro’s extensive disciplinary history.”

The Board also expressed concern that during the traffic stop, Officer Castro’s wireless microphone was not activated in accordance with APD policy. Accordingly, the Board called on the APD to look further into this issue and take appropriate action that is in accordance with APD’s disciplinary matrix.”

Chief George Turner did respond to the agency in writing within thirty (30) days as required by ordinance. His letter, dated May 27th, 2015, said “At this time, the (APD) Office of Professional Standards (OPS) has not concluded its investigation into the allegations surrounding the false arrest of Mr. McDowell. Therefore, in an effort to be in compliance with [City ordinance (Sec. 2-2211 (o)], I am obligated at this time to reject your recommendation as it is imperative that the Atlanta Police Department afford our employees their due process. Once the Office of Professional Standards has completed its investigation, I will reconsider the recommendation of the ACRB.”

McDowell says during the OPS investigation that he was offered an opportunity to come in and present his account of the encounter with Officer Castro. “Internal affairs did call me,” McDowell said. “I went in to talk to him (an OPS Investigator). But after that point they never contacted me.”

He subsequently did receive a letter from OPS saying it found insufficient evidence to prove or disprove McDowell’s allegations. His case was closed.

Two years later, the memories of the incident linger in McDowell’s mind.

“I was just riding through my neighborhood (the Pittsburgh Community off of McDaniel Street and University Avenue) where I lived 17 years of my life. I live about a mile away from that area now. I was just riding through looking for my cousin on my way to work. I noticed, when I made a left turn, he (a squad car) made a left...a good distance behind me. I got to the next corner, turned left. He made another left. Wound up on University Avenue. Didn’t find my cousin. Went to the expressway, about to make a right, going onto the interstate. That’s when he turned on the lights. He pulled me over and asked if I lived in the neighborhood. I answered his question. He said ‘the neighborhood has a lot of drugs and prostitution.’” It was then that the officer asked McDowell if he was “…looking for something.’ I felt offended but I answered his question. He asked me for my driver’s license. I couldn’t find my driver’s license but I gave him a piece of paper that had my name on it.” According to McDowell, when he returned from his squad car, Officer Castro “told me, ‘I’m going to give you a ticket for not having a driver’s license.’”

But what upset McDowell is that “He ordered me to leave my neighborhood because he said ‘If you don’t, I will put something on you because I don’t mind.’ I didn’t want it to turn into anything ugly so I said I’m leaving the area anyway and left.”

McDowell filed a complaint with ACRB on behalf of his community because he reasoned that “If he (Officer Castro) does that to me, then he must be doing it to other people.

McDowell added, “I’m pleased about the ACRB investigation. He (the ACRB investigator) did a very thorough investigation.

I hadn’t done anything illegal. Is he profiling people? I was not acting unlawfully. I should not allow him to get away with it. It’s hard to prove anything as it is against police, “ McDowell said. Nevertheless, “I felt I had to do something to at least make (the incident) known. Regardless of what he feels (about Pittsburgh), “It might seem like just a high crime area for you, but it’s home to me.”
He was our drum major and town crier, a civil rights legend with a bullhorn who came to the ACRB office offering to do whatever he could to spread the word about how important he felt this agency was to him and the citizens of Atlanta. "It’s an organization that came into existence with a fiery spirit to give citizens a very loud and strong voice (for those who) really feel that citizens have been neglected for many years and no resource to deal with those who retaliate on them," he said. More than anyone else, Reverend Stellmacher brought citizens to the agency, got them to call ACRB and lodge a complaint. Those who were disenchanted and mistrusted the system had no problem reaching out to him. Often confined to a wheelchair, he never allowed his infirmities to diminish his strong voice for justice. When accolades were offered, he refused to be acknowledged for his accomplishments. "I promised God," he once said, "that if He provided me with an education, I would give it back to the least of these...those who can’t afford attorney’s fees or to send kids to college or the people who can’t afford to get their lights turned back on or falsely accused. I promised to use the knowledge He has granted me for those who felt their civil rights were violated." We at ACRB honor his memory and mourn his loss. Our condolences to his family, friends and the scores of citizens that he supported.

ACRB Chair Sherry Williams, an Atlanta Citizens Police Academy Graduate

Kudos to ACRB Board Chair Sherry Williams for successfully completing her training at the City of Atlanta Citizens Police Academy. She urges all citizens to enroll and experience the routine of an on-duty police officer. "Once you ride with a police officer in your neighborhood in a patrol car, you will never see your neighborhood the same way again." said Williams. 

"Then you see why you need to be involved. The safety has more to do with you being aware of your neighborhood than the police officer being there."

APD says the Citizens Police Academy training is not intended to serve as an accredited law enforcement course, but merely to provide insight into the internal workings of the police department.

Tracee McDaniel Becomes the First Openly Transgender Member of the ACRB

Surrounded by friends and supporters at Atlanta City Hall, Tracee McDaniel and Municipal Clerk Rhonda Dauphin Johnson (left) sign official papers after McDaniel was sworn in as the first openly transgender member of the Atlanta Citizen Review Board.