The View of the Executive Director

ACRB’s jurisdiction will now allow it to, among other things, handle anonymous complaints.

The board can now investigate and make disciplinary recommendations on allegations of discrimination, discriminatory references, abuse of authority, discourteous behavior and failing to provide identification.

Other firsts include mediation, required police training and term limits for Board members, detailed responses from chiefs when Board recommendations are denied and a method for filing prolonged Board vacancies.

Expanding our jurisdiction and making the agency and the APD more accountable to you, the citizens of Atlanta, benefits all of us.

ACRB will never take for granted the awesome opportunity and authority we have been bestowed to serve you to the best of our abilities. Our goal is to be the most outstanding citizen review board in the United States. Thanks to you, we are closer to reaching that goal.

Always remember, if you ever have a question about the agency and/or a complaint about an Atlanta police or corrections officers’ 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!

City of Atlanta Approves Sweeping Ordinance Changes for the ACRB

The most sweeping ordinance changes in the history of the ACRB became law on March 30, 2016. They are designed to improve the function of the Board and make it and the Atlanta Police Department (APD) more accountable to the citizens they serve.

Before the new law, the Board was only able to handle complaints of false arrest, false imprisonment, harassment, abusive language and excessive force. Some 30 percent of the cases were outside the agency’s jurisdiction and therefore not investigated. And if a citizen came forward to file a complaint, that person’s name and other information had to be made available to the public.

Now, thanks to the amended ordinance, the agency has authority to investigate and make disciplinary recommendations on allegations of discrimination, discriminatory references, abuse of authority, discourteous behavior and failing to provide identification. Moreover, for the first time, the Board can accept anonymous complaints. Nobody needs to know.

Generally, most complaints that are sustained by the Board are denied by the Chief of Police who sends a brief letter to the Board without explaining why. Now detailed responses will be required from chiefs of police and corrections whenever Board recommendations are denied.

The expanded ordinance creates a method for an officer and a citizen to sit together and resolve differences through mediation which will provide a chance for perspective-sharing and mutual understanding.
For over 24 years, Clyde Corbin has been the director of the Crossroads Kitchen. Volunteers feed hundreds of homeless each week.

ACRB honors people and groups that have rendered extraordinary service to the community with the Kathryn Johnston Spirit of Truth Award

Kudos and thanks to Crossroads Community Ministries for allowing ACRB to distribute information cards each week to the homeless they serve that spell out their rights when encountering law enforcement.

“Empowering people who are homeless to progress on the road to economic and personal self-sufficiency.” That is the mission of Crossroads Community Ministries. Each week those living on the streets of Atlanta are offered a nutritious meal. Once inside, they discover an array of services available to them that could help get them back on the road to self-sufficiency.

Crossroads began more than 40 years ago when a member of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church handed a homeless man a sandwich. Today, it is a refuge for people who are homeless in Atlanta, offering compassion with constructive programs designed to give the people who come for help the tools they need to get off the streets. Crossroads’ well-trained staff and committed volunteers provide a variety of services to help people who are homeless find shelter and stability. Each year, Crossroads:

- serves 60,000 meals to men, women and children who are homeless;
- provides 6,500 MARTA passes for employment-related and medical emergencies;
- serves over 4,200 men, women and children;
- provides 3,500 Guests with a mailing address—a critical first step to end homelessness;
- acquires 3,100 state issued IDs and birth certificates for Guests;
- assists with placing 300 guests in detox and treatment programs; and
- assists with placing 200 women and children into safe, affordable housing.

For over 24 years, Clyde Corbin has been the director of the Crossroads Kitchen. “Mr. Clyde”, his dedicated staff, and tireless volunteers rise before dawn each day to serve over 60,000 meals each year. By the end of 2013, Mr. Clyde had served approximately 2,800,000 meals.

The homeless encounter law enforcement more than any other group in the city.

If you wish to volunteer or support Crossroads in other ways, visit http://crossroadsatlanta.org, or contact Volunteer Coordinator Sylvia Campbell for further details.
Testimonials: “When I think of ACRB...”

“I think it’s needed...the intent is good, but it can only go so far.”

Jonesboro City Clerk Ricky L. Clark, Jr., CMC is still not pleased with the outcome of what happened to him on Easter Sunday, April 5th, 2015 while driving in his car on his way to have a holiday meal with his family.

Clark was pulled over, stopped and detained by Atlanta Police Officers after an off-duty policeman passed by his Dodge Challenger. Shortly thereafter, Clark noticed a police car following a few cars behind him.

“The officer said he smelled the stench of marijuana...said he had some sort of device to track me. No way,” Clark explained. “I advised him in all my years I never used marijuana.”

Clark said the officers went back to their squad car and that he observed them in his rear view mirror laughing. Then, “They just let me go,” Upset about the incident, the Jonesboro Clerk said he “immediately followed up.”

Clark recalled it was Clayton County Sheriff Victor Hill who referred him to the ACRB. He filed a false imprisonment complaint with the agency.

The ACRB Investigations Unit, with more than 50 years of experience, recommended sustaining Clark’s false imprisonment complaint against Atlanta Police Department (APD) Officer Davon Green and Drew Marshall, saying they illegally stopped and detained him. Much of the investigator’s findings was based on information provided by Officer Casey Freeman who was off duty during the incident.

The Board agreed to sustain the false imprisonment allegation against both officers. It called for an oral admonishment for Officer Green. It would have recommended oral admonishment for Officer Marshall also, but he had since retired.

Additionally, the Board adopted a staff recommendation to Chief George Turner that the APD should determine if Officer Freeman violated any APD policies for following Ricky Clark and providing the information to Officers Green and Marshall that led them to stop Clark.

Chief Turner responded within the required one month period saying he must by ordinance reject the ACRB recommendations until the APD’s Office of Professional Standards (OPS) concludes its investigation into the allegations surrounding the false imprisonment of Mr. Clark. “Once the Office of Professional Standards has completed its investigation, I will reconsider the recommendations of the ACRB,” according to the Chief’s response letter, dated October 21st 2015. (OPS has 180 days from the time it is notified about a case to conclude its investigation.)

Fall and winter have turned into spring, and so far, Clark’s case has still not been resolved which is why he continues to be upset and have mixed emotions about ACRB. “I think it’s needed, the intent is good. But it (ACRB) can only go so far.”

While ACRB has no authority to reprimand, suspend, fine or remove an officer, its recently amended ordinance now requires the Chief to explain why in specific detail whenever Board recommendations are denied.

As the Jonesboro Clerk awaits a final outcome, he says he plans to file a Georgia Open Records request with the APD OPS to obtain information on his case. He had learned to suppress the memory of how his plans for an Easter Sunday meal with family were abruptly disrupted last year by sworn officers of the APD. But now that the event has been revisited, he is determined to see it through to the end.

“...I think it means justice for citizens...”

Meet Paris Everhart-Chappelle, ACRB’s newest volunteer under the agency’s Community Outreach Volunteer Ambassador Program (COVAP).

She and her husband Antoine work from home. The Everhart-Chapelles own and operate a LegalShield office in the Cascade Community, offering low cost legal assistance.

She encountered ACRB last year during its monthly ACRB Day at Mall West End presentation event and responded positively last year to the ACRB DON’T RUN billboard campaign. They reached out and offered support.

When Ms. Everhart-Chappelle thinks of ACRB, “I think it means justice for citizens. Their rights are protected and they are able to live free under the law without worrying if someone is going to exert their power.”

The volunteer describes herself as a small person. A traumatic encounter with law enforcement left her confused and vulnerable with no options. It affected the future direction of her life. She became determined to find an option to ensure

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KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AND BE HEARD!

ATLANTA CITIZEN REVIEW BOARD

The keyword in the Atlanta Citizen Review Board is CITIZEN. The agency is only as effective as the level of Citizen involvement. This is why ACRB urges all Citizens to regularly monitor, question and support its work. This is why ACRB urges all Citizens to know where your elected officials stand on civilian oversight of police and corrections. This is why it is so important for Citizens to be registered and vote. This is why Citizens need to join and be active in community groups. Get involved in Neighborhood Planning Units (NPUs). Attend Public Safety meetings, Atlanta City Council meetings and KNOW YOUR RIGHTS TRAINING WORKSHOPS. Become a member of the ACRB Board. (There are currently a number of vacancies.) Be an ACRB Volunteer through our Community Outreach Volunteer Ambassador Program (COVAP). Fill the chambers to capacity when Council votes to fund issues that matter to Citizens like you. Thank you, Citizens of Atlanta, for your continued support.

Paris Everhart-Chappelle Joins Community Outreach Volunteer Ambassador Program (COVAP)

(continued from page 4)

that what happened to her would never occur to anyone else.

She explained, “I had been treated unfairly by law enforcement before, my rights were violated. When it was happening to me, I couldn’t believe what was going on, I did not deserve it at all. I don’t like to go back to the incident, but I was fully taken advantage of. It was horrible.

That’s why LegalShield is my ministry. People don’t want to pay 300 bucks an hour for legal advice. For individuals, families, small businesses, they can protect their employees, get good advice, whether trivial or traumatic, so they can get answers they need in any area of law without having to worry about those high hourly fees.”

Paris Everhart-Chapelle was thrilled about ACRB’s recently expanded ordinance provisions. “They are much needed for the community and a way to put resources to protect citizens. We live here, pay taxes and should feel safe and that our families are safe when we leave the house. I’m all for it, as much resources as possible...so they (citizens) know that they have something to turn to so they don’t feel they have any options.”

Welcome and Kudos to ACRB’s Newest Board Members

Deputy Municipal Clerk Foris Webb congratulates Harold M. Hardnett (left) and Cecilia Houston-Torrence (right) after officially swearing them in as the newest members of the Atlanta Citizen Review Board. Ms. Houston-Torrence represents the League of Women Voters on the Board. Mr. Hardnett is a member of the Atlanta Business League.