



**PERA**

Providence External Review Authority

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**BI-ANNUAL  
REPORT  
FOR FISCAL YEAR  
2006  
Part 1**

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**David N. Cicilline**  
**Mayor**

## **PROVIDENCE EXTERNAL REVIEW AUTHORITY**

### City of Providence, RI

**January 24, 2006**

#### **Officers**

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*Paul Caswell*

*Vice Chair*

*Luz Bravo-Gleicher*

*Treasurer*

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#### **ANNUAL REPORT**

We are pleased to submit the 2005 Annual Report of the Providence External Review Authority (PERA) and its governing body, the PERA Board of Directors. This report covers the agency's operations during the calendar year 2005.

This is the first annual report submitted by the agency, which opened its doors to the public on June 24, 2005. Our goal has been to establish an agency that provides the citizens of Providence, RI, with an independent and impartial forum for the investigation and resolution of police misconduct complaints filed by the public against sworn officers of the Providence Police Department. PERA has made substantial progress over the course of 2005 to bring this agency to operational status, and provide the intended service to the citizens of Providence. We report here our accomplishments for that year and how we plan to build towards greater service in 2006.

In January Leon Drezek joined PERA as our Executive Director bringing his extensive, professional investigative experience from his previous federal service with both the US Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) and the US Food and Drug Administration Office of Criminal Investigations (FDA-OCI). Mr. Drezek relocated to the City of Providence In October 2005, complying with city residency requirements. His current staff includes Confidential Secretary Kathy Gee and Contract Investigator Kevin Deary, a retired FBI agent/criminal investigator with significant experience conducting federal civil rights violation investigations.

Significant progress has been made in finalizing all PERA regulations concerning the operation of the agency. The Administrative Rules and the PERA By-Laws were approved and in place prior to 2005, and the operating Disciplinary Matrix was approved in April 2005 as mandated by the PERA ordinance. The matrix is the basis for the remedial actions that the Authority delivers to the Chief of Police when a violation has been determined. PERA has also negotiated the services of two mediation services providers, providing an alternate track for resolving citizen complaints. In addition, the PERA Board is currently developing a set of rules and regulations that will determine the process for the conducting of administrative, evidentiary hearings as called for by the Ordinance.

The PERA office officially opened to receive citizen complaints on June 24, 2005. An Opening Ceremony was held at the PERA offices on that date, which was attended by the Mayor, President of the City Council, various Council Members, city officials, media representatives, community activists, visitors from outside the city and state, and members of the general public.

In 2005 PERA retained the services of Mr. R. Kelly Sheridan, Esquire, to act as outside counsel, and to prepare to defend the legality of the ordinance if/when challenged by the Providence Fraternal Order of Police. The PERA Board gratefully acknowledges the support of the Mayor, the City Council and the City Solicitor in retaining Mr. Sheridan's services

PERA has expanded and continues to expand the agency's efforts in its community outreach program within the City of Providence, and through the assistance of PERA Board Members, staff has attended numerous community events, and hosted meetings with various interest groups and community members and groups. In addition, PERA has published an educational pamphlet-advising citizens concerning the authority of the police and what to do if stopped by law enforcement officials. PERA continues to look for imaginative ways to bring the message of civilian oversight of the police to the public's awareness.

Effective and ongoing liaison has been established with the management of the Providence Police Department, spearheaded by Colonel Dean Esserman, Chief of Police, and his command staff. In particular, liaison and the beginning of a working relationship have been successfully established between PERA staff and Providence Police Inspector Francisco Colon, the head of the Inspections Bureau that includes the Department's Office of Internal Affairs.

In December the Authority sent three representatives to the conference of the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE). Establishing an association with other national, municipal police oversight agencies will enhance PERA's standing among the country's counterpart agencies, and already has resulted in access to a wealth of valuable information to aid PERA in the agency's continued development.

Since opening our doors to the public, PERA has received twenty-six (26) separate civilian complaints of misconduct from the public. In 2005, four complaints were referred for active investigation and notification of the complaints delivered to the Providence Police Department Office of Internal Affairs. The remaining complaints are in various stages of

development. It is anticipated that numerous additional complaints will be referred for formal investigation in the near future now that PERA is in receipt of a City Solicitor Office decision that allows PERA on a case-by-case basis to conduct an investigation that has previously been referred to the Office of Internal Affairs. Of the complaints received during 2005, the number of complaints in each category is as follows:

Incidents	Category
12	Complaints alleging Excessive Force
2	Complaints alleging Inappropriate Conduct/Language
3	Complaints alleging Harassment by the Police
0	Complaints alleging Theft
4	Complaints alleging Discrimination/Racial Profiling
5	Other - complaints involving allegations of unresponsiveness on the part of the Police.

At the onset of 2006 the PERA Board of Directors consisted of sixteen appointed and active members out of a full complement of twenty members as detailed in the PERA ordinance. The roster of board members is attached. We sincerely appreciate the efforts of the nominating authorities for sustaining the board and urge them to make the necessary appointments and reappointments in 2006.

For calendar year 2006, PERA expects to be able to accomplish the complete cycle of complaint, investigation and hearing. We plan to provide a program of classes and lectures to expand the education of board members. Community outreach will be extended including additional handouts that will explain the PERA process. Finally we expect to update our policies and procedures to improve our service to the citizens of Providence. In addition, we believe that as the public becomes more knowledgeable of the existence of PERA, and more informed concerning our mission, the numbers of police misconduct complaints lodged with PERA will increase substantially.

Finally we wish to thank the following for their support in 2005. Mayor David Cicilline and his staff are lauded for endorsing PERA and fully integrating our office into the city structure. We once again thank the City Council as a whole for creating PERA and sustaining our funding. We also thank those individual council members, led by council leaders John Lombardi, Balbina Young, and Luis Aponte for their continued support and expert advice. We also wish to recognize Stephanie Federico, Esquire and her predecessor Olayinka Oredugba, Esquire, for their service as our legal advisors.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Paul Caswell – Board Chair

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Leon C. Drezek – Executive Director