

*Testimony for US DOJ v City of Portland*

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I'm Jason Renaud and I am speaking on behalf of the Mental Health Alliance. Thank you again for the court allowing time for our allies and colleagues to speak this afternoon in public testimony. I'll speak briefly about the membership of the PCCEP.

The collective action of a group depends on coherence - members being present, capable, willing, and engaged. The PCCEP has not reached coherence because of membership attrition.

It's the position of the Mental Health Alliance that the PCCEP is not ready to provide useful oversight of the Portland Police Bureau.

PCCEP members have been selected by application. Members of the COAB were selected through recruitment. The outcome of these two tools - for any group - is predictably very different. Applications draw people who presume to know. Recruitment selects people who actually know. Applicants are easier to manage, but will produce fewer and lesser results. Recruits will assert capabilities and although they may be hard to steer - as Judge De Munitz and Ms. Saadat discovered - if they buy into the mission, their productivity can be amazing.

Mayor Wheeler has selected all the applicants for the PCCEP.

I was asked to provide training about mental illness and police use of force to both the first and second round of applicants. My impression was that they were unaware of and uninterested in the problem. They were largely unaware of this settlement agreement, and incurious. Several people in both trainings tried to steer the discussion to the use of force against persons of color. In follow up conversations with both PCCEP members, trainers, and staff members, steering away from mental illness continued.

When you met the PCCEP in June, things looked rosy. They said they wouldn't give up. But 8 months later the members have yet to coalesce as a team or move recommendations to policy. But most of the PCCEP members gave up.

Eleven of the original 13 PCCEP members quit - that's a 85% change in membership. With 85% attrition we don't get oversight.

The COAB membership stats were about the same. Of the 20 original members of the COAB by the end only four members remained - an attrition rate of 80%. New members replaced old, but each new member slowed the process down.

You can imagine the result of 85% turnover in any community-led public policy discussion. When you have a high profile or contentious subject, without skilled facilitation, the work product is usually nothing.

I've attached a list of former and current PCCEP members to my text.

Being advised turnover might be as high, Mayor Wheeler selected six alternates to eventually replace the original 13. The alternates fared better than the originals. Three of those six are currently listed as PCCEP members.

The second set of PCCEP alternates Wheeler chose did less well. Nine people were selected by Wheeler in the Spring of 2019. Today four of those nine alternates are serving on the PCCEP. It appears most of the Spring 2019 alternates quit prior to becoming PCCEP members.

Today only one out of twelve PCCEP members is a person who has self-identified as having lived experience of mental illness - 8%. About 14% of the population have an instance of mental illness in any one year, and about the same number for alcoholism and addiction. Maybe a little more. So about 28%. And of course we know 100% of the individuals killed by Portland Police in 2019 were persons in mental health crisis.

We know training causes group retention. Training for the first set of members was quite different than training for the second set. PCCEP staff don't appear to have created a curriculum. Two youth members joined last month and voted on PCCEP business last night without training.

Until last week there was not a recent or accurate listing of PCCEP members on the City's website. There is no contact information for the members. Staff members for the PCCEP are not listed on the website. There is still no one website which has all important documents about this settlement agreement.

You'll hear public testimony later today from people who made recommendations to the PPCEP and felt as if the PCCEP couldn't - or wouldn't - give them due consideration. This is an effect of attrition, and injures the capacity and the credibility of the committee.

After fourteen months of watching the PCCEP operate, I'm not sure the proposed amendment to the settlement agreement - the PCCEP plan - is an improvement over the COAB. I don't think it's yet time to approve either the PCCEP plan or the settlement.

I suggest the court not allow the change, but instead give the PCCEP another year to meet the following five outcomes.

1. Retain at least 50% of its members for a full year.
2. Maintain at least two persons with lived experience of mental illness on the PCCEP.
3. Provide staff support with either professional or lived experience for those persons.
4. Create a comprehensive governance for all parts of the PCCEP.
5. Invest in community organizers to engage people most affected by this agreement - people with mental illness

INCLUDED DOCUMENT

PCCEP Member Attrition 2018-2020