

City of Key West

CITIZEN REVIEW BOARD

Annual Report

2023



JANUARY 2024

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2023 Annual Report

CITY OF KEY WEST CITIZEN REVIEW BOARD

Introduction

The City of Key West Citizen Review Board (CRB) has been actively reviewing complaints filed by citizens against Key West police officers since January 2003. This report is based on data and events occurring in the calendar year of 2023. This report is intended to give the reader an overview of the progress of the Board's efforts and major activities undertaken by the CRB during this year. Readers may obtain a copy of this report by [accessing the City of Key West website by clicking here](#).

The Board continues to look at trends and patterns reflected by the types of complaints filed with the CRB and the Key West Police Department (KWPD). Our emphasis is on the continuing changes within the department that have influenced the CRB as well as the community to include organization changes, policies and procedures, and community programs.

The CRB would like to take this opportunity to recognize the ongoing professionalism of the KWPD members. This report and its recommendations herein are by no means meant to overshadow this fact. The KWPD, under its current leadership, reflects a professional crime fighting organization and the CRB is appreciative of its ongoing efforts. The CRB has worked closely with Chief Brandenburg's administration and the CRB will continue to share the same early intervention philosophy to help minimize miscommunications and dispel misinformation involving alleged officer misconduct. These early intervention processes have continued to reduce the number of formal complaints to the CRB.

We hope that this report will enable the reader to better understand the role of the Citizen Review Board. If there are any questions, please call CRB Executive Director Thomas E. Pakenas at [\(305\) 809-3887](tel:3058093887) or [click here to email us](#).

Letter from the Director

Thomas E. Pakenas

This past year there were five cases filed with the CRB and a hearing was held on one holdover case from 2022. While reviewing the complaints, the Board continues to show diligence in ensuring that each investigation is thorough, impartial, and complete.

This year Mr. Richard Haskins continues as Board Chairman and Mr. James Olive as Vice-Chairman. Both ensure that meetings run smoothly and take the time to listen to all aspects of the complaint consideration process.

As a civil litigation attorney, I have worked closely with numerous State and Local Police Agencies impartially gathering evidence and providing representation to individuals who felt aggrieved. I believe very strongly about the CRB and I'm proud of what it has accomplished thus far. Research has shown that the mere existence of a CRB can influence police departments to do a better job of policing themselves. I would like the citizens of the City of Key West to know they can trust and depend on the professionalism and transparency of the officers on the KWPD and the independence and competency of the Citizen Review Board.

I am honored to be a part of the continuing progress of the CRB as we move forward into this new year.

Thomas E. Pakenas

Executive Director

ABOUT THE CITIZEN REVIEW BOARD

What is the CRB?

Key West voters created the Citizen Review Board (CRB) on November 5, 2002, to review and/or investigate citizen complaints, filed by the public, against Key West police officers for alleged professional misconduct.

CRB Mission Statement

The mission of the CRB is to promote public confidence in the professionalism and accountability of the police officers of the Key West Police Department (KWPD).

Purpose of the CRB

The purpose of the CRB is to establish guidelines for the receipt and processing of allegations of KWPD officer misconduct in compliance with the Charter of the City of Key West Article I, Chapter 1.07. The CRB also independently reviews citizen complaint investigations against KWPD police officers, recommends changes in departmental policy, and when deemed appropriate by the Board, conducts independent investigations of citizen complaints. The CRB forwards findings and/or recommendations to City management, the Chief of Police, State Attorney, other state and federal law enforcement agencies and/or grand juries if appropriate.

Members of the Citizen Review Board

The City of Key West Citizen Review Board is composed of seven residents of the City of Key West and are not employed by The City. Originally, the City Commission appointed four (4) members from nominations from community based civic and/or social organizations. The original four (4) members then selected three (3) additional members from applications submitted by the general public. Any vacancies of these seats are filled in the same manner (Commission verses Board appointed positions). As with other city boards and commissions, these are unpaid positions. The term in office for each Board member is four (4) years and a Board member can serve no more than two (2) four (4) year terms.

In accordance with 1.07(IV) (d), Board members have received training through various sources. These sources include materials from The National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement, presentations by the Executive Director, CRB Attorney, Robert Cintron, and Key West Police Department, as well as ongoing reviews of professional publications.

The Board members who served in 2023 are:

Richard Haskins Chairman. Born and raised in Key West Rick began his career serving our country with the United States Navy for almost ten years. He then returned home to join the family business with his brother at Haskins Plumbing and quickly began exploring his entrepreneurial skills by starting his own swimming pool company. After seven years Rick decided to expand on his knowledge of the community and the wonderful people, he knew here in the Keys by purchasing Key West Vacation Rentals and obtaining his Real Estate Sales license and his Condominium Associations License with the state of Florida. These qualifications led him to start Buy the Keys, a Real Estate Brokerage company. Rick's recent accomplishments have become some of the most exciting yet. Both real estate ventures have been bought out by Vacasa, the largest nationwide vacation rental company in North America and he is now the Broker of Record for the entire state of Florida. Rick is honored to serve the Florida Keys Community locally as a member of the Board of Directors for the Key West Association of Realtors, one of the Directors of the Key West Wildlife Center and now to serve you on the CRB Committee. **Richard Haskins was re-appointed June 7, 2022, and his term expires June 7, 2026.**

James Olive, Vice-Chairman. Mr. Olive served as an officer in the United States Coast Guard for 26 years. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management and “on the job training” in law and law enforcement. As a Commanding Officer of two ships, and later as a supervisor of shore operations, he certified personnel as Law Enforcement Boarding Officers, and has had the responsibility to revoke those certifications where necessary and appropriate. Mr. Olive is very active in community service as a longtime member of Rotary Club of Key West where he served as past president. He also serves in the Military Affairs Committee. He is currently self employed as a realtor. **James Olive was re-appointed to the Board in May of 2013. His final term expires in May 2027.**

Richard “Rick” Wagner, Member. As an immediate past member of the UF Health Florida Recovery Center Team, Rick Wagner helped law enforcement officers and firefighters move from their work environment, through the recovery program and back to their jobs, after successful completion. Mr. Wagner assisted program participants with their unique professional requirements. He has 20 years of on-the-street experience as the director of the crisis transportation service, a New Orleans police department program responding to psychiatric and substance abuse crises. Additionally, he has acquired emergency room proficiencies that give him an unprecedented understanding

of the daily pressures experienced by law enforcement officers and public safety personnel. He also is a qualified expert witness for mental health and substance abuse cases as they relate to law enforcement procedures. Rick provides representation for those first responders who are required to appear before their respective regulatory bodies. He provides testimony and counsel for people who are in jeopardy of losing their certifications, credentials or licenses to practice within their profession. In December 2021 Rick published a book, *The Third Floor, Where Crazy Don't Mean Stupid*, illustrating how the New Orleans Police Department and mental health professionals teamed up to provide a more civil approach on interventions with individuals experiencing a psychiatric emergency. Rick has had a vacation rental business in Key West since 1994 and is involved with the Conch Republic Days Celebration in April. **Rick Wagner was appointed by the City Commission in February 2017. He was re-appointed February 7, 2021, and this term will expire on February 7, 2025.**

Gerri Gates, Member. A frequent visitor to Key West since 1978, Ms. Gates moved here permanently in 1987. She was previously employed by the school board and left there to become a social worker specializing in job development for people with addictions, mental illness, and homelessness. She spent a lot of time involved with the Key West arts and theater communities as well as working on many charity events around town. Now retired, Ms. Gates has time to devote to her duties as a CRB Board Member and continue to support the people of our community. **Gerri Gates was re-appointed to fill a vacancy by the Board October 22, 2023. Her present term expires in October of 2027.**

Bruce Troutman, Member. With twenty years of experience as a volunteer and paid firefighter, EMT and Battalion Chief, Mr. Troutman has had ample opportunity to work with numerous law enforcement agencies including arson investigations and two cases with the FBI. His business career provided the opportunity to work with colleagues, customers, and suppliers throughout the world. He is currently a soccer coach and athletic mentor for Special Olympics of Florida and a member of USCG Cutter Ingham Museum Ship, Key West Art and Historic Society, and the Tropic Cinema. He is a graduate of the Key West Ambassador's Class 33. **Bruce Troutman was appointed by the City Commission in 2021 and his term will expire in October 2025.**

John Strachan, Member. Enjoyed a career in law enforcement which included time as an officer, working in training and serving in management. He graduated from Cooley Law School with a Juris Doctor and passed the State Bar shortly thereafter. John left law enforcement to take a position with a local union. In that capacity he acted as in-house legal counsel and supervised operations of the Local. John worked part-time representing indigent criminal defendants for a period of about four years. He also served in the U.S. Marine Corps and Army National Guard. John is retired from the military and all previous careers. He has lived in Key West since 2011 and has been involved with several community organizations including American Legion Post 168 in Bahama Village. He is a graduate of the Key West Ambassador's Program Class 27. **John was appointed by the Board in October 2021 and his term will expire in October 2025.**

Amanda Velazquez, Member. Throughout her career Amanda has cultivated a passion for advocating for vulnerable populations and promoting fairness, equity, and accountability. As an Immigration Attorney she has had the privilege of working with individuals and families seeking to establish themselves in the United States. She has been Chairperson of the Boys and Girls Club of the Keys Area and is currently Vice Chair. She continues to be a Mentor for Take Stock In Children and is a Board Member for Keys Immigrant Coalition. She was a member of the City of Key West Ambassador Class of 2019, Monroe County Community Foundation's Leadership Academy Class of 2021, and the Monroe County Sheriff's Office Citizen Police Academy Class of 2023. **Amanda was appointed by the City Commission on October 12, 2023 and her term will expire in October 2027.**

Contracted Positions

Thomas E. Pakenas, Executive Director. The Executive Director of the CRB is contracted with the City of Key West and reports to the Board Chairperson. Thomas E. Pakenas, Esquire, was reappointed by the Board in October 2023 with a contract ending date of October 31, 2024. The CRB Executive Director directs major operations of the Board, including supportive services, records management, public notice, information management, and communications with Key West government members and the public. Mr. Pakenas holds a law degree from DePaul University School of Law and practiced law in the City of Chicago for 27 years. He is a Board Member of The Sunrise Rotary of the Conch Republic, a Board Member of FIRM, Fair Insurance Rates in Monroe County, and holds a 50-ton masters license from the United States Coast Guard.

Robert J. Cintron, Esquire, CRB General Counsel. The general counsel to the CRB provides legal advice and counsel to the Board. He attends all Board meetings, research questions of law, and renders advice. Mr. Cintron performed these duties during 2023. He has been the Board counsel since 2002 and his contract has been renewed for another year.

The Citizen Review Board's Authority & Responsibility

The CRB has the authority to review and investigate citizen complaints involving Key West Police Department personnel and forward findings and recommendations to City management, the Chief of Police, State Attorney, other state, and federal law enforcement agencies and/or grand juries. **It is completely independent of the Key West Police Department and, for the most part, City management.** The seven (7) board members of the CRB all live in Key West and are not employed by the City.

The CRB's review of complaints and policy recommendations are done "in the sunshine" on a fair and impartial basis. The CRB staff and Board work to ensure that all complaints receive a fair and objective investigation and, when necessary, a hearing.

The CRB is a neutral body designed to be a bridge between the community and the police department. It was designed to give the public confidence that accusations of misconduct made against an officer will be fairly and thoroughly investigated. In addition to being a neutral body, the CRB offers a public forum for citizens who want to express their opinion on police-related issues. Finally, the CRB adds additional transparency to the complaint process by providing documents currently being reviewed by the CRB on Legistar (a city web-based program) and offers complaint and commendation forms on its website. The CRB's near autonomous structure is paramount to successfully performing its functions under the City Charter.

The CRB Complaint and Review Process

Typically, a complainant contacts the CRB office to discuss what they feel is a police professionalism issue. The CRB Executive Director at this stage evaluates the issue to confirm that it falls within the CRB jurisdiction and, if not, the complainant is referred to the proper agency. If the issue falls within the CRB jurisdiction the complainant is provided with a complaint form to be filled out documenting the allegation of misconduct.

All formal complaints received by the CRB office are forwarded directly to the KWPD Internal Affairs Bureau (IA) and the Chief of Police within two (2) days of receiving the complaint. IA generally has 45 days to complete an investigation or inquiry and forward

findings to the Chief of Police, the CRB and the complainant. However, the CRB reserves the right to commence an independent investigation at any time.

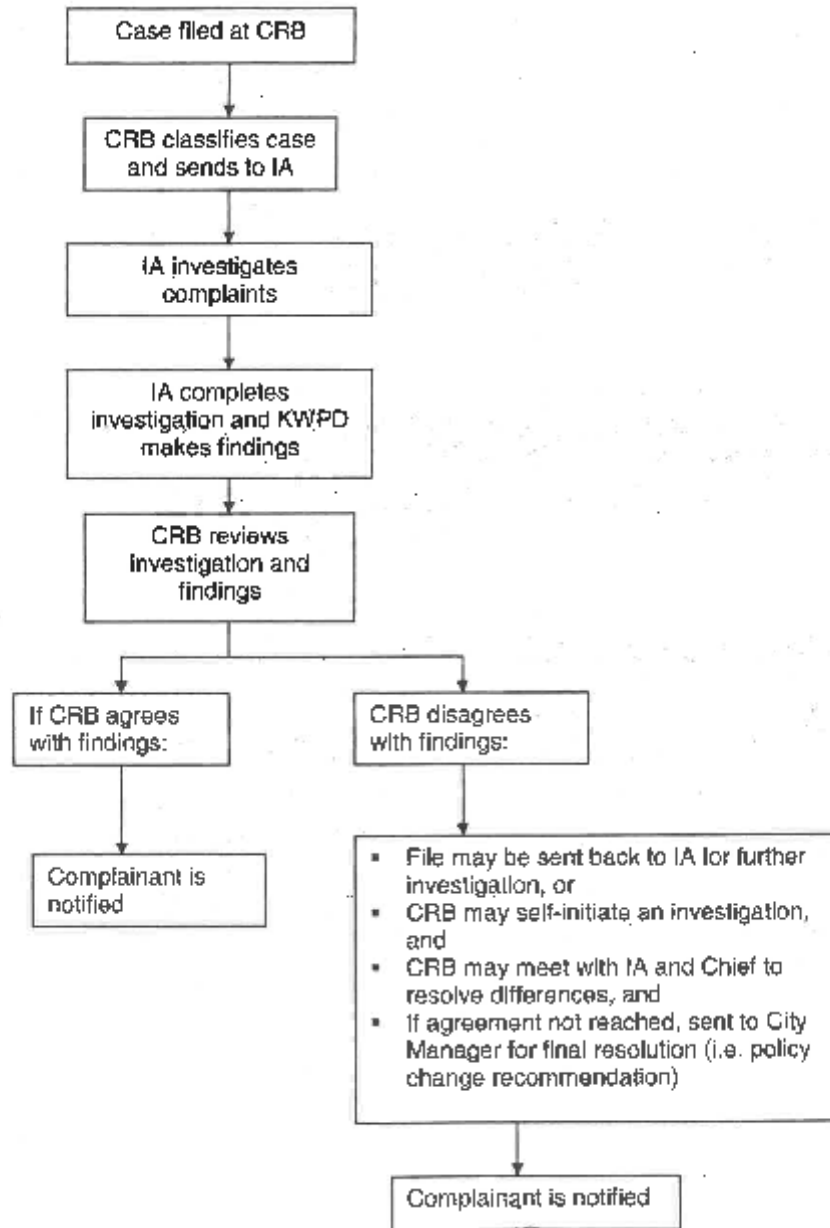
When an investigation is completed and returned to the CRB by IA, the Executive Director reviews it for completeness. The Board then reviews each allegation in each case, reflecting on the complainant's additional comments/testimony and IA's additional statements at a public meeting. The Board thereafter makes a recommended finding based on a preponderance of the evidence.

On the occasion the CRB reveals that the IA investigation or inquiry is inadequate or incomplete, the CRB has the option of returning the file to IA or conducting its own investigation. Typically, the CRB will refer the file back to IA and outline the areas that require further investigation. The CRB also has the option to conduct its own investigation, employing its own private investigator, and has exercised this option on several occasions over the years. Following the review of a complaint the Board may also consider policies that are in place that relate to the complaint.

At the conclusion of the review or investigation, the CRB forwards its written findings and conclusions to the Chief of Police and affected officers, and to the complainant, to the extent permitted by law. The Chief of Police and City Manager have the sole responsibility for discipline.

During the review process, the Board also critiques the quality of the investigation and investigative process. The review and comment by the Board gives the City and KWPD management the advantage of having a perspective that is not found in most communities. This transparent process allows for citizens to participate in its government and inspire confidence in the KWPD.

CRB COMPLAINT PROCESS CHART



Summary of 2022 CRB Files

The tracking chart below is a record of what the CRB uses, on a monthly basis, to track complaints that have been filed with the CRB and forwarded to the Police Internal Affairs for investigation. The chart shows the complainant's name, the file case number, date the complaint was filed with the CRB, date of transfer to IA, the 45-day limit, the date it was returned, and the allegation and finding by the CRB. The 45-day limit is from the Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights and pertains to the amount of time designated for the IA investigation where the complaint remains closed (45 days) and the time frame during which an officer can be disciplined for an infraction (180 days).

CRB Complainant	CRB case No.	Date Filed With CRB	Date Sent To IA	45 day limit	Date Returned	Allegation and Finding
Knorr, Gerald	22-005	11/30/22	11/30/22	1/16/22	1/10/23	False Arrest, Harassment, Unfounded
Thomas, Danny	23-001	5/1/23	5/3/23	6/19/23	5/8/23	False Arrest, No Finding, Withdrawn By Complainant
Barroso, Brian	23-002	8/11/23	8/18/23	10/4/23	9/6/23	Improper Search and Retention of Property, Unfounded
Lockett, Lloy	23-003	8/30/23	8/30/23	10/16/23	10/10/23	Deficient Service, No Finding, Withdrawn By Complainant
Fisher, Alvin	23-004	11/1/23	11/1/23	18/18/23	12/20/22	Deficient Service, Pending
Adam, Robert	23-005	12/28/23	12/29/23	2/12/23	Pending	Excessive Force, Rudeness Pending

There was a total of 64 Response to Resistance Incident (RRI) reports produced and provided to the CRB during 2023. This was down from a total of 70 last year. Of that total, a Taser was used in 25 of those cases, an increase from a total of 15 last year. The demographics of those being Tased broke down as follows: White-16, Hispanic-3, African American-6. Of the individuals tased 21 were male and 4 were female. Of the 64 RRI reports all utilized a body camera. Of the 64 individuals who generated RRIs 36 were assessed as being intoxicated.

Issues of Concern during 2023

The Citizen Review Board continues to monitor and analyze any uses of the TASER as that is an area of concern nationwide. In the past the police department gave the Board quarterly reports on TASER usage. The Board requested and the KWPD agreed to provide the Response to Resistance Incident (RRI) reports on a monthly basis to the Board. The RRI reports are completed by a supervisor anytime resistance is used by a subject that requires the officer to take additional actions during the arrest which includes the officer using the Taser. Upon implementing this change, it was determined that the Quarterly Taser Report was no longer needed. The Board does show concern on how often the Taser is used in lieu of other means of taking a person into physical custody. The Board will continue to monitor the cases where the Taser is used and the demographics of the persons being Tased.

CRB complaint 22-005 was premised in False Arrest and Harassment. In summary, Complainant alleged that on or about November 25, 2022, Key West Police arrested him for obstructing the right-of-way of pedestrians by having all his belongings piled on the sidewalk. The complainant alleges he was not given sufficient warning prior to arrest and KWPD improperly lost or destroyed some of his belongings. After testimony from the KWPD Liaison and review of KWPD documents and bodycam video the Board concluded Complaint 22-005 to be "Unfounded". A finding of "Unfounded" is entered where the review or investigation shows that the act or acts complained of did not occur or there is not credible evidence to support it.

Complaint 23-001 was filed by Complainant alleging False Arrest. Complainant alleged that on December 22, 2022, KWPD arrested him with insufficient evidence for stealing a shirt from a local business. KWPD responded that store video surveillance footage positively identified him as the suspect. KWPD applied for an arrest warrant based upon the video which was issued by Honorable Mark Wilson. The complainant was provided with a copy of KWPD's Response and although he disagreed with KWPD's position, he did not wish to file a Reply or proceed with a hearing. Complaint 23-001 was resolved with "No Finding".

Complaint 23-002 was filed by a Key West citizen alleging that on February 26, 2023, KWPD officer improperly searched and retained several “vape pens” prior to incarcerating him at Monroe County Detention Center. He alleged the officers informed him the pens were not allowed in the detention center and they would be destroyed but instead the officer’s secured said pens in an evidence bag. KWPD responded that vape pens are not allowed in the detention center and that they disposed of properly. The CRB conducted a hearing of Complaint 22-002 on January 22, 2023. After review of the subject documents and testimony from the police liaison file 23-002 was closed with a finding of “Unfounded”. “Unfounded” is entered where the review or investigation shows that the act or acts complained of did not occur or there is not credible evidence to support it.

Complaint 22-003 was filed by a Key West Citizen alleging Deficient Service. Complainant reported that on August 8, 2023, a large truck pulling a trailered boat backed into her stopped vehicle causing severe damage to said vehicle. The complainant took issue with the responding police officer including in the crash report, “Based on the witness statements I found the contributing factor for the crash to be careless driving by D1 (Complainant)”. KWPD responded that the crash investigation was within KWPD policies and procedures and that the officer recorded what the witness had related to him. CRB Attorney, Robert Cintron, suggested that with the Board’s approval he could help the complainant to deal with the insurance companies *pro bono*. The Board approved Mr. Cintron’s suggestion. Being satisfied, the complainant requested her Complaint be closed and on December 18, 2023, the Board entered a “No Finding” disposition.

Complaint 22-004 was filed against KWPD premised upon allegations of Deficient Service and Lack of Due Process. On October 29, 2023, the complainant was issued a trespass warning not allowing him to ride City of Key West public buses. The city alleges Complainant had improper interactions with a minor while riding the bus. The complainant objected to the trespass warning on the grounds he was never charged with breaking the law nor afforded due process to object to his ban of bus ridership. KWPD responded saying that the trespass warning from riding the bus was done appropriately and that the issuance of the trespass warning was approved by City Attorney Ronald Ramsingh. After hearing testimony from Mr. Fisher, the Board continued his complaint to February 26, 2024. Subsequent research revealed that The City of Key West has no written policies regarding trespass warnings from public property. Both the City of Marathon as well as Monroe County have formal procedures regarding issuance and appeals of trespass warnings from public property. The Board issued a recommendation that the City investigate the establishment of formal policies and procedures regarding issuance of trespass warnings from public property with the inclusion of an appeals process.

Complaint 23-005 alleges excessive force and rudeness by a Key West police officer while issuing parking tickets. On December 27, 2023, the complainant temporarily parked his car partially blocking the roadway to speak with his pool repair contractor. While in his yard Complainant responded to loud banging from outside his gate which turned out to be a Key West police officer. The officer loudly demanded the complainant move his vehicle immediately and stated that he had already issued two tickets. Complainant alleges that when he asked about the tickets, he was told he better move the vehicle now or he was going to jail. This complaint is currently pending.

In Conclusion

A. Transparency

The CRB continues to make transparency a main concern. Most documents being reviewed by the CRB can be accessed through our departmental website which can be located under the “CRB” department link from the City’s homepage at www.cityofkeywest-fl.gov. These documents as well as all agendas, minutes, and meeting videos can be accessed through the City’s on-line Legistar system.

Our webpage provides access by the public of:

1. The City Charter Provision 1.07 which created the CRB
2. The CRB Policy and Procedures
3. The Florida Officer’s Bill of Rights
4. A downloadable commendation form to compliment an officer
5. A downloadable complaint form to complain against an officer
6. The entire CRB yearly meeting schedule
7. Useful NACOLE links
8. CRB Staff credentials
9. Related police oversight links
10. The current and previous year’s Annual Report

The CRB continues to use the City’s Legistar system for uploading and public viewing of file contents in an attempt at achieving city wide uniformity of presenting such public records to the citizens of Key West. This continued access to public documents provides IA with a platform to demonstrate the effectiveness and completeness of each

of its investigations. The advantages of the aforementioned demonstrates the transparency of the entire review process.

B. Community Outreach

The CRB continues to conduct aggressive community outreach through the Executive Director's presentations. The Executive Director will continue to attend Constitution Day in September 2024 at College of the Florida Keys

In closing, the CRB would like to stress its highest respect and regard to the men and women of the KWPD who truly are protecting paradise. These officers are doing a difficult job under extraordinary circumstances every single day to protect the citizens of Key West. Chief Brandenburg and his staff continue to show their professionalism and prove their willingness to work with the CRB.