

# **Opening Remarks of Lead Monitor Jonathan Aronie at 13th Public Court Hearing Regarding The NOPD Consent Decree**



**Presented to Judge Susie Morgan**

**United States District Court for the  
Eastern District of Louisiana**

**November 16, 2017**

Your Honor, in 2011, the Department of Justice published its findings regarding its investigation of the New Orleans Police Department. These findings identified, among other things, significant problems with most every aspect of the Police Academy, including recruit training, field training, and in-service training.

The Monitoring Team similarly has been critical of the Academy over the last four years. In fact, I suspect many sitting in the courtroom today would say I have been one of the Academy's biggest critic. Perhaps it is because I personally have been so hard on the Academy in the past – including at hearings in this Court – that I am so pleased to be able to report today on the dramatic progress the Academy has made over the past year.

Since the outset of the Consent Decree, the Monitoring Team has spent significant time evaluating every aspect of the Academy. We have reviewed countless iterations of lesson plans, curricula, PowerPoint presentations, and course materials. We have audited teacher qualifications, student evaluations, and record keeping practices. We have personally observed classes, and met one-on-one with instructors, supervisors, and students. We even have participated in some of the hands-on instruction so we would have a first-hand view of the skills and/or limitations of the Academy instructors.

Based on these reviews, I'm pleased to report we have seen a tremendous improvement in nearly all aspects of the Academy over the past year. While the Academy still has room for growth in several areas, and we will talk about those areas today, we are greatly encouraged by the Academy leadership and staff we interact with on a daily basis. Their energy, enthusiasm, and commitment, even in the face of my frequent criticism, gives me great comfort the Academy will continue on its path toward not only full compliance with the Consent Decree, but more importantly, toward becoming a national leader in police training.

While the Consent Decree includes multiple paragraphs with which the Academy must comply, and the Monitoring Team assesses the Academy's compliance with each of those paragraphs through audits and assessments, we also work hard to take a step back and evaluate whether the Academy is achieving the objectives set forth in the Consent Decree – that is, we ask whether the Academy is providing the

sort of learning environment students, instructors, and, most importantly, the public, can have faith in.

To do this, we organize our thinking into six simple categories:

- **First, the Curriculum.** We want to be sure the Academy is teaching the right things, to the right people, in the right way, in the right order. We want to make sure the Master Training Plan is current and complete; lesson plans are accurate and detailed; and changes in law, policy, and best practices flow seamlessly and promptly into the Academy curriculum.
- **Second, the Personnel.** A good curriculum is only as good as the instructor teaching it. Accordingly, we want to make sure the Academy has engaged the right people to carry the right message to the recruits and officers. We look for teachers who are knowledgeable, experienced, dedicated, acquisitive, energetic, and memorable. We also look closely at the Academy leadership. We ask ourselves whether they have the management skills, the attention to detail, the creativity, the patience, and the dedication necessary to run a professional academic institution.
- **Third, the Instruction.** Closely tied to the quality of the instructors, is the manner of the instruction. In this area, we look closely at teaching techniques, tools, and materials. We look for teachers who apply adult learning principles. We look for materials that are accurate, up-to-date, not offensive, and memorable. And we look to see if instructors are using technology to enhance their instruction.
- **Fourth, the Facility.** Research strongly suggests the quality of the academic facility has a significant impact on both student and teacher performance. From the building to the classrooms to the technology available, we look to see whether the City and the NOPD have given the recruits, officers, and instructors what they need to be successful.
- **Fifth, the Processes.** An effective Academy needs sensible and effective systems. So we look at the Academy's record keeping, teacher evaluation, and disciplinary processes. We also look to see whether those processes have been documented and institutionalized.
- **Finally, the Students.** We look at the students, and the process through which they found their way into the Academy. We closely evaluate the Department's recruiting practices and, more importantly, the Department's vetting/hiring practices.

As you will hear shortly from NOPD and from Dr. Scrivner, the NOPD Academy – thanks to the men and women in the courtroom with us today – have made

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dramatic improvements in each of the foregoing areas from where they were when we started monitoring the Academy in 2013. While there is work yet to do, the energy I have seen over the past 12 months gives me great confidence the Academy will continue along its current path. Thank you.