

Meeting with John Hren, Portland Patrol, Inc.

*Reviewed – KG
– 4/27/20*

Date: Thursday, March 5, 2020

Auditors: Alexandra Fercak, Bob McKay

Purpose: Learn about the services Portland Patrol, Inc. provides to the Clean & Safe district.

See [contract B-5.5](#) between Portland Patrol, Inc. and Portland Business Alliance

PPI -Portland Patrol, Inc.

PBA – Portland Business Alliance

John retired from the Portland Police in 1998, where he was the Captain of the Tactical Operations. He has owned PPI since 2000. He has extensive experience working as a Police Officer and with police practices and policies.

Alexandra gave an overview of the audit and the audit process, letting John know that the auditee is the City of Portland, not any of the districts or their contractors, and the objective is to look at the City’s oversight of the districts.

John mentioned PPI is the largest contractor for Clean & Safe (C&S). He also said he was the lieutenant for the Police presence around Lloyd Center when that district was formed. He said is well informed about the issues and concerns that the districts are dealing with.

John showed auditors a map of the C&S district (same map as listed in the contract, except color coded). PPI also patrol the transit mall and the Smart Park garage system. PPI has a separate contract with PBOT to provide security for the garages. Portland Mall Management, Inc. (PMMI), takes care of the mall and Max tracks, via contracts and agreements with TriMet.

He stated all of his armed personnel are required to have at least 3 years of police experience. As for his unarmed staff, he said he wants people who are “too smart” to be the usual security folks – he doesn’t want them to be in the same positions in 5 years, meaning that he wants officers that have ambitions to become police officers or to somehow move up in their careers.

He said PMMI talked to the Portland Business Alliance (PBA) about getting security and that is how PPI got the work. PPI already had contract with Smart Park, but that went away during Vera Katz administration. He said he had the Smart Park contract three times and lost it twice, but this was mainly due to low-bidders which were then fired due to poor services and PPI was rehired. He said there simply isn’t a better security provider as PPI.

He came up with the idea of “umbrella services” where the different security agreements and areas, such as Smart Park and the Clean & Safe, the staff will cross each other’s boundaries and if they see a problem they take care of it. This provides a uniform and consistent coverage and address problems as they come up. He said they have excluded 100-150 people/month from Smart Park garages (some of the reasons are, loitering without having a parked car, using drugs, using them as bedroom or bathroom). Alexandra asked about data on officers activities and data on exclusions, etc, and he said that if Maureen Fisher the director of PBA says it is ok for auditors to have the data, then he will provide it. He stressed that he is a private contractor and doesn’t have to provide data or any information.

When asked about why the PPI officers are armed, he stated his theory is that a gun is an anchor in a situation– he said his approach is he is not hiring the gun, but the brain behind the gun, meaning that an officer has to have the know-how for using it. They have to know how to de-escalate situations and they obtain training on that. He told auditors about an incident on the waterfront that involved a shooting between two cars during the Rose Festival: 2 bullets were retrieved, the third went East and struck a man in the head who was walking with his family along the waterfront. A police car was directly behind the two cars so they immediately arrested the suspects.

R1 The PPI officers run two shifts from 6:30AM to 11PM. The morning crew starts by walking around and waking people up if they are blocking business or entrances. Some people respond nicely, while others have an issue with the officers. If PPI officers can’t resolve the situation (moving people along) they call the “2-800s” (the 4 Portland Police officers funded through C&S). The PPI officers write up reports of these incidents, which look exactly like Police reports, except they say PPI at the top. The police officers like these calls because the PPI officers have already filled out most of the paperwork and provided the necessary information. He said that comparing calls and police reports for the 4 Police Officers at C&S to the other police officers assigned to central precinct, the C&S police officers answer more call and produce more reports than the other police officers in the precinct. He said the C&S police officers are very productive because of the assistance and support they obtain from the PPI officers. PPI runs businesses and others, and PPI dispatches **R4** the call center to answer the calls from district the calls to their officers or the police officers if needed. He said it all depends on the situation, but normally the PPI officers are dispatched first.

The PPI officers can’t arrest people or issue enforcement citations, but the officers patrolling Smart Park garages can issue exclusions from garages, which has been set up with the DA’s office. He pointed out PPI also hold the contract with the Apple Store for security. He said all of his management team are former Police so they are very experienced in enforcement and management of officers. He said PPI officers’ average response time in downtown is 4 or 5 minutes, but if someone were to call the Police (for the same issue) it might take them up to 30 minutes or they may not even answer some of those calls. He mentioned that the PPI uniforms for C&S have the C&S badge on them, but his staff in Smart Park garages have no badge/logo.

He said the 4 C&S funded Police officers work for a PPB sergeant, and they don’t work for John, but he meets with the Sergeant at Starbucks in Old Town every Wednesday morning at 9AM (along with representatives from C&S and PMMI). He gave an example of how they all work together: they are in the process of getting a ‘bait bike’, which is a nice bike with a GPS tracker in it to catch thieves, but it the cost for the bike was around \$2,000. The police were unable to pay for it, so John paid half and C&S paid half.

He told the auditors that the C&S cleaners from Central City Concern were in the back room of the same building that houses the PPI office. The cleaners' radios reach dispatch (which is central at the PPI front desk). They can't contact security officers directly. Some of the cleaners are accompanied by PPI security officers if for example they go in areas such as under the bridges that are considered out of sight and riskier for the cleaners to work in.

Alexandra asked about controls John had in place for accountability of security officers in public spaces. Is there a complaint process? What controls are in place?

Initially John said we didn't have the right to ask him that as he is a private contractor. He said they do have a system where they will take a complaint at PPI, they investigate it, and within 5 business days will come back to report the outcome of the investigation. The person who made the complaint will be told the outcome - i.e., the officer was disciplined – but will not be provided with any details. He claimed PPI was different than any security company in Oregon in that once a quarter they list all complaints and give them to PBA. Last quarter Maureen [new Director of PBA and C&S] was new so they skipped reporting during that time. He said he has been reporting these complaints since Potter was Mayor. Again, he claimed there was no reason for complaints to be made public as he is running a private company and this reporting is "all voluntary" and he is the only security company that does this. Alexandra pointed out that this reporting of complaints is required in the agreement between the City and C&S.

Recently, he said, there was a public information request from PSU asking for data on security officers. He called Robert King, who he says is a former police colleague and currently on Mayor's staff and told him it was not ok to make this info public, but if PSU was interested John said he would agree to sit down with them and go over the data. He said he didn't want things to get into the media and said there has been much written about him and his company. He stressed again that he is a private company and he voluntarily agrees to provide any information on the activities of his business. He also mentioned that the concern is that other security companies would take his business ideas to compete.

Alexandra asked about reports he provides to PBA and if the Police ever ask for any data on officer activities.

R2 John said he has been providing monthly reports for 22 years to the PBA. He said it has been revised periodically but contains information on topics like number of arrests, contacts, business assists, where calls are coming from, etc. He has it in a spreadsheet and can get information on what happened on all four corners of an intersection in the last 30 days, for example, or on any block [within the district.] He shares it with PBA.

Once a month there is also a meeting of the Downtown Security Network (DSN). The DSN has an Alert System which, as an example, sent out a description of the person (and their car) who stole \$21,000 of purses from Nordstrom. The meeting is not open to the public, but most large businesses downtown belong and attend.

Alexandra asked whether PPI provides info to any other City bureau besides Police, and he said the only other City bureau they regularly deal with is PBOT, but that is because of the Smart Park garages contract. But he said security activities in the downtown are all interconnect and "incestuous". For example, different jurisdictions or contract agreements go from property line to property line, but if a neighboring security force needs help, and asks, then security officers will provide help. This even applies to the City's Park Rangers. He said they used to have the contract with the City for patrolling downtown

parks, but now there are City Park Rangers, so PPI officers don't patrol parks. He said he thinks the City is not getting good service for how much the Park Rangers are costing the City. He'd love to look at cost for PPI vs Rangers – for example he thinks where the City sends 2 or 3 high-priced (union and benefits) security personnel, PPI would send only 1.

R3

Alexandra asked if he ever met with the Mayor or Council to provide info on security activities or complaints. John said "yes and no" - if Robert King has a question then he calls John. For

example, he said that the Starbucks at 3rd and Davis is closing at the end of the month because their employees don't feel safe in Old Town. John said a bunch of people (PPI, PBA, Mayor's office) all got together to say let's fix that – ask Starbucks to give them an extra month to try some things out. He said Starbucks are getting complaints from others in the neighborhood that they are a 'magnet' for problems. He noted that customers from the methadone clinic around the block have started hanging out in front of the store rather than dispersing. And so John met with others to try to resolve this.

John suggested auditors talk to that Starbucks, ONEA (in the former Port of Portland Building – who moved from Lake Oswego and now their employees don't feel safe walking to their cars), or the College of Art on Broadway, in order to get business perspectives of those that are looking to move out of downtown. Auditors could also talk to Mark Schlesinger & Dave Hamilton (Old Town/Downtown) who will tell you that PPI is great, or Greg Goodman (parking) who will tell you PPI is over-priced and he is not sure what PPI does.

John also said he believes Commissioner Hardesty does not like anyone with a gun, pointing out she was involved in ensuring that Central Eastside district security not carry guns. The 3 business districts have nothing in common, he said, and noted that the Central Eastside could afford the security that C&S has.

John said his officers are much smarter than typical security folk who only need a minimum of 18 hours training. He also stressed that even the former police officers that are now PPI officers have to be retrained, because security officers, unlike police officers, have the obligation to retreat, observe and report. For the first 30 working days they are partnered with a coach. It takes 5 or 6 months for any new PPI hire to be out on their own. He stressed the importance of de-escalation, reassuring, talking and using your words. He said he'd rather hire an 18-25 year-old woman than a man because there are no testosterone-related issues and women are better problem solvers. He also said being in a public space on the street is totally different (than say, the garages) - everyone has a right to be there. He instructs his people to talk to everyone and build relationships. Every Wednesday they conduct an hour training class on everything from de-escalation to marketing skills. He said there are 35-40 security firms in Oregon.

Bob asked him to expand a little more on the Park Ranger program. John said if it was put out to bid PPI's bid for the 9 downtown parks would be \$30/hour unarmed and \$40/hour armed. It suggested comparing that to what the City pays. Plus he said PPI's exclusion rate would be higher, "guaranteed". He said individually the Rangers are fine, but their direction/management has no connectivity or working relationship with the Police or PPI. With a firm like PPI you have relationships and connections with people all over downtown and it is easier to network. He said he's not in favor of privatizing Police, but he feels there is a role for private security in other areas. That's Parks' argument, that Police shouldn't patrol the parks, and he agrees. But he said he feels the Rangers only do a fair job and are very expensive.

He mentioned he would be out next week (9th - 13th) but would be happy to answer any further questions.

