

Champaign County ACLU Steering Committee

Thursday September 5, 2013

7:00 p.m.

Room 3405 Siebel Center

Present: Steven Portnoy, president, Mort Brussel, Bob Illyes, Carol Leff, Mark Leff, Marilyn Lindholm, Esther Patt, Carol Spindel, Shirley Stillinger
Guest Durl Kruse

AGENDA

1. Approval of minutes, with correction of the details of the bookstore's Public I reinstatement.
2. Most of the meeting was devoted to a discussion with Durl Kruse on the most recent IDOT (traffic stop) data, which includes for the first time data on the use of sniffer dogs to scent contraband during traffic stops. The concern here is the local failure rate—most searches subsequent to dog "alerts" came up empty, and at a much higher rate than in the state at large. The question is why. Are the dogs "probable cause on four legs" that respond to cues other than the scent of drugs? Are there record keeping and reporting differences between local authorities' practices and those elsewhere in the state? (For example, it was suggested that local authorities may not count cases as "successful" in which trace amounts of drugs were found insufficient for prosecution). Without pre-judging this issue, we agreed with Durl Kruse that it would be appropriate to ask for further explanation of the findings.

Kruse reviewed with us the most recent IDOT traffic stop data (2012) and the pattern of racial disparity that prevailed in Champaign and Urbana (currently somewhat less so with University of Illinois police traffic stops). In general, Kruse noted, African Americans are stopped at about twice the level of their percentage of the driving public (based on estimates of the driving public derived from 2010 census data). An additional issue emergent from the racial disparities in traffic stops was the financial costs/traffic fines accrued by the minority community as a result of the disproportionate traffic stop rates, disproportions that have persisted over the period of record-keeping (2004-2012). Kruse offered a sample calculation of these costs based on actual stops, estimated local minority driving population, and the fines accrued for a normal single traffic ticket. This calculation created an estimate of more than a million additional dollars in fines for the black community over the 2004-2012 period as a result of racial disparities in traffic stops.

Kruse asked us for support in the following areas: support for a racial justice task force, support for study sessions on traffic stop data with the local city councils, and presence at the September 24 meeting at which the findings of the criminal justice task force report were to be laid out and discussed. These requests were moved and approved later in the meeting.

3. Announcements & Communications
4. Old Business

- a. Pool Closing in north Champaign (letter from Anna Barnes)—the pool itself has been closed and the land "repurposed," but the general issue of adequate recreational services for the African American community in the area remains. It was pointed out that there are demographic changes in the location of our minority communities, and that the north Champaign population is aging, but follow-up on racial disparities in service provision is a question worth exploring.
- b. Bill Brown renewed contact by e-mail with internet privacy expert Lori Andrews, law professor at IIT Chicago-Kent, who was unable because of her schedule to speak at annual meeting in the spring. He will report on her response.

4. New Business

- 4.a. Fall gathering –the place and date (early November) for the fall gathering was confirmed, and it was agreed to send out a "save the date" postcard.
- 4.b. Progressive "potluck" (Oct 5)—a collection of local social justice groups invited us to join a planned potluck to discuss greater coordination of local initiatives where there were common interests. Some steering committee members expressed skepticism of the efficacy of this kind of effort, noting that past such coordination attempts had fizzled out. A common

on-line calendar might be useful. Bob Illyes was already planning to attend the potluck, and agreed to report back if he did indeed attend.

4.c. We voted to accord long-serving member Stuart Laird emeritus status on the steering committee.

5. Adjournment at 8:40.

**Next meeting (note change):
Oct 10, 3403 Siebel Center**