

Greater Rockridge NCPC / RCPC Joint Town Hall - Minutes (12Y/13X)
Thursday, October 23, 2008
Rockridge Library 5366 College Avenue
General Public: 7:00-9:00PM

1. Refreshments and General Introductions
2. Reports/Discussions (flexible 10 minutes each depending discussions at hand)
 - a) Presentation on crime statistics (Vivek Bhatia)
 - b) OPD Report
 - c) Neighborhood Issues
 - d) Merchants' Issues
3. Door to door solicitor permits in Oakland (30 min.) – Ms. Millie Crossland, OPD Records Manager, and Ms. Barbara Killey, Assistant to the City Administrator, will explain what permits are required for door-to-door solicitors in Oakland, and will answer questions on the subject.
4. Review of Previous Month's Priorities and Setting of New Ones (10 minutes)

Twenty-four people attended the October NCPC meeting including the following OPD officers:

Officer P. Gerrans, beat 12Y PSO
Officer J. Gordon, Field Training Officer/Traffic Division
Officer E. Arriaza, trainee
Officer M. Rhoden, Beat 9
Officer M. Rodriguez, foot patrol ? 12Y
Sgt. D. Kelley

No one from beat 13X attended the meeting.

Vivek Bhatia was unable to attend, so there was no crime statistics presentation. Chris Jackson noted that the adult bookstore on Telegraph Ave. at 57th was robbed within the last 2 weeks. The Shell station at Claremont and College was also robbed recently.

Jim Dexter, the NCPC chair from beat 13Y, reported that beat 13Z has had a rash of house break-ins including some doors kicked in, there may be multiple groups of criminals, which may even be organized and checking out neighborhood for targets. There have been no arrests that he knows of. Officer Chew, the PSO for beat 13X, didn't attend the meeting because he was actively working on the burglary investigation with the patrol officers, checking out license plates. Beat residents are using a Yahoo email group to share observations (cars, license plates, etc.). Officer Gordon says there's been 1 arrest on Alvarado (beat 13Y) – OPD stopped a Starving Students moving truck, the driver had an out-of-state burglary warrant. The firm owner says that drivers are hired by the day and not checked. This may or may not be related to the burglaries. Jim Dexter noted that most break-ins have been around Thornhill (beat 13Y), and there have been no arrests there.

Officer Arriaza commented that people who don't come to the NCPC meetings don't know the issues, we need to educate them.

On the subject of door-to-door solicitors, Officer Rhoden explained that many of the people who go around from door to door are working for a CA-based company, which hires low-income people, often very young, from other states including the South, brings them here, puts them up in inexpensive hotels in suburbs like Hayward, then sends them door-to-door to get what they can. Some of them are honest, some not. They may or may not eat depending on how much they can bring back; they may be sexually abused. They claim not to know they need a permit. Officer Rhoden urged people to call OPD when solicitors come by. Chris Jackson agreed it isn't good for the kids going door-to-door, or for the neighborhood.

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A resident asked about the issue of stolen catalytic converters, and is it related to these solicitors? Officer Rhoden said that's a nationwide problem, made worse because the local recycling centers don't check sellers' ID.

Chris Jackson emphasized that 99% of the people coming unasked to your door are up to no good. They are casing the joint. You should put up a No Soliciting sign – if you don't want to buy a commercial one, NCPC has one available on the web site that you can print out. Officer Rhoden urged women that if they do open the door, they should pretend their husband is in the house and they have to ask him about whatever the vendor is selling. (Closing the door to do so, of course.) Don't appear to be alone in the house. A resident who is relatively new to the neighborhood and attended his first NCPC meeting with his wife, asked if there is much vandalism and petty theft, as they're new to the area? Chris Jackson agreed that yes, we get it off and on. The new resident's wife asked about a man who says he's from the security company? Officer Rhoden explained that the men from the *real* security companies are delighted to show you their credentials; no credentials, probably not a valid security rep.

Denise Boisvert-Jorgensen asked Officer Rhoden if he would ticket someone who crossed the street at an intersection, against a *Do Not Cross* light, even though there were absolutely no cars in the intersection? Officer Rhoden replied that he absolutely would issue a ticket, crossing against the light is against the law regardless of whether any cars are coming or not.

PSO report: Officer Gerrans isn't sure if the recent porn store robbery was done by the same thieves as last time. The area at Canning and 59th is much calmed down, has had 1 domestic violence call. The Kales Ave. house that was reported at the September meeting has had no activity in the last month, no incidents, no calls. He checked the records, and OPD has had 5 domestic dispute reports in the last year at that address. None of the complainants attended the October meeting. It isn't really a criminal issue, it's a civil issue. Officer Gerrans says that if it happens again, the neighbors can contact him directly. OPD has arrested a suspect in the recent robbery at Claremont and Colby. Regarding the area at 63rd and College, where a laptop was stolen, Officer Rodriguez hangs out around Cole Coffee. He's had complaints of people parking motorcycles on the sidewalk.

Chris Jackson asked the beat officers about their projects; beat officers allowed 1 project per quarter.

Officer Rodriguez has been giving tickets to people who don't yield to pedestrians in crosswalks. The tickets are around \$300, they go on insurance records and require community service. He only gives tickets when he's sure of the offense. He hangs out by Zachary's. He's been going by the Canning site on the day shift and seeing nothing. Chris Jackson noted the Canning action is now at night, there's drug dealing in the OHA parking lot– NOT by the residents. Canning is back on the priority list because of the porn store robbery and a report (received the day after the NCPC meeting) of a homeless encampment on the front steps of a vacant "for sale" building at Telegraph at 57th.

Officer Rodriguez asked, what's happening during day that he's missing? Even the recycling guys don't have rap sheets. Chris Jackson agreed, it's been really quiet.

A resident reported a neighbor who drives drunk, parks at Miles & Cavour, and sometimes passes out in the car. She isn't sure what to do about him. He's usually there between noon-1:30, in a black Saturn crunched front bumper; he's a 70-ish white man. He has no relatives she knows of. Chris Jackson asked if the PSO could discuss this with him when he's sober, first thing in the morning?

A representative from the RCPC reported that there's still an issue with Claremont Middle School parents double and triple parking on Birch Court when school lets out. Officer Gerrans suggested

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talking to the school again, warning parents and handing out flyers, because the fines have gone way up. Karen Ivy mentioned the same issue with Anthony Chabot School on Patton between Chabot and the freeway. Officer Gerrans said they hate to ticket parents picking up kids because they want the kids to be safe. Jim Dexter pointed out that the fines, already high, are *doubled* in a marked school zone. In beats 13Y/Z, the PTAs are organized and have set up a loading zone, which helps a lot. But for the people who just don't care, tickets are the only remedy. Trouble is, both those schools were designed as neighborhood schools, and now they're commuter schools; we need to get the schools involved on the parking issue.

A resident asked about jaywalkers - people walk right through the *Don't walk* sign. Officer Rhoden said he honks and points at the sign. Chris Jackson said, we can make that a traffic priority.

The RCPC representative offered a big thank you to OPD for the crackdown on u-turns on College Ave., it's much better than it was.

Merchant issues: The representative from the Rockridge District Association reported that the meeting that was supposed to happen yesterday has been postponed to the 28th. Chris Jackson noted the Shell station robbery reported to him by Sarah Lamb. There's been no word of problems with kids so far this school year.

A resident asked about the recycling thieves - are they fined or what? Chris Jackson said they aren't picked up unless there's a warrant out for them. The resident reported a black woman going through her garbage that morning who said "don't you take a picture of me!" when the resident brought out her camera. Officer Gerrans thinks there's an obscure code section that says recycling belongs to the recycling company once it's out at the curb. A resident asked if garbage bills are going up because of lowered profits on recycling due to thieves? Chris Jackson said yes, that's true.

A resident brought up the issue of garbage cans blocking sidewalks; some of the trucks leave them every which way, and it endangers disabled people. He has disabled neighbors. Jim Dexter suggested he get the truck number and report it, Waste Management *does* follow up and correct the problem when they're told about it.

The RCPC representative complained we still have an issue on College Avenue with businesses putting out sandwich signs on the sidewalk, these signs are ALL illegal. The merchants simply refuse to comply. Jim Dexter suggested that if the signs are illegal, maybe they can just disappear. A resident asked about tables and chairs on the sidewalk? The RCPC representative explained that they have permits which govern a certain distance from business. Tables and chairs have to be within that limit. If you think they're too far out, talk to the merchant.

Chris Jackson reported that 58th was posted for tree trimming today; but the signs are all down and the crew tells him they're all about to be laid off. Nila Kim of Jane Brunner's office confirmed that we're losing at least half the tree trimmers. A resident said they're in the power lines in his neighborhood. Chris Jackson said, if they're hitting the power lines, PG&E will come and trim. This is a beat-wide safety issue, the trees block street lights, and make streets too dark to walk on. Officer Rhoden suggested a neighborhood tree trimming party - he thinks it's legal.

Denise Boisvert-Jorgensen noted that if you want graffiti remover, the NCPC bought some to sell at cost, \$7. We had 3 bottles out but no takers at this meeting.

Official Presentation on Door-to-Door Permits

There are 2 kinds of permits to solicit issued in Oakland:

1. Commercial peddlers permits, allowing sale of items, issued by OPD Records Division.

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2. Charitable solicitation permits, allowing people to ask for donations, issued by City Administrator's Office.

Ms. Millie Crossland manages the OPD Records Division. She just moved here from Kansas City and has lived in Oakland 75 days. Her office issues *commercial peddler's permits*. Peddler's permits are for door-to-door soliciting. She provided a handout with a list of the people who currently have a peddler's permit, plus a photocopy of the certificate which they have to have and show on demand. Very few people actually have these permits: the list has only 23 names. Peddlers also have to have an Oakland business license, be fingerprinted, and pay numerous fees: the Master Fee Schedule for the City shows that the Peddler-Solicitor Permit fee is \$50, plus \$25 for fingerprinting and \$32 for a Department of Justice check. It's her impression that almost none of the people going door to door actually have permits.

If citizens put up a "no solicitors" sign on the door, people with permits *may not knock*. The odds are very high that people coming around door-to-door DO NOT have permits. They are required to show you the permit if they have it; you can take down their name and complain to the city, if they have a license. If they don't have a license, of course, you have no recourse except to talk them away. Either don't open the door to them or use verbal self-defense.

Ms. Barbara Killey of the City Administrator's office runs the department which issues special business permits for charitable solicitation. The charitable solicitation permit costs \$20. She also gave out a handout showing what the permit looks like, a copy of an actual permit issued to Crocker Highlands Elementary School PTA. The organization must be a registered 501(c)(3), and must give the city a financial report on what they took in. There are only 5 outstanding ongoing permits (one of which *is* the group that has people selling the *Street Sheet*)! Groups may get a one day permit which will specify *where they can go* to solicit; the usual permit is for "store front solicitation" or "street corner solicitation". They've *never* issued a door-to-door permit for charitable solicitation in the 4 years she's been doing it.

The RCPC representative asked about signature gatherers who then ask for money. Ms. Killey said that they've crossed the line when they ask for money. The First Amendment doesn't allow you to ask for money.

Ms. Killey asked about the people who drop kids off in the neighborhood - would officers respond to a call about them? The officers repeated that yes, they will - OPD recommends you call those in. If dispatch is reluctant to take the report, tell them the PSO or the NCPC told you to call it in.

Jim Dexter commented that the NCPCs get mixed messages on this issue all the time; OPD needs to hand this information out much more broadly and get it into the officer training. OPD officers often don't understand the situation. Ms. Killey said she did the charitable permit speech in the police training sessions last year, there was a lot of interest, but also a lot of confusion. She probably needs to give it again. Officer Gerrans noted that they can't really arrest unless they see the guy soliciting. Failing that, they must have the citizens attest that *they* saw the solicitation.

Chris Jackson noted that our former PSO, a 13 year veteran with OPD, had only seen 2 permits in her entire career. A citizen asked, what about the Street Sheet people? Ms. Killey wasn't sure, she took that issue to the City Attorney. The S.F. Homeless Coalition *does* have an ongoing permit, but - each paper seller is supposed to have a copy of the permit, with his name on it, and the dates he's able to do it. It isn't clear whether they actually do that. Annette Floystrup asked if the RCPC need a \$20 permit for the booth in the street fair, if they have a donation can? Ms. Killey said, technically, yes they do.

A resident noted that people who leave business cards for contracting have to show a contractor's license number on the cards. Yeda Altes cautioned that the cards aren't necessarily left by the

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person whose name is on them. The holders of commercial peddler's licenses look like the sort of operation that would have street tables. Can we get a flyer for outreach on this issue??

The RDA representative asked if solicitors are ever allowed to go door-to-door or are they always in a public location? Ms. Crossland thought the police peddler's certificate might make it legal to go door-to-door, but suggested that citizens put up a no soliciting sign, and don't answer the door to anyone you don't know.

Our next meeting will be a joint Town Hall with the Rockridge Community Planning Council on Thursday, November 20 – NOT our usual date. Join us to hear City Attorney John Russo speak.

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Priorities

Beat 12Y

1. 5700-5900 Telegraph – 5900 Block Canning

Monitor area for suspicious people/vehicles and juveniles loitering in relation to the adult bookstore and the Washhouse. Drug Activity reported as returning to 59th & Canning area (possibly same subjects who loiter on the 5900 block of Telegraph).

May be related to recent armed robbery of adult bookstore at 57th and Telegraph. Also, homeless encampment reported on front steps of vacant "for sale" building at Telegraph & 57th (southwest corner).

2. Monitor neighborhood recyclers

Beat 13X

1. Continue to investigate recent rash of burglaries and forced entries (doors kicked in).

Traffic Priorities

12Y – General traffic enforcement on College Avenue, including pedestrian and bicycle.

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