

Minutes
Greater Rockridge (Beats 12Y and 13X) NCPC Meeting
Thursday, March 10, 2011, 7 pm
Rockridge Branch of the Oakland Public Library

Present at the meeting:

NCPC officers: Frank Castro, chair; Barbara Minton, vice chair; Denise Boisvert Jorgenson, treasurer; Janet Somers, acting secretary

OPD Officers: Officers Maureen Vergara (PSO for Beat 12X and acting sergeant); Randall Chew (PSO for Beat 12Y, currently filling in on Beat 12X for Officer Vergara); Rick Flores (patrol for Beat 12 OHA properties); Trent Thompson(PSO for Beats 13X, Y, and Z)

Neighborhood Services Coordinator Patricia Rose
Oakland Fire Dept. Officers Tracy Chin and two others
Wayne Gregori, founder of LicenseLook.com

Attendees - A dozen or more from the community including one person from Berkeley

The meeting was held in the upstairs hallway (another group was using the meeting room).

1. INTRODUCTIONS: Everyone in the room introduced themselves.

2. FIRE DEPT PRESENTATION: Officer Tracy Chin and two others from Engine 19 described the department's services. More than three-quarters of the calls the department responds to are emergency medical calls. They also perform fire safety inspections of commercial establishments. They often work with OPD on a variety of calls.

The department provides monthly CPR and first aid classes. 238-6957 for information.

The fire department's "CISM" (Critical Incident Response Management) teams are volunteers who provide emotional and other support to people who have experienced loss after significant incidents. Example: After a nun in the Lakeshore district was hit and killed by a dump truck, CISM brought people in the community together to help bring closure.

The dept. makes school visits, giving kids information on basic fire safety and showing girls that women can be firefighters too - skill is not dependent on body size.

CORE (Citizens of Oakland Respond to Emergencies) is a free series of classes in disaster management. Call 238-6351 for information.

Oakland Firefighters Random Acts of Kindness, started 10 years ago by firefighters who saw a need in the community, is a charity organization providing clothing for fire victims, help for people living in poor health conditions, etc. It once gave beds to two kids found sleeping on the floor. Donations and information on the website, ofrandomacts.org, or call 465-8422.

3. OFFICER CHEW – BEAT 12Y REPORT

Crime statistics: (Note: He refers to statistics for the month between the January and the February meetings as “Jan – Feb” and likewise for February and March):

Jan-Feb: 5 auto burglaries, 16 home burglaries, 5 robberies, 7 stolen vehicles

Feb-Mar: 2 auto burglaries, 7 home burglaries, 1 commercial burglary, 0 robberies, 2 stolen vehicles

There is someone in custody now for home burglaries, which Chew said might account for the reduction during the more recent period. He said robbery victims are “always someone with an iPod on, or talking on phone, or walking into a group of kids, taking short cuts, not paying attention.” There were no felony assaults in either period.

Responding to concerns about the large number of “kick-in” burglaries in Montclair, Chew said there was only one “kick-in” in 12Y ; the rest were all either side or back windows or back doors. In many cases the criminals apparently used patio furniture to climb in through a window.

BART vs. OPD jurisdiction: There was a question re BART vs. OPD jurisdiction: BART jurisdiction is the parking lot and inside the station, but Chew said, “They are sworn officers and can act anywhere just like we can.”

Use and effectiveness of alarm systems: A victim of a back-door kick-in burglary asked about effectiveness of alarm systems. Officers in attendance said if you have an alarm and it goes off in a kick-in (or in general), your loss is significantly less. “They may just grab something really quick and leave.” Officer Vergara: “If they really cased your house and they’re after a certain item, they know how long they have.” She said the criminals also case the cops and know where they are and when. She said setting your alarm so it sounds, even if not connected to a provider, is effective.

Chew said, “Montclair is getting blasted with burglaries. The majority don’t have alarms, or the alarms weren’t activated” (because they weren’t being set). “We here are activating our alarms and people are running away.”

A question arose about what to look for in self-installed alarm systems. Answer by officers: The cheapest is a motion detector but they also have the most false alarms. The next best is a wireless system. Make sure it’s audible; some people in the hills have silent alarms. Officer Thompson says those are ineffective, partly because of the law requiring alarm companies to make two calls before calling OPD, which could take 5-10 minutes. The value in an alarm system is that it scares off the criminals. Thompson: “We’ve had more burglaries in 13 thwarted by neighbors coming out and saying, ‘Hey, put that TV down’ and the burglars dropped it and ran.”

Time of day of burglaries: An attendee asked what time of day most burglaries occur. Chew said this is hard to determine because the time of the report could be hours after the actual burglary, but there are often clues that can be used to narrow down the time. He they occur

usually when people are away at work, M-F. “We’re working on that trying to narrow down the times. The latest one so far was 4 pm.”

What he is currently working on (including priorities from last meeting):

1. Merchant complaints about people riding bikes on sidewalk: He’s making every attempt to walk the beat up and down, only noticed one incident. Attendee: “I’m nearly run down nearly every month or two by bike riders ON the sidewalk.” Chew: “I know it’s a concern.” But he apparently can’t catch them in the act.

2. Monitoring areas around Wendy’s – “it’s pretty quiet now”

3. Vendors on College Ave: “yes, they are required to have a permit.” Re Girl Scouts: “They have a blanket permit throughout the city of Oakland.” Taco trucks need permits too.

4. Nude Sushi (6228 Telegraph between 62nd and 63rd): The owner has agreed to close the back half of the building or wait for deliveries after 9:30 pm.

5. Problem neighbor on 400 block of 63rd, with guy revving his motorcycle, unlicensed auto repair, lots of traffic, etc.: It’s not quite a noise-ordinance problem. An attendee feels he’s “doing it to annoy her.” Chew he could be inspected by the fire dept if it’s an unlicensed business. The attendee will give him the info.

6. Drug (grow) house on Manila: It’s slated to be inspected, supposedly he’s a cannabis patient and is supposed to be following the legal parameters. This month there was only one drug hotline call. Chew: “You guys need to stay on that.” Call 238-drug any time you witness drug activity

4. OFFICER THOMPSON – BEAT 13 X REPORT

Crime statistics: Thompson: “13X is great for the most part.” There were 4 residential burglaries in 13X in the past month (since the last meeting). This is down from 6 in the prior month, and compares favorably with 14 burglaries in 13Z (burglaries also were high in 13Y). 13X had one petty theft and one auto burglary.

Ring alarm calls have gone up – alarms are thwarting the crooks. Thompson: “You guys (13 X) are doing an awesome job, setting your alarms, and they’re working. Keep activating them...They [the criminals] WILL crawl through windows. One house had an enormous loss. Somebody found a way to get through a tiny window. Don’t leave windows open.”

Stolen vehicles have gone down as well, and there was only one auto burglary, with a previously smashed window (a crime of opportunity).

Thompson encourages people to send him email with intel: “I love when you guys email me license plates and photos with your iPhones... Don’t write down every license plate you see, but you know your neighborhoods.” Write down the license plate, the time of day, and what they were looking at. It “will help catch these people... you guys keeping up with

information about what they look like and where will help me generate some sort of a plan...Keep me aware of anybody doesn't belong in your neighborhood, just throw me an email, it doesn't have to be much." His email address is tthompson@oaklandnet.com

Burglaries times of day/use of alarm systems/MO: Thompson is now targeting certain areas at certain times of the day. The Oakland Hills are hit mainly between 9 am and 1 pm, sometimes as late as 3 or 4. The majority of burglaries are people who didn't activate their alarms. Beat 13x has been high volume for ringing alarms, making the criminals go away. "Video surveillance is great but you still gotta monitor them, watch 8-10 hours of video footage" at the end of the day. "Great tool if you're willing to put in the work." Most perps use latex gloves, so there are no fingerprints.

Problem locations from last month: Cochrane was a problem before, but there was nothing going on there this month; same with Sheridan.

His current priorities: He's working with the investigator on the series of beat 13 burglaries. They have a suspect but "need some solid license plates." The plate numbers given out to the community "got put into the news" so they're no longer good. Thompson: "If we have suspect information, don't put it out into the news - the whole lead is gonna be gone. Keep it amongst the neighborhood. We don't want to televise that we have intel."

5. OFFICER FLORES - OHA REPORT: Canning and 62nd St had only two calls for service this month - a problem tenant and a family with high narcotic activity. Evictions are possible.

6. WAYNE GREGORI - PRESENTATION ON LICENSELOOK.COM

Gregori, a San Leandro resident, has developed a computer application to deter crime in neighborhoods, free (except for optional yard signs, which cost \$5) to residents of all East Bay cities (there is a \$75 fee per neighborhood in all other cities across the country) and available at licencelook.com. (His contact number for further information is 510-895-1066.)

How it works: People enter license plate no.'s of suspicious cars, descriptions of suspicious solicitors, crime alerts about a specific crime, and "other," intended for announcements of neighborhood gatherings, etc. Yard signs are available to both deter criminals and encourage other neighbors to take part. The database is publicly accessible, including to police and the criminals themselves. When police get a report of a crime in a certain part of the city, they can compare it with information in the database. Gregori: "It allows us to enter and [police to] track suspicious vehicles and solicitors and place them at a definite location and time."

The system sends a citywide email each week to anyone who signs up for that, with entries grouped by neighborhood. If you have entered information, only the first four digits of your email address are publicly visible. Participation in the system requires your full name and optionally allows entry of your street address.

The rationale: Gregori said phoning police for suspicious cars or solicitors is ineffective. "That suspicious car is a non-priority call, and an officer comes in 1-2 hours on a good night....If the car moves on and you talk to the officer, chances are the person casing will

come back next week and rob someone...The criminal is not even aware the call was made, so this is not deterrence....” A non-emergency call to dispatch also is unlikely to make information available to police officers. “They get 2,000 calls a day and there’s no way for them to get the information. If you say, ‘Give me the suspicious license numbers for the last three weeks for this neighborhood,; that information is not available.” Even if people are posting license numbers to a listserve, “it all gets lost.”

Gregori emphasized the difference between deterrence and prevention. Prevention, like a barking dog or a camera, sends the criminal down the street to another house, but does nothing to reduce the effects on the community. Deterrence is actively discouraging crime and requires “communication” with the criminals (like the database and the yard signs).

How to start LicenseLook.com in your neighborhood: Go to the website and start using it. Gregori: “Plant a sign in your yard. Your neighbor will take note and go to the website.”

Question: “Is OPD down with this?” Gregori: “Every police department in every city I’ve talked to is enthusiastic.” **Question:** “What if an innocent car gets reported into the database?” Gregori: “We allow people to challenge it and get out of the system.”

7. PRIORITIES FOR NEXT MONTH

12Y: Keep the three on the list from last month (Manila drug house, nude sushi, problem neighbor on 63rd). Add fourth priority: attempted videotaped mail theft by guy on bike.
13X: Current ones have subsided. No priorities.

8. MISCELLANEOUS REMARKS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Frank announced Mayor Quan’s Town Hall Meeting for District 1 on April 2, 10 – 12:30 at the North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 MLK. Frank: “This is our first and probably only shot to talk to the mayor face to face about issues we face here in district 1. I encourage everybody to go – you can talk about crime, taxes, pensions, anything you want.”

Suggestions for future speakers including a postal inspector and an alarm expert. Frank welcomed the suggestions, adding, “This is your organization, your group, not mine; we want speakers at these meetings that you want so that you stay interested in this organization. “

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting ran overtime and was adjourned at 9 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Janet Somers
Acting secretary