

Greater Rockridge NCPC (12Y/13X) – Rockridge Community Planning Council
Joint Town Hall Meeting Agenda
Thursday, July 21, 2011
Rockridge Library Community Room, College & Manila, Oakland
General Public: 7:30-9:00PM

NCPC:

Frank Castro – Chair
Barbara Minton – Vice Chair
Denise Jorgensen – Treasurer
Karen Ivy – Secretary & Information Officer

RCPC Meeting Portion

Annette Floystrup of the RCPC called the meeting to order at 7:32 PM. Thirty-four people attended the meeting including three OPD officers.

Annette announced that the Rockridge DVD Project has bought 2,800 DVDs with borrowed money, which they need to pay back. The Project is soliciting donations, they need about \$4,100, with a due date of October 1, 2011. On behalf of the Project she appealed to attendees for tax-deductible donations. Each DVD costs \$4 – the Project has gotten donations in all amounts. The 2,800 DVDs currently in the library represent 3% of the collection and 28% of the library's circulation. By doubling the collection they will increase circulation and thereby make the Rockridge Library look more valuable to central planners when allocating resources. The Rockridge DVD Project web site is www.rockridgedvdproject.org.

Annette briefly described the Planning Commission hearing on the College Avenue Safeway Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). The hearing began at 9:30 PM and was discontinued at 11:00 PM. The objectors present outnumbered the Safeway supporters. Safeway people talked mainly about economic issues which the Planning Commission can't consider in this hearing. The RCPC feels that the DEIR is deficient and shoddy. They consider that it relies on infrastructure improvements don't exist, paid for with money that may not arrive, and doesn't adequately assess the cumulative impact of another new Safeway a mere 1.1 miles away at Broadway and 51st. She encouraged attendees to write letters and attend the next meeting on the subject. Interested people should go to the web site for www.fansco.org (Friends And Neighbors Of College Avenue) which wants to defeat the project as it stands. A 52,000 square foot store is too big, the impact on College Avenue traffic is much too great. If you agree please help; if you disagree please go to www.fansco.org and register your opinion by taking the poll. The Planning Commission hearing has been continued to August 3 – RCPC hopes the Safeway project will be discussed around 7 PM. The DEIR is available on the Oakland city web site in electronic form, you can download the PDF to your e-reader. Here is the link, this project is #3 on the list:

<http://www2.oaklandnet.com/Government/o/CEDA/o/PlanningZoning/s/Application/DOWD009157>

Warning: the PDF is 26MB and if you just click on the link it takes a *long* time to open.

All comments on the DEIR must be submitted by Monday, August 15 at 4 PM, no later.

The city economic survey on retail leakage suggests that Oakland is short about 5 grocery stores in West and East Oakland, where Safeway doesn't want to go. But Fresh & Easy and Kroger's are taking a chance on putting new stores there.

Annette then introduced Zac Wald, Councilmember Jane Brunner's chief of staff. Here is a summary of his remarks:

Zac considers himself a "budget geek"; he has worked on last 8 budgets for Oakland (which covers the last 2.5 years). The latest budget was the most difficult in a long time due to declining revenues, which is happening everywhere, to cities and companies alike. Oakland's revenues dropped from over \$500 million to \$390 million, a decrease of almost a quarter of the budget.

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Before this budget process began, the city had already made \$170 million in cutbacks and eliminated 528 jobs (320 from general fund), but that wasn't enough.

The deficit this year was \$58 million; the city needed to "right-size" its government. Without reorganizing, cutbacks would merely create inefficiency. The budget passed on time: it eliminated 214 positions, most of which were already vacant due to a hiring freeze over the last year. Sixty-eight people were actually laid off.

Reorganization Details

The budget office is no longer a separate department; part of it was moved to the City Administrator's office, the other part to the Finance Department. The Oakland Museum is no longer a city department; it has been transferred to the private non-profit agency which was helping the city run it. The Contracting & Purchasing department was broken up, part going to Public Works and part to the City Administrator's office. The city will civilianize complaint intake at the Citizens' Police Advisory Board in the second year of the budget; this will get trained officers off desk duty taking complaints and on the street. The Mayor suggests combining Human Services, Parks and Recreation, and the Library – this may have to be revisited.

Employee Concessions

City employees were very generous in helping with the deficit: in negotiations they gave back \$53.2 million over the next 2 years, about half the deficit, equivalent to a 9% pay cut for all employees. OPD and OFD agreed to 2-tier pensions (new pensions will be less generous). OFD agreed to a 9% pay cut over the next 3 years in exchange for no layoffs during the same period. Fire stations will be fully staffed. OPD agreed to 9% pension contributions. Civilian employees agreed to 20 furlough days each year, about a 9% cut.

These concessions saved city services: there will be no cuts to library services for this 2 year budget. The Neighborhood Service Coordinators will stay. Tree and Park maintenance workers will stay; arts grants, and film promotion will stay. Councilmember Brunner added funding for a full crime analysis unit. The council also set aside \$16 million for a general fund reserve; this is responsible budgeting for emergencies.

The special mail-in ballot scheduled for November 15 will include two measures:

1. Mayor Quan's proposed \$80/household parcel tax (which will include commercial property in "households"), to support city services (such as park maintenance and police staffing).
2. A proposal to make the city attorney position appointed, not elected.

Zac said City Councilmember Brunner opposes the city attorney proposal. Ms. Brunner believes the city attorney should be independent.

Zac then opened the floor for questions but asked that any police related matters be held until Captain Tull speaks.

Q: What about new city administrator's large salary and generous benefit package? Why is she paid so much in these tight times? She gets more than the president!

ZW: Zac doesn't really have an answer, although he thinks her pay is comparable to similar positions in other cities. It's a big, competitive job. Mayor Quan's first city administrator was very good, and also very expensive. Zac agreed to find out exactly what the salary package is and report back to the RCPC through Stu Flashman.

Q: When departments are split, does the department head actually go away, or do they take that big salary and work somewhere else in the city? Is the city just firing the lower paid employees?

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The questioner said he was not voting for any parcel tax without some straight talk about getting rid of huge administrative salaries.

ZW: He'll find out and report back.

Q: What is the city's total payroll? How much did it go down?

ZW: He doesn't have the total payroll amount, but he knows the city got back 9% of the payroll in concessions. He noted that civilian employees haven't had a raise in 4-5 years.

Q: Is there any plan for getting big box stores, to make a downtown shopping area like Walnut Creek? Why don't we have a JCrew, and get sales tax dollars?

ZW: We have a billion dollar sales tax leakage in Oakland. Jane Brunner has met with people who have made it in Oakland to find out what worked. The Safeway at Rockridge and 51st is a big opportunity. College Avenue is one of the top tax generators for Oakland.

Q: Would the city waive any taxes/fees to get new businesses?

ZW: Yes, we do have business incentive programs.

Annette Floystrup: Oakland spent a lot of money on a downtown fiber network for business. Are we capitalizing on that? A business person recently said our downtown fiber net is fabulous; are we advertising it?

ZW: We have a lot to offer. We tried to get Google and that was one of the offerings. Pandora is right here in Oakland.

Q: About the parcel tax measure on the mail-in ballot: is it true that it doesn't specify how the money will be spent? Everyone was saying, save the libraries, and now the parcel tax won't be spent on libraries.

ZW: Both statements are correct – it's a mail-in ballot, and the money can be spent on a broad range of General Fund items such as police, libraries, roads, etc. Library funding is an all or nothing proposition because of Measure Q – if our library spending goes below \$9 million we lose \$14 million in additional funding.

Q: How likely is it that the parcel tax will pass? The last one dropped dead. And why can people who won't have to pay the tax vote on it?

ZW: \$80 is a lot less than \$360. He hasn't seen any polls on the \$80 tax; the mayor did a private poll, she thinks it'll pass. It's limited to 5 years. There is a passthru provision: half the tax can be passed thru to renters. As to why is it per parcel, and not based on property value: if the tax is too complex it loses; if people think it's unfair it loses. If it were based on property value, the tax amount would be a range, for example, from \$40 to \$360.

Q: is there no way for the city to raise money from everyone, not just property owners? How about a city income tax?

ZW: We haven't considered all the options. I will investigate that. (*Ed. note: It turns out that the state of California doesn't permit localities to raise funds through local income tax.*)

NCPC Meeting Portion

At 8:15 PM Frank Castro gave a brief explanation of what the NCPC does, then turned the meeting over to the OPD officers present, to introduce themselves.

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Captain Steve Tull thanked the NCPC for the invitation and introduced himself as the new area commander of Area 1.

Officer S. Hamilton, Beat 12.

Officer Trent Thompson, Beat 13 PSO. The beat 12 PSO is out on training.

Frank Castro noted that recently, due to budget problems and staff attrition, OPD did a major reorganization.

Captain Tull began by saying that suspects had been arrested and charged (the day of the meeting, Thursday 7/21) in the case of the woman who was set on fire on Ivanhoe. It wasn't related to the neighborhood at all.

He then went on to discuss the issue of losing officers, and in that context, how can OPD be effective, efficient, and serve community best. Chief Batts has decided to split the city in half at 23rd Avenue. He has also assigned two deputy chiefs, one in each area. This reduces each deputy chief's span of control, and makes them accountable for their area. The chief also made changes to the rank and file. The West side has two captains, administrative and operational. Captain Tull is the operational captain, his job is to reduce crime while complying with the consent decree. General compliance with the consent decree is the administrative captain's job.

A resident asked, what consent decree?

Captain Tull provided a very brief overview of the Riders case, and the consent decree which placed OPD under the supervision of a Federal judge. He emphasized that OPD is not above the law, it must be held to high standards and respect civil rights. The law enforcement world is resistant to change, but it must change.

Chief Batts believes in community policing, that OPD should reduce crime and should not offer excuses. The chief tells his people, be creative, be innovative, be smarter, be efficient. Proposed new crime analysts will be able to pinpoint crimes, and support predictive policing. The Chief will also reorganize the criminal investigation bureau to use a team approach; you see this on CSI. The goal is to solve homicides quickly and efficiently.

Captain Tull's role is to find a balance to produce desired results. There's a known property crime problem in beats 12 and 13. He will dedicate a car to respond to those issues alone, in those areas. The car's job is to be visible; it won't respond to calls for service. Beat officers must now walk 4 hours a week, engage the community. Police visibility is a great deterrent – the police must be seen consistently, and at different times of the day. PSOs work on long term solutions; patrol officers work on short term solutions. The dedicated cars will focus on identified "hot spots."

He told the meeting, your concerns drive our agenda; the police department serves the community. Property crime is clearly a major concern here. Most crime is committed by a small number of people; OPD has to identify and stop them. It's a great challenge. PSOs know the community, know the community concerns, what the community wants done. PSOs will walk beats too. Everyone should be a PSO. Beat configurations and resources haven't changed, although resources are now evenly split between east and west. The city is one unit.

Q: Will we still have bicycle officers?

Captain Tull: Yes. We've lost some units – there are no more motorcycles. We also lost some specialized units; the officers have gone to Patrol. When a citizen calls 911, someone should come.

Q: Has there been an increase in muggings?

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Captain Tull: Yes, there's a trend of increased armed robberies. There's also a trend of juveniles on bicycles, coming this way from West Oakland. These youngsters are organized, adults are teaching them what to do, because they've realized that 8-9 year olds aren't kept in jail.

Q: If there's an increase in muggings, will we see an increased police presence? I read about these muggings but I rarely see a police officer.

Captain Tull: Yes, you will see more officers. The challenge is to sustain a police presence, not just flood the area for an incident.

Q: A recent *New York Times* article says that OPD puts property crimes at the bottom of the list, and unless there's a witness or direct evidence they won't open an investigation. And she's seen that. Are they wrong?

Captain Tull: It's not wrong. There are more property crimes than violent crimes; but we focus on the violent crimes. Sometimes people who commit burglaries do other crimes too. Using crime data to guide resources we hope to address property crimes. Our goal is to teach the PSOs to investigate property crimes, to act as a force multiplier. We want to take the skills out of the building and onto the street.

Q: I want to ask about 2 different incidents: first, a woman home alone heard a noise in the attic, called 911 at 11 PM, and 5 units responded. Later, on Presley, the front door was kicked in at 6 AM in an invasion robbery, the homeowner called 911, and there was no response at all. Robbers grabbed a laptop and some other stuff and split. Why isn't a home invasion robbery prioritized over "I think I hear a noise in the attic"?

Captain Tull: The dispatchers have to use their judgment; a lot depends on how the caller describes the situation to them. But I'm curious how this played out.

Q: How can we help you? The *New York Times* article says if you have photos, it might help. Our street has been bombed every July 4 for 18 years, the same 2 houses do it, and it's getting worse. We called the hotline and were ignored; it's a non-violent crime, unless a rocket sets a roof on fire. It should be a low priority. Would it help if I took pictures? Multiple people left messages on the hotline and no one ever responded. We're a well-organized block, what can we do? A police car drove down the street, past the guys setting off the crackers, and just rolled on by.

Captain Tull: It isn't an excuse, but we get so many calls on July 4 that we have to distinguish between firecrackers and bullets. That car probably was heading for a reported gunshot call.

Officer Thompson stepped in to comment: All the July 4 fireworks calls were routed to the PSOs. The PSOs were after people who were throwing M-1000s (Ed. note: a quarter stick of dynamite) at cars; he personally chased a guy with a 30-round clip. They got more guns than usual this year; one incident almost turned into a riot. It was non-stop madness, but they got and charged high-explosive crimes – those take priority over firecrackers, unfortunately. And OPD doesn't have a paddy wagon – PSOs have to transport arrested people to jail, and they're off the street while they do.

Q: Can OPD arrange to talk to these people who set off these fireworks every year? We know who they are. Follow up might help. Officer Thompson promised that he and Officer Vergara will follow this up.

OPD Report

Officer Thompson said there has been an increase in muggings on Telegraph. It's a 3-person team of youngsters, riding bikes. Some of the victims were inattentive; some were walking alone after dark. The majority of crimes reported in beat 12 are still *domestic violence*. Burglaries are about

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the same as last month. PSO officers will now start getting burglaries; Officer Thompson is already a full-on burglary investigator. The one homicide, on Ivanhoe, was gang-related. It had no relation to beat 12 except the convenience of a dark quiet street near the freeway. The suspects are from the other side of the lake.

Q: Was there a body dump on Ocean View?

Officer Thompson: a person was dumped out of a car but she was just drunk.

Lower Beat 13 is still pretty quiet, only 2 burglaries. Burglaries in the hills have slowed down. Officer Thompson has been put into a "hills squad" - on the grounds that "the hills" are kind of a unit. They hope they can see trends they might otherwise miss.

Q: Can you cross the border into Berkeley?

Officer Thompson: Yes we can.

Q: Our block group at 60th and Telegraph wants to know what happens if there's a major emergency and we have to act as our own police? In what circumstances can we function as our own police if we have to? We're CORE trained but they don't talk about what happens when neighboring people come in.

Officer Thompson: We can't deputize you. There are no guidelines. You expect to be infiltrated?

Q: We do, we're better equipped than most blocks.

Officer Thompson: I'll have to think about that, I've never had that question before. You have the right to make a citizen's arrest, which is supposedly non-physical and non-confrontational. If you were sued, I doubt the city would back you.

NCPC Priorities

Due to the unusual meeting format, the NCPC will retain the same priorities we had in June.

NCPC Priorities for June:

12Y:

1. Drug house on Manila - tenants have told landlord that they intend to move and are looking for a new place; OPD is working with property owner intensively
2. Graffiti & burglaries around Manila, Desmond, & Glendale. No more incidents, but possibly related to the drug house?
3. Burglary at 60th near Colby & Claremont

13X:

1. No priorities for 13X this month.

*The regular Second Thursday meeting schedule shall resume on **Thursday, August 11, 2011** at 7:00 PM at Rockridge Library Community Room.*

*Refer to the Rockridge News or our website for any changes or announcements.
See you there and stay safe!*

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