Greater Rockridge
Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (12Y/13X) – Agenda
Thursday, August 8, 2024
Rockridge Library and
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
General Public: 7:00-8:30 PM

Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (NCPC):
Michael Ubell – Chair
Lisa Hingley - Vice Chair
Eric Neville - Treasurer
Karen Ivy – Secretary & Information Officer
Officer Meeran Gichki – Community Resource Officer, beat 12Y
Officer Sylvestre Triana - Community Resource Officer, beat 13X

7:00 – 7:05 PM – Introductions

7:06 PM Mike Ubell opened the meeting. He announced that Captain Ausmus will be here in a bit, and asked, do you have anything you want to bring up?

7:05 – 7:20 PM – Oakland Police Dept. (OPD) Status Reports, beats 12Y and 13X

There were no CROs in attendance, so no official OPD status reports.

7:20 – 7:30 PM – Discuss neighborhood issues and problems

Resident: I have some suggestions. How many of you were at National Night Out last night? We need more security in the neighborhood than Neighborhood Watch says we have. They have rules about how much foliage has to be cut back and trees trimmed, and the city won't do it. I think citizens ought to go around, look at things, and tell people to obey the law.

Mike Ubell: It's not a law, it's a recommendation for safety. I don't think it's against the law to have your house obscured by hedges. CROs used to inventory property for people and tell them how to make it safer; but I don't think there's a law that says a house has to be visible from the street.

Resident: I heard that trees have to be 7 feet above the sidewalk, and so many feet from the house, and we should offer to help people do that.

Mike Ubell: I didn't realize you were talking about the sidewalk; I don't know what the law is about the sidewalk.

Resident: Bushes and trees don't stop people from doing awful things. They know nothing will happen.

Karen Ivy: That business about shrubbery around the house is not the law, it's the insurance companies.

Resident: I think welfare checks need to be done – at the white house at Manila and 51st, it smells like there's a dead body in there (I was delivering a flyer and smelled it). There's another house at Manila and Clifton. I've knocked on the door and nobody answered. Neighbors should take care of neighbors.

IMPORTANT RESOURCES:

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/RockridgeNCPC/
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Mike Ubell: Did you call the police? If you think there's a dead body in there, call the police.

Resident: I left the other house to Dan Kalb, it's his neighbor across the street.

Mike Ubell: But that's not a city council member's job. You should call the police for that.

Lisa Hingley: Neighbors taking care of neighbors is good, but they may not be able to do much. Did the house seem to have mail coming? I'm trying to get back to the welfare check.

Karen Ivy: That's sort of what Neighborhood Watch is supposed to do, are they organized enough to do this?

Resident: I personally knocked on the door, and asked the people on either side if they knew anything about what was going on in there.

Mike Ubell: The captain says she's on the way.

Resident: How about calling Adult Protective Services?

Mike Ubell: I think that's a county service, I don't think the city does that. Keara from Dan Kalb's office is asking (on Zoom), is that house at 350 51st St?

Resident: I think that might be the address.

Keara D: I know Dan Kalb's wife thinks there's an unhoused person in that house, maybe getting into the property. We have no response from the city yet, but if that's true, the property owner can be required to maintain the property and keep it safe. So that's what we'll try to do.

Resident: The other address is 5278 Manila.

Keara D.: What's the issue there?

Resident: it's untended. The car in the driveway has a 2020 tag. I've never seen anyone there. I've walked up the stairs, they're falling apart, there's mail all over the place. I don't think there's anyone in there.

Keara D.: I'm not familiar with that property. We can ask OPD to do a welfare check there.

Mike Ubell: The captain just texted me.

Resident: Is there a beat cop walking on the beat?

Mike Ubell: Every beat has an officer on duty, they have 3 shifts. They're always trying to get walking officers in the business district, but the officers keep getting pulled off to cover murders and so on. The captain can … speaking of the captain, she's here.

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7:15 – 8:00 PM – Area 2 Captain Lisa Ausmus will discuss issues of crime in the area

Captain Ausmus arrived about 7:20 PM.

Captain Ausmus: I didn't bring anything; I can tell you what the crime stats are. The crime in Rockridge is down. Not great, not perfect, but down from last year.

Karen Ivy: I'd like to offer some feedback. A couple of weeks ago I was walking College Avenue handing out flyers for this meeting. Three small business owners told me they felt that car break-ins were down over this year.

Captain Ausmus: I'm always happy to hear it. We have the stats, but we also want to hear how you feel about it, and if you think we're doing it right.

Mike Ubell: We just had a question about walking officers.

Captain Ausmus: I have 6 walking officers for beats 8 through 13, which is more than other areas have. We used to have dedicated officers, not anymore. Michael Cooper walks Montclair Village, but he also walks another beat. The walking officers usually walk Tuesday through Friday, 11AM to 9PM. Our CROs now cover 2-3 beats each versus the single beat they used to have. Some of the walking officers have multiple beats. I'd like to have enough officers to have one per beat, the way we used to.

Resident: We see people walking down the street, in a mask, peering into cars. I didn't call OPD, I didn't think you'd come.

Captain Ausmus: Call us. We want to know, and we might be able to send someone. Chris Jackson is my right-hand person, if he gives me a good description of a lurker, I push it out to the officers.

Resident: How do we get more cops?

Captain Ausmus: We're in a budget crisis. We're broke, we just sold half the Coliseum for $105 million and the A's got $125 million for the other half. It'll get very interesting. It's not just me and my officers, it's fire and all the others. It hits all of us. I wish I could say there's a magic answer. I just try to take care of my community, and I will. We'll keep catching them, we'll keep sending them to the DA, we'll work to get them convicted. Commercial burglaries are definitely way down. Breaking into a closed firm and stealing a safe is a different crime from entering an open business and stealing, whether it's petty theft of more expensive stuff. Even petty theft is down a little bit. Robberies in your area are still a little up, but not horrible.

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Resident: What's the difference between robbery and theft?

Captain Ausmus: Robbery is where I actually take something from a person by force or threat. I may have a gun or pretend to; you give me your belongings out of fear.

Resident: What about taking something from someone's back yard?

Captain Ausmus: That's a burglary.

Resident: What about this thousand-dollar theft business?

Captain Ausmus: That's a state law – grand theft was $450 when I started and now it's $950. You have to stay in touch with your elected representatives and the new laws they propose. We didn't understand proposition 47 when it passed. It meant people could do petty theft and get way more money than before, for less penalties. We didn't see that coming. They're stealing for a habit, to get more stuff. To stop that theft, you have to stop the addiction, but I also have to stop people stealing. Read the propositions; pay attention to what candidates say when they talk about new laws and do radio outreach.

Resident: Do you think it's good if Armstrong were to become the council person at large?

Captain Ausmus: I do. I grew up with Ron, he was a beat partner for a long time in deep East Oakland. I like him, but we don't talk politics.

Resident: You talk about "gateway crimes," little crimes that are not getting charged. When they are charged, nobody solves them. Other cities like San Francisco can solve crimes, why don't we?

Captain Ausmus: We do a really good job of solving crimes. We're not good at telling people about the crimes we solve. If the case is charged (sent to the DA) that's solved. The DA does do a lot of diversions, drug diversions and mental health diversions, to try to get people to change their ways. She doesn't always take offenders to trial. When they come back and do the crime for the third or fourth time, diversion hasn't worked.

Resident: I mean "solving" crimes like finding out who did them!

Captain Ausmus: We can't talk about who we've caught, that all has to go through the Mayor's office, they authorize everything we release. Our CROs and CRTs (Crime Reduction Teams) are doing a fantastic job. We aren't doing a good job telling people about it. The robberies down at 28th and Broadway – we made 6 arrests that week, 2 cases were charged, the others were juveniles and not charged; and we're not getting the publicity for it. I think the media has the idea that Oakland is a dangerous place, so they don't want to publicize our successes. We need to start pushing other arguments, that we're doing what we can with what we have.

Resident: People are out of control right now.

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Captain Ausmus: We've had some very tragic stories, there was a bad one last night, a son killed another family member. But the family members stood up and helped the officers. We need to do a better job of saying what we do. We need to push the good stuff we do.

Resident: You need permission to do that?

Captain Ausmus: We used to, but not as much now, not everything has to go through the Mayor's office.

Resident: My name is Parker, and I just joined the board of Safer Rockridge, a non-profit organization, we get no city money. The board is just 4 seats. We just sent a survey asking for feedback, what do people want to see more of. Our people just patrol, they aren't armed, but if they see something, they call OPD. They have a very good relationship with OPD, who responds to their calls. It's just 1 car.

Captain Ausmus: If you know people who are hiring for things like this, let me know, give me a contact number, I can give it to the walking officers to talk to them. I appreciate this, I'll take all the help I can get to prevent crimes occurring. If people realize they're watched, they're less likely to act. I didn't know about this group, I knew about Temescal. If they and OPD have each other's numbers, they can communicate.

Resident: Can you do any traffic enforcement?

Captain Ausmus: Yes, the other day officers wrote 35 tickets around Rockridge and Piedmont. My direction to officers – if you have a few minutes free, hit any traffic violations you see. We were very hands off during the pandemic, they've lost the habit of doing some things, they're doing more and more traffic enforcement now.

Resident: I've heard that even if you had enough money, people aren't even applying to be policemen.

Captain Ausmus: It's a huge part of our problem right now. When I applied, it took 6 months to a year to get an interview, take a test; there were 300 people waiting to take the physical. Now we can barely get 20 applicants. Nobody wants to be a cop. We're working on retention and taking care of officers. This is a hard job – you meet people at the worst time of their life. My job is to make sure officers feel appreciated.

Mike Ubell: Don't you have a police academy going on now? How many people are in it?

Captain Ausmus: Yes, they last about 6 months. We started with 34, but I think we still have 30.

Mike Ubell: Next time you see a police officer, say hello and thank them.

Resident: Don't you need like twice the cops you have?

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Captain Ausmus: That has been a myth since I've started. The Police Commission is now doing an actual study of police staffing. They interviewed a bunch of us, commanders and officers. 25 years ago, there were 750 officers, and half the population we have now; we've doubled the population in 25 years but we still only have 700 odd cops.

Resident: Can we get the Guardian Angels in Oakland?

Captain Ausmus: People here are willing to help. We have people called ambassadors on Telegraph – the community hired them. They're good, they walk people to cars, talk to people, pick up trash. It's a good thing. Chris Jackson has walked this area more than anyone.

Resident: I've been in business on College Avenue for 45 years, right next to Zachary's. It's scary now, everything closes at 8 o'clock. That block has a lot of break-ins still, glass on the street.

Captain Ausmus: We used to have a Rockridge newsletter.

Resident: We still do, Judy Berne is the reporter.

Captain Ausmus: Give me the information, I'll pass it on to the PIO.

Resident: The PIO is Public Information Officer.

Captain Ausmus: That's right, right now it's Paul Chambers. He used to work for KTVU.

Resident: It's so bad I hate to walk by myself.

Captain Ausmus: People are very concerned. I walk with people when I can. One area had 3-4 home invasions in a row, so they set up a WhatsApp group – they text neighbors and say, I'm coming home. It's a good idea – helps keep the lights turned on. That's a suggestion if you think it would help. Whatever you prefer to use, let people know, and let me know.

Karen Ivy: They use WhatsApp because it's encrypted. Only the people you use it to send text to, can read it. Open texting isn't normally accessible, but it could be read by someone who hacked into your phone carrier (or who works for the phone carrier).

Mike Ubell: Venezuela has outlawed WhatsApp; they pull people over and arrest them if it's on their phone.

Resident: Nancy Skinner passed something that allows undocumented people to apply to become cops if they have the correct work authority. Is that real?

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Captain Ausmus: If they pass a background check and live here, we'd hire them. I have a lot of authority. I could take your civil rights away, and other things. People ask if this is constitutional policing – Oakland has much stricter rules than the constitution. I could drive a car at 80 miles an hour and it's constitutional. For the most part Oakland has a very good police department here. They're like kids to me and I take them under my wing and teach them policing.

Resident: What about sideshows?

Captain Ausmus: It's very tough right now. They cause a lot of damage. We can try to block them in the intersection but then they go feral and will do anything to get out. We've used gas, and it's very effective, but the city attorney doesn't want us to use it.

Mike Ubell: We'll close at 8 PM but I want to give the people on Zoom a chance.

David Brodsky: What about the partnership with CHP and the new cameras?

Captain Ausmus: It lets us use fewer officers. CHP is very tech savvy, they use cameras, they track these cars so they can arrest the drivers. They've been very helpful. I love technology. The cameras are all installed; CHP owns them, but we have rights to use them. And there are license plate readers on every freeway entrance and exit – the cameras will flag "stolen vehicle" every time they see one. The kids that steal cars just start in the morning and keep on stealing. There's a couple of groups that we've arrested several times. The DA is trying to do diversion for them, which is real, but they just keep trying to steal. I don't know how the DA sets that up.

Resident: Are the kids employed by adults running a ring?

Captain Ausmus: There's one that I know of for sure, I'm not sure about others. They want to stay away from us.

Resident: I have a daughter with autism, sometimes she gets mad and starts to scream. Can we tell the CRO that we have a problem kid?

Captain Ausmus: Yes, and you can call Dispatch and tell them your address and that you have an autistic kid. We have someone who trains us to deal with autistic kids, we care about this. We use the techniques to teach people how to avoid flareups. Call dispatch, give your address, and explain about the outburst. We're getting more dispatchers, but it takes 6 months to get them trained.

Resident: What about tinted windows on cars?

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Captain Ausmus: You can pay to have it done, but it's against the law to have it tinted too much. If CHP can't see the driver of a car, the tint is illegal and they can bust it. You can put more tint on back windows but we have to be able to see the driver.

Resident: What about strange cars cruising neighborhoods?

Captain Ausmus: Take a photo of the car and send it in, at least we'll know. We all know who our neighbors are. If they're someone's relative looking for an address, it's no problem, we can help them find it.

Lisa Hingley: We got very good reports last meeting about Coffee with a Cop on Telegraph.

Captain Ausmus: I love that. We can do that more often. The new chief wants to do that. You guys have to tell us how you want us to do policing. All our policies are online. Watch the election for possible changes in the law.

Lisa Hingley: Go to the police commission meetings, anyone can attend a police commission meeting. Anyone can go to the meetings and can even be on ad hoc committees.

Captain Ausmus: I'll never make everyone happy, but we want to do the best we can. If we go into the community and talk, it works out much better. We'd like you to understand how OPD works, and we need to understand what you want.

Resident: Does OPD do welfare checks? Like on a house that seems to be empty and not maintained?

Captain Ausmus: We do. The response depends on the circumstances, say, I haven't seen my elderly neighbor in 5 days. And don't just email me – if I'm in a meeting I can't do anything.

Resident: 5278 Manila.

Captain Ausmus: What about it?

Resident: It's got mail all over, a car with an old tag, house not taken care of, nobody answers the door.

Captain Ausmus: I can have somebody look into that. We also now have a phone number for MACRO – 44MACRO. [(510) 446-2276] But they can't go into houses.

8:20 PM Mike Ubell closed the meeting.

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Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council Priorities for June 2024

Beat 12Y:

1. *Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council Priority:* Car break-ins on College Ave., especially in the library parking lot.

Beat 13X:

1. *Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council Priority*: No current priority.

Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council meetings
are normally the SECOND Thursday of even-numbered months.
*Next meeting **Thursday, October 10, 2024** at 7:00 PM*
Rockridge Library and virtual meeting
Zoom link is available at https://rockridgencpc.com, NEXT NCPC MEETING

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