Greater Rockridge
Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council Meeting – Minutes
Thursday, December 12, 2024
Rockridge Library and
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
General Public: 7:00-8:30 PM

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

Introductions

Mike Ubell opened the meeting at 7:15 PM, with the comment that we couldn't get any police to attend, so it's just us. We'll just discuss things. Mike introduced himself as the NCPC chair and Karen Ivy introduced herself as the secretary and information officer. There were 4 other people there in person, and two on Zoom, including our treasurer, Eric Neville.

Oakland Police Dept. (OPD) Status Reports, beats 12Y and 13X

No police officers attended. Karen Ivy read from her monthly crime report.

Karen Ivy: Once a month (around the 5th) I extract the last 2 months of reported data for each Rockridge beat (12Y and 13X) from a city database. Since 2021, I've found that taking a second look at a month for each beat produces more reports, probably due to delays in processing and city staff shortages. October 2024 (data collected 11/6) had very few crime reports for both beats: 12Y had 22, 13X had 6. The monthly averages this year are 51 and 16. The second report for October (collected 12/5) shows 12Y at 58 and 13X at 13 – more than double the original amount for both beats. November's first report (collected 12/5) showed 12Y with 57 and 13X with 24, much more normal. I don't know why October's first result was so low.

The biggest group of crimes we have is property crime. We have very few of what we call "crimes against the person" (robbery, assault, etc.). And the biggest type of property crime is auto-related – breaking into and stealing cars. It's always the largest number but it wobbles – in November it was 33 and 7 (12Y and 13X), and in October it was 29 and 4. These were high for the month but not as high as it has been. July was the high for auto property crimes this year – 44 for 12Y and only 10 in 13X. I don't know if people in 13X don't park their cars on the street or what. One of my neighbors parks on the street and has had his catalytic converter stolen 3 times.

Resident: Where do you get this data?

IMPORTANT RESOURCES:

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/RockridgeNCPC/
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/RockridgeNeighborhoodWatchNetwork/

Karen Ivy: I get it from a city database containing the most recent 90 days of crime reports, indexed by police beat. It gives me a spreadsheet which I can sort by police beat and date. We use categories which basically we made up ourselves: crimes against the person, property crimes, auto-related property crimes, and quality of life. We have had to invent an "other" category for cases where, for instance, someone waved a gun around but no one was shot, or they didn't obey an unspecified court order. I define all this in the header of my monthly report, so people know what I mean when I say it's an "a." All this is on the NCPC web site, and posted in the NCPC blog once a month.

Resident: Where are the beats?

Karen Ivy: They are south of the Berkeley line, east of Telegraph Ave. and west of Highway 13. 12Y is west of Broadway and 13X is east of Broadway. Both beats are north of 51st Street/Pleasant Valley Ave.

Discuss neighborhood issues and problems

Lou Smith: I'm Lou Smith – Louie Smith, and I've lived here since '69. I was once an NCPC member. I'm curious about who you call for a parked car in front of a house with someone sleeping in it all night?

Karen Ivy: I assume you'd call the non-emergency number, which is on our web site (510-777-3333).

Lou Smith: I appreciate that, I know about that and I used it. The trouble is, this guy's from North Carolina. He has North Carolina plates on his truck. He's been parking on my street, Birch Court, for four and a half months. He gets up every morning about 7, comes back at night about 8-9 o'clock, and sleeps in the truck. But he's nice. He keeps the area clean, doesn't make trouble. My wife is wondering why he sleeps here; why not somewhere else. I called the non-emergency number, and they just didn't answer, I was on hold for hours.

Mike Ubell: We don't seem to have a number you can call for a homeless person. If he doesn't make trouble and keeps the area clean, who can you call?

Lou Smith: I don't think there's an answer right now because the city is so short-handed. There's no solution at this point in time.

Resident: I wonder if he could call MACRO, would they respond?

Paula Hawthorn: MACRO is a city department, it's part of the fire department, and they deal with homeless issues.

Karen Ivy: They aren't on our web site; I'll have to correct that. MACRO is Mobile Assistance Community Responders of Oakland.

Mike Ubell: The phone number for MACRO is 510-44-MACRO.

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Lou Smith: Who are they?

Karen Ivy: They help with people in trouble on the street.

Lou Smith: But he's not "in trouble" – he's got a brand-new truck. He might even have a job for all I know. He's living on the street, but he's clean and no trouble. I don't really have anything to complain about. He's trying to abide by the rules. There's no issue with trash.

Paula Hawthorn: He's a trouble to *you.* But MACRO only works during the day. If he's only there at night they won't see him.

Eric Neville (from chat): There's a 72-hour time limit on parking, if that addresses this. You report violations to Abandoned Vehicles, or to 311. There's a Vehicle Abatement Detail at (510) 777-8538 or email vehicleabatement@oaklandca.gov. Web site is https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/vehicle-enforcement-unit.

Mike Ubell: A Zoom attendee says the city won't tow a vehicle if it looks like someone's living in it. Chat includes this link: https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/clean-safe-city-town-halls-homelessness-encampments-questions-answers

At this point Mike Ubell repeated that we won't have any OPD present, and asked attendees to introduce themselves. In addition to Lou Smith and the NCPC officers, attendees in person were Paula Hawthorn, Brian Guenther, and Saeid Kian. Mike posed the question, what does the group think we should do?

Saeid Kian: I'm curious, what has the NCPC done of the last year, about preventing crime, other than reporting?

Karen Ivy: Not much.

Mike Ubell: Nothing at all.

Karen Ivy: I've been NCPC secretary since shortly after I retired, about 2009 or 2010. Back then, community policing was a big thing, and the CROs (who were then called something else) would attend every meeting. We could tell them what we were worried about, and they'd look into it. I remember we'd have reports on problem houses, or problem bars. If you look at the agenda, you'll see that our priority now for 12Y is people breaking into cars on College Avenue. If a Community Resource Officer showed up (we haven't seen one in several months), we'd tell him (or her) that was what we wanted them to work on.

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Paula Hawthorn: They do respond, even if they don't show up at these meetings. They assign more patrols, they put more people out on the street. There have been times over the years when they have responded and taken action. Recently they were looking into the homeless encampments under the freeway. That kind of went away after that Supreme Court decision about homeless camps (Ed. Note: *City of Grants Pass v. Johnson*) which said cities could evict homeless camps.

Karen Ivy: A lot of things went away during the pandemic.

Mike Ubell: And the staff shortages mean the CROs don't come to our meetings anymore and we don't know who or where they are any more.

Karen Ivy: I tried to find out who was the CRO for beat 13, and the city web site had 2 listings for CRO assignments, the most current one dated 2022, and the only name I recognized was Officer Gichki, who was the CRO for 12Y for a while.

Paula Hawthorn: If you want to talk to the police these days you have to go where they are. They attend City Council meetings. Attending City Council meetings is a good idea generally, but you'll find the police there. When I track them like that they aren't annoyed, they seem to feel, "Oh, someone friendly to talk to me!"

Mike Ubell: The local captain has been very cooperative and helpful up until the last month, when she suddenly went silent. If she was on vacation or visiting relatives there'd be a message on her machine. There's something going on, we don't know what it is.

Saeid Kian: I love the idea of showing up where they are. Are there other places? Can we go to the Police Dept?

Paula Hawthorn: I wouldn't go to police HQ, there's just one person at the front desk and they don't encourage you to hang around. The other thing to do is email them, they all have an email address. Google "Oakland Staff Directory" and search for the officer.

Mike Ubell: We used to be able to send an email to the CRO. We're also supposed to check with Neighborhood Services – I tried that and they were on vacation.

Karen Ivy: I used to do email for a living and I've observed that Oakland has an email naming convention: it's always FirstinitialLastname@oaklandca.gov. So officer Gichki is MGichki@oaklandca.gov. I've emailed him recently and got no response.

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Saeid Kian: I'd rather be proactive than reactive, let's not wait until something happens on College Ave. The city budget crisis looks very bad, we're unlikely to get more officers in the next few months. What *can* we do? This is kind of "all the above." Can the CROs put cameras in the library parking lot?

Paula Hawthorn: We could consider the local group Safer Rockridge.

Karen Ivy: Oh, are they back?

Paula Hawthorn: They never went away. [Ed. Note: see https://saferrockridge.org/] They're a nonprofit; they get donated money, they hire security guards. Their security people can't be armed; some people think this means they aren't effective, but I kinda like them. I sent them an email this morning, there was an article in the *Rockridge News* about them. I suggested they might come to this meeting, but they didn't respond. There was also a guy who was trying to get everyone to get security cameras, so we'd all have security cameras. We could talk about that, the NCPC could organize it. I think if anything happens we'll have to do it.

Karen Ivy: We once did things like that. I actually have a camera in my basement, belonging to the NCPC – years ago we used to lend it out to people! I don't think it would connect to any system that's available now.

Mike Ubell: OPD does have a database of people who have cameras, and they can ask for video if something happens in the neighborhood.

Paula Hawthorn: Maybe we should put that on our web site, so people who have cameras know where to report them.

Karen Ivy: I can do that.

Paula Hawthorn: We could ask Safer Rockridge to show up at the next meeting.

Saeid Kian: We can just let people know about the camera database. Some of it is creating the impression that there's something you can do. I'm just brainstorming.

Mike Ubell: The police don't find the cameras all that helpful, but they like them because they help identify people sometimes. People wave to the cameras.

Paula Hawthorn: We live right across the street from the Blood Bank, which used to be a carpet store. The carpet store parking lot was really dark. And every time one of our kids parked along that part of the street, next to the parking lot, they got broken into. Now that the parking lot is brightly lit and has cameras, it never happens. A sergeant once told me, we're just trying to make your house look less attractive than the other ones; so put up the camera and the lights!

Karen Ivy: My next-door neighbor has a sign on his backyard gate: "Controlled by a rabid dog."

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Saeid Kian: We know lighting is going to be important, also cameras.

Paula Hawthorn: Can we do anything about the library parking lot?

Brian Guenther: We [Ed. Note: the library; Mr. Guenther is the manager] aren't responsible for the parking lot, but it is an ongoing issue. We haven't had a lot of crime inside the library, we get an occasional individual who may cause trouble but it's unusual. We know our regulars.

Karen Ivy: We have a new person in the room, would you like to say something?

Resident: I have to leave shortly to move my car, but it seems to me that all the smash-and-grab I used to see isn't there anymore.

Karen Ivy: My crime stats show that auto-related crimes peaked around July last year and have definitely dropped recently.

Paula Hawthorn: This October was the first time since 2011 that Oakland had NO homicides anywhere. That's very rare.

Karen Ivy: My crime stats occasionally include something called "unexplained deaths." I got curious and asked an officer, who said, no, those aren't homicides, we found a body and didn't know why it died when we did the report. So I don't report them; but I count them, and they're very rare in this area, the most I've seen in one month all year is 3 and the norm is none.

Resident: Do you take data only from these two beats? Where are these 2 beats?

Karen Ivy: Yes, only from these two beats. Both beats are south of Berkeley. 12Y is east of Telegraph, and west of Broadway. 13X is east of Broadway, west of highway 13. They're both above 51st.

Paula Hawthorn: There was a sideshow at College and Claremont. Should we make sideshows a priority with OPD?

Mike Ubell: OPD does have a sideshow task force, mainly dealing with the big ones. I will ask the Assistant Chief about the silence in OPD – is Captain Ausmus OK? Can the CROs attend these meetings again? I'm hoping we can get our new city council member for the next meeting (in February).

Paula Hawthorn: And will we invite Safer Oakland to come too? By the way, Lou, what are you going to do about your guy sleeping in the truck?

Lou Smith: You know, after listening to all this, I'm just going to let it ride. He does no harm, and there's nobody to call about him anyway.

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Mike Ubell closed the meeting at 8:10 PM.

Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council Priorities for October 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, February 13, 2025** at 7:00 PM*
Rockridge Library and virtual meeting
Zoom link is available at https://rockridgencpc.com, NEXT NCPC MEETING

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