

CITY OF OAKLAND

AGENDA REPORT

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
2006 MAY 31 PM 4: 18

TO: Office of the City Administrator
ATTN: Deborah Edgerly
FROM: Oakland Police Department
DATE: June 13, 2006

RE: **An Informational Report from the Chief of Police on Strategic Area Command and Community Policing Efforts Related to the Deployment of Problem Solving Officers**

SUMMARY

This informational report will provide an overview of the Oakland Police Department's (OPD) Strategic Area Command Division and the deployment of Problem Solving Officers (PSO), who are the conduit for the Department's Community Policing effort. Also outlined is the Department's strategy to fully implement Community Policing and improve the delivery of police services throughout the City.

FISCAL IMPACT

There are currently 24 PSOs assigned to the Strategic Area Command Division; 13 positions are funded by the General Fund and the remaining 11 are funded by the Measure Y initiative. The use of PSOs in the Department's crime reduction efforts are a part of OPD's budget appropriations.

BACKGROUND

During the latter part of 2005 and early 2006, the City began to experience an increase in violent crime such as homicide, robbery, assault, and domestic violence. Additional concerns included an emerging gang problem and serious juvenile crime; both of which are exacerbated by an increase in the use of *designer drugs* such as ecstasy. The Department also continues to address illegal behavior associated with "Sideshow" activity.

In order to meet the challenges of the full deployment of PSOs, and proactively address violent and emerging crime trends, the concept of Strategic Area Command (SAC) was developed and implemented. SAC Division is comprised of the following units:

- Crime Reduction Teams (CRT)
- Problem Solving Officers (PSO)
- Traffic Section

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- Special Events Unit
- Tactical Operations Section
- Alcohol Beverage Action Team (ABAT)
- Foot Patrol Unit
- Crime Scene Technicians
- Canine Program
- Police Reserves

KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS

OPD continues to struggle with providing the basic police services that are recognized as cornerstones of municipal policing, which include:

- Responding to Emergencies
- Conducting Basic Criminal Investigations
- Providing Traffic Enforcement and Investigations

The Department is also faced with many demands in attaining full staffing of all Measure Y funded positions. One of the mainstays of Measure Y is the assignment of 57 PSOs. As noted in the language of Measure Y, "Each community policing beat shall have at least one neighborhood officer assigned solely to serve the residents of that beat to provide consistent contact and familiarity between residents and officers, continuity in problem solving, and basic availability of police response in each neighborhood." Measure Y also mandates that the Department shall deploy seven, fully staffed, Crime Reduction Teams (CRT) and provide improved police services at the Public Schools.¹

During the period of March 31, 2006 through April 29, 2006, Measure Y expenditures for funded positions were suspended because PSOs were loaned back to regular patrol assignments. As a result, the Department has been unable to assign PSOs in accordance with the schedule outlined in the Measure Y initiative.

The Department's Patrol Division has severe staffing shortages. Currently, 120 shifts are staffed weekly by officers working mandatory overtime assignments. Open beats, inadequate staffing, and mandated overtime assignments have resulted in reduced efficiency in response to 911 emergency calls and other non-emergency calls for service. This led to a request from the Bureau of Field Operations command staff to have PSOs assist in responding to calls for service on their assigned beats. It is likely that these assignments will continue into 2007.

¹ The Violence and Public Safety Act of 2004 establishes the staffing level of a Crime Reduction Team as one sergeant of police and 8 police officers. The current staffing level of the 6 CRT teams is a sergeant and 6 police officers.

The current staffing situation of the Department has been termed as *anything but routine* by some and an *emergency* by others. This current state of affairs requires the Department to expend Measure Y funded positions, in an effort to provide the “basic availability of police response in each neighborhood.”²

Training

In collaboration with the Community Policing Advisory Board (CPAB) and the Oakland Community Organizations (OCO), the Oakland Police Department has developed a 40-hour Problem Solving and Community Policing Training Course. The next PSO Development Course is scheduled for June 4-9, 2006.

PSO Sergeants Assigned

As of May 26, 2006, three sergeants will be assigned to supervise and guide Problem Solving Officers as they carry out their community policing and problem solving efforts. The ultimate goal is to have one PSO sergeant for each of the City’s six Police Service Areas (PSA.) Currently, there is one PSO sergeant responsible for PSAs one and two; one sergeant for PSAs three and four; and one sergeant for PSAs five and six.

Challenges

Problem Solving Officers who are funded by the Measure Y initiative are required to focus their efforts within their assigned community policing beats. This mandate has brought about an unintended consequence:

Problem Solving Officers who are *not* Measure Y funded will be required to cover more beats in the Police Service Areas until all 57 Measure Y funded PSOs are fully deployed and assigned to a community policing beat. There are currently a total of 24 PSOs; 13 are assigned to Measure Y beats. As more Measure Y PSOs are assigned, this disparity will be reduced and ultimately eliminated once each police beat is staffed with a Problem Solving Officer.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

PSOs and Patrol Officers Work Together One Day A Week

Problem Solving Officers have been assigned to respond to calls for service one day a week within their assigned beat, in an effort to meet three overarching goals:

- Improve response to emergency calls
- Increase community outreach

² Part 1, Section 3, Paragraph 1,a of text of Measure Y.

- Improved communications with Patrol

In order to effectively use the PSOs in the Department's crime reduction efforts, those officers have been tasked with identifying problem properties and locations, and working on Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council Priorities. It is intended that Problem Solving Officers will provide Patrol Officers resource information concerning Problem Oriented Policing projects, and build a bridge between Patrol and Strategic Area Command Divisions.

Additionally, Problem Solving Officers are an important link between the Department and the community and serve to directly address the community's priorities and quality of life issues.

Working with the Community

To expand the effective use PSOs in the Department's crime reduction efforts, they must work with Neighborhood Crime Prevention Councils (NCPC). Problem Solving Officers attend and participate in NCPC meetings, working closely with Neighborhood Services Coordinators (NSC) and community members to develop projects on all NCPC priorities involving law enforcement.

Problem Solving Officers also work with other organized interest groups including, but not limited to, Home Alert Groups, and attend merchant meetings, OCO, and other community meetings upon request (as time allows and with authorization.)

There are members of the community who could benefit from the assistance of a PSO but who, unfortunately, do not participate in these important programs. This group includes people who live on the margins of society such as the families of gang members, those living within the cycle of domestic violence, the families and children of people with chemical dependencies, and those who are struggling to stay out of trouble while on probation or parole. It is believed that communications with these vulnerable members of the community will be facilitated by having PSOs respond to their emergencies and calls for assistance.

A recent report by the Community Policing Advisory Board (CPAB) identified a disconnection between the Patrol officer and the PSO. Bridging the gap between the Patrol officer and his/her involvement in the Department's Community Policing efforts is a collateral benefit of having a PSO respond to calls for service.

A technique known as SARA (Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment) model requires a collaboration between Problem Solving Officers and Patrol beat officers to focus a team approach on the following crime and quality of life issues:

- Illegal business practices (e.g., selling of old unsanitary mattresses as new mattresses), assaults in and around liquor establishments, speeding and reckless driving in residential areas (e.g., side show activities)
- Disorderly conduct by youth in public places

- Thefts of and from cars around parking facilities
- Nuisance and criminal activity associated with homeless encampments (e.g., under the freeways and in parks)
- Crime hot spots that may include street narcotics, loitering, public disorderly conduct
- Beat Health cases such as drug sites, including houses, apartment buildings, or commercial establishments where narcotic trafficking plague the neighborhood with noise, increased crime, disorderly conduct, elder abuse, child abuse, domestic violence and code violations.

By identifying and working on these problems together, it is hoped that the team (PSO and Patrol Officer) can more successfully reduce calls for service and overall crime; in turn allowing the Patrol beat officer to spend his/her discretionary time on these identified problems.

PSOs Walk in High Crime Areas

There are specific areas of the City that have been identified as having higher crime than others. These locations have additional issues such as problem liquor stores, blighted property, prostitution, and high levels of narcotic activity. All of these problems are frequently mentioned as priorities of the NCPCs and local residents.

Law enforcement experts have long touted the effectiveness of foot patrols to address crime and establish open lines of communication with members of the community. While it is acknowledged that foot patrol is the *least efficient but most effective* form of police work, it seems to be an appropriate role of the Problem Solving Officer to fulfill throughout portions of the workday. Therefore, on the remaining four days of the week when the PSO is not working in Patrol, he/she will walk in the high crime areas of the beat and/or PSA the last four hours of the shift.

Measure Y funded PSOs will only work and walk their designated beats unless called elsewhere for an emergency. The walking hotspots are identified by the PSA commander, who reviews an analysis of calls for service, crime reports and community complaints, before making a determination.

The goal of assigning walking officers is to:

1. Get PSOs out of office and the car to walk (or ride a bicycle) in high crime areas.
2. Facilitate communication and relationship building with the community and business members, as well as potential victims and suspects.
3. Develop new opportunities for SARA projects in their area.
4. Use problem solving to reduce calls for service, allowing PSOs and Patrol officers to respond more effectively elsewhere.

Early indicators show that focused walking in selected high crime areas has reduced violent crime.

The Department is also working to improve the Foot Patrol Unit, which provides business districts with dedicated walking officers. In addition, the Department has an obligation to provide contractual and legislatively mandated services to the Port of Oakland and Central Business District.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic

Proactive crime reduction activities will enhance the City's efforts to reduce crime and provide a climate in which economic development can flourish.

Environmental

There are no environmental opportunities associated with this report.

Social Equity

Effective deployment of Problem Solving Officers and other Measure Y funded positions will improve the Department's ability to respond to concerns of individuals who have been unable or unwilling, to participate in a more organized Community Oriented Policing process. A desirable outcome would be to involve those disenfranchised citizens in the solution of the problems facing them and their communities.

DISABILITY AND SENIOR CITIZEN ACCESS

There are no American with Disabilities Act (ADA) or senior access issues contained in this report.

RECOMMENDATION

Problem Solving Officers have been tasked with improving the delivery of police services, addressing major crime trends, and developing solutions to quality of life issues. By using a team philosophy, it is the intent of the Department to reinvigorate the Patrol beat officer, continue its crime reduction efforts, and ensure its commitment to Community Policing and neighborhood based priorities. With support of the Mayor, City Council, and Oakland community, the strategies and goals outlined in this report can be accomplished.

Staff recommends acceptance of this report.

Respectfully submitted,



Wayne G. Tucker

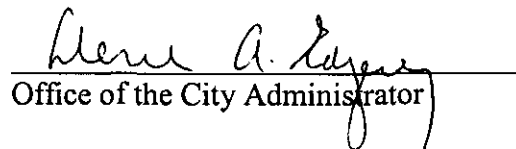
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Strategic Area Command

APPROVED AND FORWARDED TO
THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE



Office of the City Administrator