

Greater Rockridge NCPC Meeting Minutes (12Y/13X)
Thursday, September 8, 2011
Rockridge Library Community Room, College & Manila, Oakland
General Public: 7:00-8:30PM

NCPC:

Frank Castro – Chair

Barbara Minton – Vice Chair

Denise Jorgensen – Treasurer

Karen Ivy – Secretary & Information Officer

At 7:08 PM Frank Castro opened the meeting. Thirty people attended the meeting, including OPD officers. Since there were too many people present for individual introductions, the NCPC Board members and the NSC introduced themselves, and Frank then turned the meeting over to Barbara Parker, the new City Attorney.

Ms. Parker told the meeting that we are first NCPC she has addressed since taking office. She said she plans to follow her vision for the office and to fight for the best interests of the city of Oakland. She has worked in the City Attorney's office for the last 20 years. Before that, she was an Assistant U.S. Attorney and also did some corporate work. She supervised the City Attorney 's office under John Russo since 2000; she was appointed city attorney in July 2011.

She addressed her budget issues. The City Attorney's office has lost 19 attorneys and 14 support staff since 2003, approximately 40% of the 2003 staff. Demand for services has stayed stable or increased. She has told the city council that her office has been cut to bone and can't take more cuts – they now have to retain expensive outside counsel instead of doing the work with inside staff. The office must become more efficient; she is implementing a reorganization. Her goals are:

1. To prioritize jobs so as to do as much as possible in-house
2. To maintain the highest possible level of services
3. To focus resources for maximum impact on the community

Oakland has a public safety crisis. Ms. Parker lives in Haddon Hill, she has lived in Oakland for 31 years. She is afraid for her daughter when she's out. Oakland has had 80 homicides this year; at this time last year we'd only had 61. If the trend continues we may hit 115 homicides in 2011. The City Council is discussing options including gang injunctions and youth curfews.

What can and should City Attorney's office do?

The City Attorney can address blight problems in the neighborhoods: things like problem houses, problematic liquor establishments, and prostitution. She is both expanding and consolidating the code enforcement unit in the City Attorney's office. She plans a dedicated staff to deal with liquor sellers. The Neighborhood Law Corps will continue to work on prostitution; there are three suits currently pending. She considers all prostitutes victims, but is especially concerned about underage prostitutes. The City Attorney is fighting to shut down drug houses. If you have any of these problems in your area, call OPD and file a report; the City Attorney needs the evidence of those calls to support civil actions.

Her unit will focus on public safety and the existing gang injunctions. The North Oakland injunction has been in force for sixteen months and none of the people named in the injunction has committed any

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crimes within the injunction zone. City Council has decided to issue no more injunctions now, but to focus on what we have (the North Oakland and Norteño injunctions) until they can review them for effectiveness.

She closed her brief overview and offered to take questions. [*Ed. Note:* For clarity's sake I have put the following remarks in the first person. They are *not* direct quotes but they show the gist of what was said.]

Frank Castro said that he was at City Council meeting about gang injunctions. What kind of evaluation will they do for the North Oakland injunction and how long do they think it will take?

Ms. Parker: They are still working out the details on that.

Resident: If none of the people named in the North Oakland injunction has committed crimes in this area, how about the crimes they may have committed in other areas?

Ms. Parker: I don't know the answer.

Resident: Have you read the civil grand jury report on CEDA, and what do you think?

Ms. Parker: I've read the report and worked with the city to develop a response. Grand juries may sometimes overstate a situation, but Oakland clearly needs clearer standards and better training; there is a lot of work to do. The city is buying new software for CEDA which they hope will help.

Resident: I'm also concerned about public safety; I have 5 grandchildren, and I worry about it a lot. I recently learned there's been an increase in crime in the North Oakland safety zone, even though the named people aren't committing them.

Ms. Parker: The injunctions were very narrowly tailored to specific individuals; so we can only judge success against whether it curtailed those individuals' criminal activity and it seems to have done that. Other crimes need to be addressed in a different way. Gang injunctions are not an end in themselves but one tool of many.

Resident: Have you studied gang injunctions in other cities?

Ms. Parker: I've read the reports; the results vary. Oakland needs a multifaceted approach, including more police but also injunctions, nuisance actions, etc.

Resident: I've been a taxpayer here for 20 years. I completely agreed with the grand jury accusations against CEDA. CEDA staff are as incompetent as I've ever seen, they all sit around and watch Jerry Springer. If it were a business it would be closed. My husband and I have been assessed fees based on the zip code they live in and *nothing else*. There's no reason for me to shop in Oakland, you can't leave your car safely and not be harassed. What's the city's solution? I wouldn't mind paying more if I got more service, but I've been a victim of crime 5 times so far (including yesterday in my own home) and get no protection. Why would anyone move here? What's Oakland going to do?

Ms. Parker: I'm very sorry to hear that story and especially of the recent crime. The City Attorney's office is trying to develop strategies to reduce and prevent crime. If you have specific feedback on

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CEDA, please call my office with details, as we are working now on revising those procedures. As to why live in Oakland, I love the town too, and I'm trying to do what I can. The city does need to focus on public safety. I'll do my best.

Resident: We definitely feel a decline in safety, what with weekly emails about muggings and public safety. There is no police presence here despite a cluster of robberies in our neighborhood. I understand the budget problems, but what are the plans to increase the number of officers? The criminals know the police just won't come, it's an open city.

Ms. Parker: The police officer will speak about that. There's a proposed budget, and a parcel tax on the November ballot. Police numbers have dwindled through attrition. As city attorney I'll work as hard as I can.

Resident: I am a board member of Rockridge District Association. Should we talk to the City Attorney about what services merchants can expect from the city, and how to partner effectively to deal with issues in the district? How can merchants and businesses be protected from liability for things like pedestrians who trip on tree roots (of city trees)? Would we take that to your office?

Ms. Parker: On partnering with city, you would probably go through the City Administrator's office, but feel free to call my office and we'll advise you. As for liability for tree roots and so on, the city doesn't have the time or resources to inspect. If you know of a problem, call the City Administrator's office or the Department of Public Works to report the problem, they'll come out to fix it. The City Attorney's office doesn't have full power to fix things, but we know where everyone is and what they do.

Resident: *Chronicle* had an editorial recently on the low priority on non-violent crime. The police just don't come for non-violent crime; and it's been like that for at least 15 years. That sets the stage for everything else, it makes no sense to do that. We don't know if the City Attorney can help, but Oakland has acted like this for a very long time, ignoring the broken window theory. Does the City Attorney's office get involved in that?

Ms. Parker: We're at the table. Our office's major focus is on nuisance situations, problem houses, liquor stores and prostitution. We feel that the Mayor and City Administrator want the City Attorney to be an equal partner in fighting crime. It's true that unprosecuted property crimes lead to more crimes.

Resident: How much do you have to defend sheer incompetence and inefficiency? Example: SF had to defend a bus driver who didn't have a driver's license. Have you had anything like that?

Ms. Parker: When it all works right, we advise on how to handle situations when the rules aren't followed, to make sure any disciplinary actions can be upheld. Citizens may have to testify to provide evidence that the prosecution can use. The new City Administrator is very interested in following this up. She wants to updating policies and procedures to get consistent standards. For CEDA specifically, we need to establish what are fees and why are they imposed, do the staff have documentation to follow and appropriate training? Once the proper procedures are in place, people who can't rise to the new level must move on. There will always be outliers, but if everyone has absolute discretion it's

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just chaos. I've never had a case like the guy with no license. We do get sued all the time by people who don't think they should have been fired.

Resident: I have a son and daughter in local schools (Oakland Tech and Chabot). Our neighborhood had a rash of house robberies, apparently done by school kids around the time school lets out. Can the City Attorney do anything about high school kids? I'd like to see someone talk to them and tell them about the consequences of their actions. The school police seem helpful. We have two high schools in the area – Far West (serving borderline non-mainstream kids) and Oakland Tech. Can somebody go into schools and educate the kids about choices? How about a seminar the kids would have to attend?

Ms. Parker: We're considering a mentoring program for students, have them come into the office and do filing, so they can meet and work with successful people. We're also considering something more formal, like mayor's mentoring program. The schools have a truancy program which can be extended to talk informally to kids about after-school activities. This is a long-term issue, and we're very interested in this. We can explore this idea more.

At 7:45 Frank Castro announced there is time for one more question.

Resident: You said the North Oakland gang injunction had been going for 16 months, does it have a start and end time, or does that get decided later?

Ms. Parker: We don't have a permanent injunction at the moment. We have a preliminary injunction. If there's no recurrence of the behavior, the court could dismiss the injunction, or the city could apply for a permanent injunction. The North Oakland injunction has no end date at the moment, and it could just go on for several years because of court overload. We're going back to court on the North Oakland injunction at end of this month to check back.

Resident: I'm distressed at the Mayor's relationship with the attorney who is defending some of the injunction targets. I know there was some tension with John Russo. What is your feeling on the gang injunctions, will you try to push them or do you agree with the mayor?

Ms. Parker: The council policy now is to pursue only the North Oakland and Norteño injunctions, and we're pursuing them vigorously. If they decide to do more injunctions, we will work on those too. Right now we're supporting the existing policy.

13X OPD Report

Officer Thompson began by asking, is anyone here from 13X? In response to a "yes," he asked, why are you here? The resident said, mostly to keep up on the situation, we always attend. Officer Thompson reported that beat 13X had 5 residential burglaries, 3 auto burglaries and a few stolen vehicles. The major crime in 13X is still domestic violence. OPD understands the frustration when no one responds to a burglary, but what about the wife who's being beaten? Oakland has an increase in shootings and robberies – which one do you go to, an in-progress beating or a burglary that happened last night? Everyone here should do a police ride-along, for at least 8 hours (which isn't a full shift). You will be appalled, and you'll know why we don't always show up for burglaries. Everything is up, violence wise. We have to go to the violent calls first. Officer Thompson lives in Tracy. His car was

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broken into, and his police bag stolen; it took Tracy cops 24 hours to come. The police do triage, just like a hospital emergency room; the guy that's bleeding goes first. That's just how it is. Weekends, Mondays and Wednesdays, are when the action is, a ride-along would be a great experience. There's no fee, you just have to sign a waiver that you won't sue if you get shot during the ride-along!

A resident said, I'm not criticizing the police. How do we work together to get more police presence? We have a neighborhood watch, we found a van roaming the neighborhood with no plates and tried to get it in to the local officer. He was gone for the week, they got an out-of-office message.

Officer Thompson asked, was that the PSO that you called? If you called dispatch, they would put that on the call. He knows that call, that was a good burglary van, but he needs at least a partial plate. Neighborhood Watch is great, sometimes not so great. The bad version of Neighborhood Watch: 2 weeks ago, a guy walking down Mountain saw a car with big wheels, and didn't think much of it even when two men walked out of a house with a flatscreen TV and a load of loot. The man realized *later*, oh, that was a burglary... Officer Thompson reads every report – people leave their doors and windows unlocked. There's not much burglary in the West Oakland flats because there's not much stuff. Violence happens in West Oakland, that's where the stolen stuff goes. He covers all of 13, Berkeley to Montclair. Burglaries in 13 are steady, not up; but that's not good enough. The police just can't handle it. Beat 13 is awesome for neighborhood watch, because there are lots of retirees; there are fewer neighborhood watch groups in beat 12 because more people in beat 12 work, they aren't around.

Question: who calls in the domestic violence cases? The neighbors? How many of these are there?

Officer Thompson: There has to be physical evidence of abuse (like bruises). With that evidence, we have to arrest, it's mandatory. It's not illegal to yell at your partner. He gets 2-5 domestic violence calls per day in beat 13!

Question: last week I saw a weird car parked cockeyed, I was sure it was stolen (it turned out to be a drunken neighbor's new car). I tried to call the non-emergency number and the TDY noise on the repeating recording was so loud I couldn't stay on line. Karen Ivy suggested dialing 0 to bypass the recording, but the resident said rightly that you have to be able to stay on that line! Officer Thompson will report that issue to dispatch, maybe it can be adjusted. The resident commented that the recording really shouldn't repeat, especially when it's that loud.

Resident: Thanks for your work. The problem isn't too few cops, it's too much crime. What role can citizens play? What would your ideal citizenry look like?

Officer Thompson: it's really disheartening. A murder happens on a corner, everybody was hanging out, you knock on the door and nobody saw anything. My dream is that everybody would stand up against the violence. Say yes, I saw that guy, he shot the victim, he should go to jail. It doesn't happen. Nobody wants to help. That would be great.

Resident: Thank you for your work. I'm sorry the City Attorney left, she should have heard this. (Denise Boisvert-Jorgensen noted that her assistant Alex Katz is still here.) Yesterday, I left the car

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unlocked briefly and somebody stole my prescription shades; the neighbors didn't see anything. I have a neighbor whose attitude is "I don't want to know about it." You guys came last year when my weird neighbor came through the fence with a hatchet - you came in seconds! It was fabulous. But the burglary thing – we pay taxes, we're entitled to a response. Neighbors feel, "We're on our own up here."

Officer Thompson: Well, yeah – you get left alone a lot. You have great patrol officers on beat 13, but they have to cover the hot spots. Patrol rides in single cars, and multiple guys show up for the guy with the hatchet, that takes them away from other places where less threatening things are happening.

Resident: we must be stronger advocates for ourselves. Coming here is a step, but we have to do more. We have to complain and use our political power.

Resident: We have a good neighborhood watch; we give suggestions, things you can do to help. Put police on speed dial on your phone. Take photos with your phone. We'd like numbers: how many police are there, what they do, what does the City Attorney do, what should Neighborhood Watch do. What's the big picture response to all this?

Officer Thompson: I'm not trying to defend the police; I see both sides of the coin. Everybody should come out for a police ride-along. Get a solid core of neighbors that will look out for each other. That's what needs to happen. If you live in 13, email Officer Thompson (tthompson@oaklandnet.com), he'll come and take the report.

Resident: what are chances of getting more police? What can the citizenry do?

Officer Thompson: Some people insist on working in Oakland – I turned down 4 offers to come here - but a lot of PDs are hiring. SFPD just hired a whole bunch of officers, other places pay more and have less crime. OPD is looking at a lateral academy, I just heard recently, I don't know how many officers or where the money comes from. Lateral academies have shorter training time but Oakland is different so they always have to be trained for Oakland. Oakland academies are very good, people get paid bonuses because they were trained here.

7:55 – 8:10 PM 12Y OPD Report

Frank Castro noted that there will be no beat 12 report this week, the PSO couldn't make it.

What can we do? Talk to the city council, go to the meetings. Email your councilmember. Get involved. He lives in the neighborhood around the drug house on Manila; in the last 2 years the people from his neighborhood have come to this meeting once. Crime here isn't violent but it still deserves respect and attention. If a crime happens, report it, or *it didn't happen*. A reported crime is a call for service; a string of calls for service gets attention. Set up a Neighborhood Watch; the NCPC has flyers at the desk that show you how. We'll try to get some successful block captains here to explain how they did it. We're in this together, police can't do it all. We have to do what we can, look after each other.

This has been a good meeting, much bigger turnout than usual. A couple of weeks ago there were some people who had a string of car break-ins; one man had his car broken into five times, and didn't

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report ANY of them. So they didn't happen. This is where you can talk to the police face-to-face. Also meet our Neighborhood Service Coordinator.

We apologize, there will be no crime stats this week because of the speaker, but we'll have the full presentation in October. October meeting will also have a presentation from Dispatch.

No BART police officers attended.

Setting of Priorities

Because the PSO couldn't attend for beat 12, we'll carry last month's beat 12 priorities over to next month. No one suggested a new priority for beat 13.

Priorities for July:

12Y:

1. Drug house on Manila
2. Problem house on Canning near 62nd Street

13X:

1. No priorities for ~~August~~.

Meetings are the SECOND Thursday of the month.

*Next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, October 13, 2011** at 7:00 PM at the Rockridge Library Community Room.*

Please note that the November meeting shall be at College Preparatory School at 6100 Broadway (near the entrance to Route 24).

See you there and stay safe!

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