

**Greater Rockridge
Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (12Y/13X) – Agenda
Thursday, October 12, 2023
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 open

Eric Neville - Treasurer

Karen Ivy – Secretary & Information Officer

Officer Nathanel Estifanos – Community Resource Officer, beat 12Y

Officer Silvestre Triana - Community Resource Officer, beat 13X

Introductions

Mike Ubell was unable to attend the meeting, but Carolyn Burgess of the North Hills Community Association kindly agreed to stand in as moderator. At about 7:10 PM Carolyn started the meeting. She introduced herself as an NCPC chair for about 12 years; she lives in beat 13Y. Eight people attended on Zoom, and 6 attended in person. The beginning of the meeting was affected because we couldn't turn the lights on in the conference room; we set up anyway, and fortunately Brian Guenther, branch librarian of Rockridge Library, attended and had his keys, and he turned them on after about 12-15 minutes. The first speaker, Kylah Staley of Neighborhood Law Corps, attended on Zoom. The main speaker, Damon Manni, arrived late but in time for his presentation.

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

Neither Community Resource Officer (CRO) was present.

Carolyn Burgess: Crimes are active everywhere, we see lots of broken car windows, and car-jackings. Has Rockridge had many burglaries recently?

Karen Ivy: I've been working on the crime stats for last month and there was a major uptick in general burglaries, in addition to car burglaries.

Carolyn Burgess: There are lots of commercial burglaries along College Ave. especially from Ashby to Hudson. OPD is trying to get more walking patrols. The CROs have been stretched very thin because of staffing issues. I've talked to our new captain, Lisa Ausmus. She was very informative and responsive. Since Damon Manni isn't present but Kylah Staley is available on Zoom, perhaps she could present.

Karen Ivy: I had promised Vennessa Hasten that, if there was time after the CRO presentation, she could present her proposal for Paws on Patrol.

Carolyn Burgess: Yes, go ahead.

IMPORTANT RESOURCES:

RockridgeNCPC.com & OaklandPolice.com

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Venessa Hasten: I live just down the street, off Clifton at College. My friend Sandy (who's present on Zoom) started a Neighborhood Watch, and we've been looking for ways to feel safer. We thought, what about Paws on Patrol? This takes advantage of the fact that everyone with a pet is out walking them. More people out walking deters crime; more people out walking with dogs deters crime even more. It won't solve all the problems. We're trying to tell people what to watch for, what to do if you see something, who to call if you need to. We reached out to Officer Estifanos for advice. We found a nationwide training process we can use. I've applied for a city grant to activate Paws on Patrol in Oakland. It's getting people together, taking a walk down College Ave., engaging with businesses that may be supportive. We found some young women working in a Leslie Evers (a clothing store next to Trader Joe's), who were nervous about getting to their cars at 7 o'clock at night. Maybe we could find people who'd be willing to walk them to their cars at night. We want to keep it simple. My email is vennessahasten@gmail.com. I'm gathering people who might be interested in participating.

Carolyn Burgess: Are you the lead? In what areas do you want volunteers?

Venessa Hasten: There's a form in the back if people are interested. We're just looking at Rockridge - College, maybe from Broadway to Claremont, for now. We want people out walking, maybe with a Paws on Patrol tag, just to make people feel safer and answer questions about this.

Carolyn Burgess: Having people present is good for safety - if you're not alone, you're safer.

Venessa Hasten: I attended a presentation on self-defense, we might also want train people in things like how to use your voice. We're asking the CRO, what information do you really need? I get frustrated walking around and seeing that Dodge Charger smashing all the windows, and not knowing how to report it. What can we do to make a difference?

Carolyn Burgess: I applaud you. One thing you might think about is, of the houses you pass, which ones have cameras on the property? That's a source of information if something happens.

Venessa Hasten: A lot of people have cameras but aren't sure how to get the information to the city. We need more information on how to do that. I love that idea.

Carolyn Burgess: I've been working on this for some time, I can help you. At 7th Street (OPD headquarters) they have a room full of geeks who compare the videos that are sent to them, and they can sometimes identify the people in them. They also look on Facebook! I can give you an email address to send photos or videos to the inspectors. For each video they need the time it was taken, where it was taken, any description of a car or license plate number that isn't clear in the photo, also things like what kind of shoes is the person wearing. Shoes may be distinctive. You can send that information to Officer Palmer who's in charge of inspections -

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jpalmer@oaklandca.gov, to help them do better follow-up. You can also send to opdburglary@oaklandca.gov. When will you have the training? Can the dog be anything from a chihuahua to a borzoi?

Vennessa Hasten: I've created a Facebook page outlining resources and training, or people can connect to me directly. I can share that, or I can email stuff to people who aren't on Facebook. I need to know what other communication techniques people use.

Carolyn Burgess: One area uses a WhatsApp group to report on burglaries and so on, creating a chat about suspicious vehicles and car break ins to alert residents.

The meeting was interrupted when someone from Maintenance phoned Karen Ivy from downstairs to ask how we had turned on the lights; Brian G. went downstairs to show him.

Carolyn Burgess: Also, Brian Cassidy is a good source of information on safety, home hardening, and protecting oneself.

Brian Cassidy: I met Vennessa when she set up a Neighborhood Watch. I work for Neighborhood Services. We used to be part of Oakland Police and we still work with them but we're now under the City Administrator. We offer CPTED ([Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design](#)). We can come out and advise you on ways to make your house safer. It's free, it's not official, I just talk to people, it may make your area less attractive to crime. We educate people about what they can do to empower themselves. We encourage video cameras, especially with speakers, so you can yell at suspicious people without going outside. People say that actually helps. We advise on vegetation maintenance for visibility. For instance, what kind of fencing is best? See-through fencing is better than solid boards, because visibility is less attractive to criminals. Also, do you have alarms?

Carolyn Burgess: If you have an alarm, use it. I turn mine on at night. Things happen at night. Outdoor lighting is good. Motion detection lights on the porches is good. If the trees have overgrown to make the lights dim, call 311 and let them know. They're very slow, keep at it or they forget. That's a brief overview, you can contact Brian.

Brian Cassidy: My email address is bcassidy@oaklandca.gov.

Carolyn Burgess: That's Oakland city's email naming convention, it's always [FirstInitialLastName@oaklandca.gov](#) - unless there are 2 people with the same first initial and last name.

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Venessa Hasten: I just learned something about 311. I reported graffiti and it wasn't taken care of, but after 10 days or so it goes to code enforcement, and they go out and talk to the business. So after the graffiti wasn't cleaned up I called Code Enforcement and they went out and fixed it within 2 days.

Kylah Staley, Neighborhood Law Corps attorney for 12Y/13X

Carolyn Burgess: Kylah, would you introduce yourself and tell us what you do.

Kylah Staley: I'm Kylah Staley, I'm a Neighborhood Law Corps attorney with the City Attorney's office and I cover beats 8 – 14, Area 2, for the Neighborhood Law Corps (NLC). [Ed. Note: She displayed a map showing [Oakland police areas](#).] We represent the city, but we don't represent individuals; we're a government entity. We can bring lawsuits on behalf of the city, or of the people of Oakland. We work with community members and may refer them for private counsel to organizations like [SEEDS mediation](#), the East Bay Community Law Center, and Bay Area Legal Aid.

We address issues like environmental concerns (mostly illegal dumping), tenant protection (utility shutoffs, illegal lockouts), criminal activity at businesses (gambling establishments, drug nuisance properties, brothels and human trafficking concerns). That's the bulk of our work. We hear from community members in various ways – they may call a hot line like [OAK 311](#) [Ed. Note: OAK311 is also available as a smartphone app], [Code Enforcement](#), Police and Fire; we also hear directly from council members, nonprofits, and other city departments. It's important to go through Code Enforcement if you report blight, tenant issues, or habitability issues – we need the records they keep if the case has to escalate <https://oaklandca.nextrequest.com/>. The links are on the Oakland City Attorney web site under *How Do I*. Karen Ivy may have copies of the [Public Nuisance Reporting Guide](#). That's just where to report whatever problem they may have.

Karen Ivy: Sorry, I thought I printed it out but when I looked tonight I couldn't find it. I've added the link above.

Kylah Staley: We mostly enforce local ordinances, like the Oakland Municipal Code, but also some state public nuisance and housing codes. The tenant protection ordinance is the one we enforce most. Neighborhood Law Corps can't sue on a single violation, they'd need a pattern of practices. But individuals can sue on a single violation.

Common courses of action we can take include the types of letters we can send:

- courtesy letter (we've had complaints),
- notice to abate (stop this or else),
- demand letter (similar to courtesy letter),
- citation (City Administrator may issue, or Code Enforcement).

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Litigation is the last resort. It takes a lot of resources and may take years to resolve. We use preliminary injunctions to order some action to stop – we may get a court order before the lawsuit concludes. Lawsuits may go to trial or be settled. We may receive Civil Penalties, payments which only go to the city attorney; individuals who want monetary damages have to sue on their own behalf. Equitable relief is similar to a preliminary injunction: it orders a property owner to correct something, make certain repairs, etc.

Some examples of recent cases:

- Santos Engineering: a debris hauling company was spreading toxic dust and debris; a preliminary injunction limited their future business activities in the City of Oakland.
- 1620 Fruitvale: NLC sued the apartment complex owners for inhumane conditions, got a preliminary injunction which required repairs, and later made the owners hire property management to maintain to maintain the property.

Here are the emails you can use to reach NLC: lawcorps@oaklandcityattorney.org, kstaley@oaklandcityattorney.org. The hotline is 510-238-6628. Are there any questions?

Carolyn Burgess: How many lawsuits are you currently involved in?

Kylah Staley: I'm not working on any lawsuits, I'm very new. I'm working on investigations, gathering data, and working with Code Enforcement. I've drafted a couple of demand letters. If the early work I've done won't resolve the issue, it may go to a lawsuit. I don't have a list of all the issues the team is handling right now.

Vennessa Hasten: About all the graffiti at the old art school – are they not taking care of the property? Would you write them a letter?

Carolyn Burgess: What's the best way to get action on graffiti? Should we call 311?

Kylah Staley: Call 311 or Code Enforcement. They'll open a case, confirm the issue, maybe send a courtesy letter. If initial attempts don't work, our office may take a look, or talk to Code Enforcement. I don't know the laws about graffiti offhand, Code Enforcement would know.

Resident: Shouldn't the citizen complainer get a report number?

Kylah Staley: I can look at ACCELA and see what's been reported. That's [Code enforcement's log of complaints](#), I can search it for a property and see the list of complaints. You can also do that if you have a report number.

Vennessa Hasten: So we should just keep filing and following up?

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Kylah Staley: Yes. It's tedious to do that, but it makes a really useful record.

Carolyn Burgess: They keep track of graffiti complaints because people who tag usually do the same thing every time, and that can be used to find them. It's important for the property owner to keep correcting it because of the broken window syndrome. In my area we take care of 2 gardens and we have graffiti all the time. We can't assume that Oakland will fix it.

Venessa Hasten: So does the city cover it once, and after that it's the owner's responsibility?

Karen Ivy: Kylah, can you answer that?

Kylah Staley: I'm not really familiar with that process on tagging and graffiti but it sounds as though Code Enforcement might be involved if it keeps getting reported. They'd reach out to the property owner. It's tedious but they need the records. I'd like to clarify something – the City Attorney's office doesn't bring criminal suits, only civil. DA does all criminal suits. Thanks for having me, feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Carolyn Burgess: We wish you well with your new job. We hope to hear from you in future. So if someone sees a gambling center or a brothel, they call you?

Kylah Staley: Yes, but also make the formal [public nuisance report](#).

Damon Manni, a neighbor, on his Lighthouse Project, for Oakland safety

Carolyn Burgess: Damon, would you introduce yourself?

Damon Manni: I'm Damon Manni, I've lived in Rockridge for 12 years, I have a business, we love it here. The crimes we've had started me on The Lighthouse Project (TLP), to get the community involved – it's a new, different, innovative way to deal with crime. We have to solve it ourselves, the city can't. Crime is a downer. We need to be positive, like Ted Lasso. If we partner with each other, it's contagious, and everybody feels good. As we all should be prepared for earthquakes, we all should be prepared for crime. We want to set up a model in Rockridge for other communities to follow. We all need to feel safe all the time. You have to be physically involved. The Lighthouse Project high level vision:

To become the role model in neighborhood and community safety that our city, law enforcement and judicial system can endorse.

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To have a collective mindset where our citizens come together and participate in actions that become the fabric of their communities' well-being and everything that goes with its preservation.

The Lighthouse Project mission statement:

Our mission is to make it effortless for all of us to feel safe, now, today. And to empower each neighbor with the necessary tools to connect with other citizens, educate them on the best safety practices and show how their actions continue to eliminate crime in their communities.

We provide a simple, safe and unique approach to prevent, deter and foil crime incidents from happening. We can prevent crime and deter the criminals. And if something does happen, TLP people can be in the area and be witnesses. We want to be in front of it. We want to be preventive.

How do we do this? We use the “Lighthouse and beacon” analogy. There’s no dependency except us. We don’t have to go to the city. It’s available and free. We just launched our new website, <https://thelighthouseproject.xyz>.

[Ed. Summary: A *Lighthouse* is a group of citizens, with or without a table, who stay in one place and talk to passersby, and maybe give them a handout or a whistle. A *Beacon* is a citizen, or a couple of citizens, who walk around and talk to people they meet, and also maybe give a handout or a whistle. Lighthouses and Beacons wear identifying yellow vests.]

We need volunteers for the types of teams that target different issues. We need people on the street, and people to help manage the organization and do campaign finance and orientation. *Ramble-on* is a team of Beacons going around, setting up Lighthouse stations. Beacons are always on the move. *Table-top* is a table on the street, where you talk to people. There are 2 orientations scheduled for the 3rd week in October. I host them.

What is a beacon? How do I do that? They wear bright vests, with emblems, to get attention. We want people to associate yellow vests with safety. We’re a neighborhood patrol, clearly identified. We give you a pack of stuff including vests, whistles, and a safety awareness card with a QR code you can scan to get pepper spray.

Here’s a quick demo: a day in the life of Lisa, a neighbor. [Ed. Note: This demo is available as a video on the TLP web site.] Lisa has lived here 7 years. She lives on James Avenue and takes BART to the city. She stops at Hudson Bay Café for coffee. She walks around the neighborhood on her way to BART. As she’s walking,

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Lighthouse people set up a Lighthouse Station on the corner. When she gets to the corner, a Beacon greets her and they chat about safety. We want to keep people aware and get their attention. We give everyone a whistle – the goal is for each Beacon to give out 25 a day. We also give everyone a safety awareness card. You can get a discount on pepper spray from Cole Hardware. Each interaction takes 30 sec. to a minute – and creates a grateful neighbor. It spreads when she goes home and talks about it – “Look what Rockridge is doing.”

Imagine Lighthouses just popping up – randomness is the point. They can be anywhere, anytime: there’s those yellow jackets again. As people see the Beacons more often, they’re more comfortable with them. And the Lighthouse Stations make your walk safer. A woman was recently attacked walking down Manila, taking her cat to the vet. We want multiple Beacons on a street.

Lisa comes home at 5 or 6 o’clock, it’s getting dark. She walks home and sees yellow vests on College Avenue and she feels safer. She has the whistle we gave her this morning. Citizens are creating safe passageways for other citizens so they feel safe again. The presence is helpful, even if you don’t necessarily engage. Go to the Lighthouse website and check this out.

I’ll put this presentation up on the Lighthouse website. [Ed. Note: He did.] What if you’re a ramble-around team, just talking to people? We give a tutorial on how to engage all kinds of people. We need volunteer help on the back end, setting up training, etc. Vennessa has been a big help and is partnering with me. I’m trying to partner with NTO (Neighbors Together Oakland) and Safer Rockridge.

Carolyn Burgess: So people can go to your web site and volunteer?

Damon Manni: Yes, there’s a lot of stuff there. There’s a description of the Beacon role, and what a Ramble-On team is. It’s a different way of thinking. And I take donations – pepper spray, whistles, we can recycle them. You can sign up for an orientation. This is a different way of thinking.

Carolyn Burgess: this is a wonderful idea and it partners with Paws. It really means to be visible; we need to get out, enjoy our area and give safety to our partners.

Damon Manni: A resident at home is a team player, we coach them on using the website. There’s a crime-mapping tool: I want to see the last 3 crimes that happened within a block of me. If you’re a senior citizen, look at this and feel a little better. We want to know what’s going on.

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Resident: I live in another district, this isn't my NCPC. What about resources, funding, connections – what can be on the actual cards we give out? Do you feel you have a core group of people who can take leadership of this project, provide orientation, and so on?

Damon Manni: I'm like MACRO was 2 years ago, my crew is very small, I need staff help. Nextdoor is an ugly place, but we can offer the posters another alternative. We need to reach out and get people involved; we need people behind to support that. Go to the web site, we'll show you how to write a letter to Gavin Newsom.

Resident: If you had funding, you could pay people, especially young people, to be involved and give back to the community.

Damon Manni: That's a great idea, it's on the list. I'm funding it now but I'm not rich. We have to stop relying on the city and the police. And time is a problem, how much time will this take?

Venessa Hasten: There's a new program, [Activate Oakland](#), trying to engage businesses in a neighborhood. You don't have to be a nonprofit to do this; the focus is on the business corridor. College Ave. is a business corridor, and people walk to BART

Damon Manni: We've gotta do something. Everyone in this room can do something. It's not just money, it's time. How much time can you contribute?

Carolyn Burgess: How about a mobile Lighthouse? Just wear the vest when going to shop.

Resident: How about a yellow tag on the door? You can knock here and we'll help you. We need to talk to each other.

Resident: When we see someone who's hurt, they have trauma, they may get help from family or not. I've created a healing circle space, so they can express what happened.

Damon Manni: The woman who was attacked, they sprayed her eyes, the neighbors took her in and washed her eyes. But they didn't prevent it. And nobody got her name to follow up with her, is she OK. This happened twice, 4 days apart, and someone reported the screams because they were so loud. The hard part is getting this thing off the ground. Residents, citizens, a neighbor community. And after an incident you should run a healing circle.

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Carolyn Burgess: it's building a community. The police don't follow up a day later, they don't ask, are you OK? This is how things grow and improve. The county is another place to approach for funding, they're into services. Oakland does a poor job with this. We do have to wrap this meeting up. And the XYZ, what's that?

Damon Manni: that's just a domain, but I wanted it to be unique.

Carolyn Burgess: Karen, the CROs sent you the crime reports. Could you summarize them?

Karen Ivy: They sent me 2 reports, one for beat 13X, above Broadway between Berkeley and 51st, and the other for beat 12Y, which is the other side of Broadway between Berkeley and 51st, down to Telegraph. These are all for the periods from August to October a year ago, and this year.

- In 13X, from August to October a year ago, there were no robberies, 4 burglaries, 5 thefts from vehicles, 10 other thefts, and 8 stolen cars. Total: 27
- In the same time frame this year there was 1 robbery (gun), 5 strongarm robberies, 9 thefts from vehicles, 7 other thefts, and 15 stolen cars. Total: 39

- In 12Y, during the same period last year there were 2 robberies (gun), 5 strongarm robberies, 1 other robbery, 2 aggravated assaults, 13 burglaries, 43 thefts from vehicles, 38 other thefts, 24 stolen cars. Total: 128
- In the same time this year there were 16 robberies (gun), 1 robbery (knife), 6 strongarm robberies, 2 other robberies, 4 aggravated assaults, 28 burglaries, 56 thefts from vehicles, 25 other thefts, 33 stolen cars. Total: 171

Venessa Hasten: I wanted to stress reporting. You can't report if it's not your car.

Karen Ivy: I can answer that from our last meeting. Someone asked Captain Ausmus why not, and she said there is a state law that says only the car owner can report a crime with a car.

Venessa Hasten: I printed out these little cards, with a QR code, you can click here and report a crime. Can we track what is reported, will it increase?

Carolyn Burgess: We could leave a note saying I saw this happen, contact me if you want to know what I saw.

Karen Ivy: I always say, on NextDoor, we have to report crimes, even if the police don't come. If we don't report it, they'll never know it happened.

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Resident: Could we hand out cards with like 3 questions you could answer and hand in, about a crime you saw?

Carolyn Burgess: I'll give you my card and I'd like you to send me the QR code. It's been a great evening.

Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council Priorities for October 2023

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, December 14, 2023** at 7:00 PM
Rockridge Library and virtual meeting
Zoom link is available at <https://rockridgencpc.com>, NEXT NCPC MEETING*

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