



PUBLIC SAFETY CITIZEN TASK FORCE PUBLIC MEETING

Wednesday, October 2, 2013

6:00 p.m.

Santa Cruz Police Department Community Room
155 Center Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

MINUTES

- I. Chair Reyes Call to Order
 1. Meeting called to order at 6:10 p.m. by Chair Reyes.
 2. Theme Three (gang violence) will be discussed.
 3. Task Force members absent: none

- II. Approval of September 18, 2013 Minutes
 1. September 18, 2013 Minutes approved.

- III. Upcoming Task Force meetings are discussed.
 1. The public format meeting is mentioned.
 2. The next meeting will take place at Branciforte Middle School. Interpretation services will be offered.
 3. Deliberations might need to overlap into the first Wednesday of November.

- IV. Panel Presentation on Theme 3, Gang Violence
 1. Officer Joe Hernandez, Santa Cruz Police Department
 - a. Has worked with gang teams, on a task force, as a gang detective and has been assigned to community outreach.
 - b. Some programs that have been coordinated include PRIDE, a 12 week program for at risk 12-15 year old youth. PRIDE helps them with the decision-making process. Poor life decisions and their consequences are discussed during the first six weeks. There is a program at San Quentin called SQUIRES, which is similar to scared straight. The interaction with inmates helps channel the youth to open up in ways most adults would not be able to get them to do. The inmates' situations often cut down the youths' excuses on their behavior. The second six weeks include discussions on positive life decisions and the benefits that can come with them. It also includes some trips, such as a visit to three science laboratories at UCSC. Some of the youth can also take a trip to Watsonville airport and fly around the Santa Cruz area. There is also a ropes course to help fortify team building. This course helps the youth build trust in other youth, and pushes their limits of comfort to show them that all obstacles can be overcome.

- c. Another component of PRIDE includes parenting classes. The class does not talk down to the parents, but gives them tools to help address their teenage child's behavior accordingly.
 - d. PRIDE could not succeed without its mentors.
 - e. Another program is BASTA (Broad-based Apprehension Suppression Treatment and Alternatives). It requires interagency cooperation. It focuses on two different sections of the County, north and south. BASTA focuses on students through applying a wrap-around model. It includes adults, preferably from the youth's school, and helps deliver what resources are needed to separate the youth from trouble.
 - f. The community is vastly important in helping at risk youth make the right decisions. The community can get involved and help occupy the youths' time by coaching, mentoring, or supervising.
 - g. The time between when the student is released from school and when at least one parent returns home is an incredibly vulnerable time. This time is often unsupervised, and is when most youth tend to develop risk-taking behaviors.
 - h. The youth are never forced to attend BASTA; they do so because they want to. A sense of belonging and beneficial utilization of time is established during the short amount of time BASTA has with the youth.
 - i. BASTA also has a website which educates those who want to know what common and current trends and signs of gang activity are (such as tattoos, clothing, etc.). It is focused on norteño and sureño gangs.
 - j. The youth are involved in BASTA for only a 12 week period. Though it is a great resource, it does not provide the ongoing resources that youth need.
2. Nane Alejandrez, Director, Barrios Unidos
- a. Has been involved with preventing gang violence for over 35 years in Santa Cruz.
 - b. The word gang has been misused and overused. It has painted a picture in many residents' minds of what a gang is. In the 1970s, most gangs in Santa Cruz were white.
 - c. Gangs became a predominant issue for Santa Cruz in the 1980s.
 - d. Education is vital to addressing gang violence and the issues that resonate.
 - e. During the 1970s, there was a large ignorance to the beginning surge of gang activity. Due to this ignorance, a communal response to curb gang activity was lacking, helping to fuel the issues that are seen today.
 - f. Barrios Unidos has only a very limited amount of time with potential gang members. Barrios Unidos gets to spend maybe an hour a day with them, then their friends have the rest of the day to influence on them.
 - g. Despite what people think, racism is a prevalent issue in the Santa Cruz community and cannot be ignored.
3. Mario Sulay, Commander, Santa Cruz County Gang Task Force
- a. Santa Cruz County Anti-Crime Team's (SCCACT) budget is about \$120,000 a year. This does not cover salaries, operational and support staff costs. SCCACT works with multiple agencies. Many of the support staff are volunteer analysts.
 - b. Enforcement officers see specialized training to become field experts.
 - c. Officers patrol the streets, primarily hot spots, in order to try and quell gang member activity before it even occurs.

- d. SCCACT works with probation and parole to ensure that clients are conforming with their terms.
 - e. Another tool to combat gang activity is to reduce anonymity for gang members and their participants.
 - f. Educating the public to raise gang awareness, intervention, prevention, etc. to identify at risk individuals is important. If you can stop an individual from following a gang path as soon as they begin the more likely it will keep them away from future gang activity. Prevention is better than intervention.
 - g. The narcotic task force is also multi-agency and applies covert strategies. It has been trying to build an intelligence component in its task force.
 - h. Santa Cruz and the surrounding area reports 21% of gang reported incidences for the County. 25% of reported crime was violent crime. 19% of these crimes included drug and alcohol violations. Another 19% involved violations of parole terms.
 - i. 48% of individuals in gang related crimes are 18-25 years old; 19% are 12-17 years old.
 - j. There is a 44% decrease in gang related felony arrests in the north county during the first two quarters of this year (in comparison to last year). There is also a decrease in south county's gang related felony arrests.
 - k. 23% of juveniles that were arrested in gang related activity were arrested multiple times within a six month period.
 - l. The use of weapons has increased this year. Though there has also been an increase in firearm seizures.
 - m. When juveniles are in gang related incidences, there is almost always someone who is older present.
 - n. Many gang members are not limited to areas of the County. Mobility throughout the County is common. Many of these individuals are impacting all areas of the County.
4. Willie Stokes, Executive Director and Founder, Black Sheep Redemption Program
- a. Has had a really difficult life. Has spent much of his time since a teenager in and out of juvenile hall, jail and prison. Saw firsthand how the gang world operates while serving time in Pelican Bay.
 - b. Gangs are only concerned with money and power, regardless of what it takes. Violence and drugs are a way to gain that money and power. Many of the people running gangs are from within the prison system, and have even less concerns for the well being of communities.
 - c. Just like Nane stated, Black Sheep Redemption Program only gets an hour at a time with troubled youth, where fellow gang members/troublesome friends get the rest of the day.
 - d. It is worrisome that teenagers and other troubled youth are willing to commit crimes, acts of violence, die or even kill for these gang leaders that are spending their time in prison.
 - e. In order to remove the youth and troubled individuals from gang situations, people must be able to be reached 24 hours a day seven days a week.
 - f. Gangs have minimal concern over race. They provide a sense of belonging that is difficult to rival. Programs must go above and beyond

what most individuals do in order to meet this sense of belonging and importance that gangs portray they have.

- g. Gang activity will never change unless the troubled or at-risk youth are changed.
- h. Many youth feel they are forced into gang activity. They are often faced with threats if they do not follow gang activity.
- i. Resources must be provided to this group of at risk youth from 3:00 pm to 9:00 pm (after school); otherwise they will be lost to the streets.
- j. BASTA has a lot of overflow programs that the Black Sheep Redemption Program deals with.
- k. Programs to empower at-risk youth should address programs that they are interested in. They should not solely be based around what others think they need to be doing.
- l. Providing these resources will take money. However, it needs to be viewed as an investment.

V. Task Force Question and Answer Period

1. Question: If the City could reduce meth and heroin consumption by 20%, would it have any effect on gang activity?
2. Answer: Not by much, but it would have some decrease in gang activity. There is a bit of misunderstanding in terms of gang activity and drugs.
3. Question: If gangs are not involved in drugs, what else are they involved in? Are there any specific spots that are high gang turf areas?
4. Answer: In many cases where an attempt at projecting dominance over someone else, weapons are used. Beach Flats, Ocean St. corridor, Live Oak, etc. Gangs are involved with a lot of violence (25% of gang reported cases included violence and weapons). Many of the weapons are stolen, so theft is another big area of concern. Gangs are dealing drugs; just not all gang members deal drugs. Many kids seem to almost be forced into selling drugs if they are involved with gangs. Selling drugs is one of the biggest moneymakers for gangs. A large percentage of gang members have some activity with drugs.
5. Question: Are many robberies that are occurring connected to gang activity?
6. Answer: A lot of theft issues are from gangs. They operate off of illegal activity. Gangs are involved in narcotics. If there is a decrease in drugs, there will be an impact on gangs. Beach Flats seems to be thrown out as a neighborhood with gang problems. There are families there that have been victimized by gangs. Majority of the people involved in gang activity are not even from Beach Flats. Many of these people are from other areas; they only visit the Beach Flats to cause trouble.
7. Question: What is the total number of documented gang members in the City?
8. Answer: That is one of the big challenges in combatting gang activity. There are different agencies documenting different things. The last report was 850 in 2006. 1,000 or so were documented in 2005. This is not to say there was a decrease, but an inconsistency in reporting and documenting gang members.
9. Question: Why does the police department not have a representative for the Gang Task Force?
10. Answer: The police department did until January 2012, due to staffing circumstances. There was recent recruitment, but that officer has been off. Hopefully that officer returns this month. Effective gang enforcement requires familiarity with the individuals and surrounding area. When an officer is lost, all of a sudden that familiarity is lost. It will be beneficial when that officer returns. Currently, SCPD is down 26 officers, which is about 30% of the force. There are

currently not enough officers to hold down enough shifts and provide the expected service to the community. Despite this, SCPD will not lower its standards just to fill more space.

11. Question: In comparison to the rest of the County, how bad is the gang activity in Santa Cruz?
12. Answer: It fluctuates with the seasons. During the summer months, more gang members enter from other jurisdictions. Local gang members also come and go.
13. Answer 2: A majority of the people involved in gang activity are white surfers. How do you label those that are involved in West Cliff, and they have more access to more money, drugs, etc. There are a lot of issues with drugs going on in the community.
14. Comment: The TF is not focusing on race; it is simply trying to understand the makeup of local gangs.
15. Answer 3: It only takes a small incident to spark a crime wave. Santa Cruz has a strong reputation for sureño and MS13 gangs.
16. Question: Are the Westside gangs committing the same crimes as sureño, norteño and MS13 gangs?
17. Answer: When we discuss gangs, especially in regards to north and south, we are typically talking about gangs with Latino decent. There are Caucasians and Latin Americans in these gangs, though. It is still recorded when a student at Santa Cruz High School wears the color blue or red (despite an individual's argument that red is the school's color). Within municipal codes, gang members are specifically defined, and if an individual does not meet those criteria, they are not legally considered a gang member. There are a higher percentage of Latino gangs than others. The main violence between gangs is between norteños and sureños.
18. Question: What other gangs are there?
19. Answer: The Redwoods and East Siders. These gangs are primarily white. Outlaw motorcycle gangs are also an issue.
20. Question: Would adding one more school resource officer better suit the needs of the students, the schools and the community?
21. Answer: It would be of great help to have another officer. Despite the fact that schools are fairly safe, an extra officer would help. There is one officer that splits their time between two high schools and two middle schools. They are fairly busy.
22. Question: The problems that the City witnessed in the 1970s are still occurring today. There are efforts that have been and are being made, and those are appreciated. However, in absence of throwing money at all of these issues, what will it take to turn this City around?
23. Answer: Time and money will be needed to be invested in projects. It is likely that not all of these programs will work, and funding and time will need to be removed from those. However, if community members are going to invest time and/or money, it needs to be a long-term commitment. People are busy, but time can be found and given to help the youth of the community. However, people also have to want to give their time to the community.
24. Answer 2: Barrios Unidos required a lot of time and commitment to get started. There is too much focus on prevention at the end of the system, on incarceration. Prevention needs to come earlier for at-risk individuals.
25. Comment: Kids know when you really care and want to be helping them. This want makes a large difference and is crucial to helping the youth.
26. Question: What can the City do to better address gang activity? There were multiple gang related murders in the Beach Flats area years ago. The Beach Flats

- became a hot spot where many officers frequented the area to protect the residents of the Beach Flats area. Could a model like this be workable for other hot spots?
27. Answer: The City is able to apply gang specific units to certain areas.
 28. Question: Is the City typically a hot spot?
 29. Answer: It goes through sporadic spurts, much like the population during on and off seasons, and other times.
 30. Question: There seemed to be an influx of gang members around the time of a particular murder or string of murders. During this time, it seemed that SCPD did not participate. Is there a way to get gang related individuals from coming into the City and committing crimes? In other words, is there some form of deterrent to keeping gang members out of the City?
 31. Answer: There was not an influx of Fresno Bulldogs; if that is the incident you are referring to. Also, SCPD did participate. However, its narcotics team did not because of specific marijuana laws from Measure K.
 32. Question: In regards to the DA's office, there was an ability to reduce crime in the Beach Flats area. Is there a model or lesson that can be learned from that in the City and to keep other gang members out?
 33. Answer: The importance is consistency. There must be a full time unit to handle gang related activity. The City of San José had a very successful suppression program. As soon as that was disbanded, their gang violence has gone through the roof. Consistency is key and the City must follow through.
 34. Question: How do we empower communities to be more involved in public safety groups? What actions do you recommend in order to progress towards a more active community?
 35. Answer: Remaining visible in the neighborhood and community is important. In the 1980s, Beach Flats was an open air market. Its residents seemed to be held hostage. The police department showed its presence there. Within six to eight months, its residents started to become more comfortable and active around the community.
 36. Answer 2: If the people in the community feel that they cannot trust the legal and/or judicial process, they will not get involved. Community is very distrustful of law enforcement. This is partially because a lot of these individuals are from areas where the law enforcement cannot be trusted. Take City Council for example, every individual is white. A lot of these issues can boil down to race. Why are Latinos not in positions of power in Santa Cruz?
 37. Question: It appears that it is very difficult for a gang member to remove themselves from the group. Is this true? Can removing oneself from a gang lead them down a positive path, or is it too dangerous?
 38. Answer: There is a debriefing process, where people can get out and walk away. How an individual walks away from a gang is crucial to their future safety. Currently, there are six individuals trying to get out without going through the debriefing process, which often does not lead the individual down a good path.
 39. Answer 2: You cannot just walk away from a gang once you are involved with one. Most if not all of the youths in gangs are not too involved with the gang to get out. In order to get out of the gang the safest way possible, they should fade out by incrementally limiting their time with the gang. This will be significantly more difficult or even impossible if that youth is living in a neighborhood inundated with gang activity. There is no resource for these kids to get out of the gang life. There is a slow pace that is needed to slowly remove kids from gangs. There is Rancho Cielo in Salinas, a housing development to help kids get out of gangs safely. So many gang members or potential gang members want to get out, but it is nearly impossible to do so safely or to just uproot and remove oneself.

40. Question: Recently there have been some instances of marijuana smuggling up the north coast. Are the police unaware of the drug activity coming into the City, due to Measure K? Is there a local gang that controls the entry point and the distribution of these cross-border marijuana drop offs?
41. Answer: It is likely that the drugs that were dropped off in the north coast were not intended to come to Santa Cruz; it was just a dropping off point. These drugs are coming from south of the border up to our beaches, it is likely to be intended for other areas. The crews that are hired to unload the boat are usually from southern California and this sort of activity seems to usually be organized by southern California gangs. There is no information that any local residents or gangs have been involved. There have only been two reported cases so far.
42. Question: What is being done to address the high number of probation violations within the juvenile population? Why are these kids on probation?
43. Answer: There are a fair amount of cases of kids with guns, and this is a serious issue that requires extra attention. Kids seem to be increasingly more active in gang activity.

VI. Closing Comment Period

1. This TF is a big start. We seem to know what needs to be done, people need to stop talking and start doing. Maximum community input is needed to provide better opportunities for the City's youth.
2. If we can deal with the youth and other programs like BASTA, while limiting opportunities for gang activities and lifestyles, we can come closer to reducing gang issues. Youth is a precious commodity; however, Santa Cruz County was ranked tenth in the state as far as youth victimization.
3. Thank you for this opportunity. There needs to be much tighter knit connections within the community. Right now much of the public seems blocked from law enforcement. This separation has gone on too long. Working together, pro-social involvement and street outreach teams are needed to deter gang activity.
4. Laws need to be enforced. Also, we need to prevent people from getting to the point in their lives we've discussed tonight. What are our expectations? Rancho Cielo in Salinas is something great to be modeled after. It is not just a focus on academics but trade skills. Youth who are not college-bound need skills just as much as college-bound youth. Employment is key to keeping people away from gangs and violence.

Adjournment -- The Public Safety Citizen Task Force adjourned from the public meeting of October 2, 2013 at 9:00 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for October 9, 2013, 6:00 p.m., Branciforte Middle School.

The City of Santa Cruz does not discriminate against persons with disabilities. Out of consideration for people with chemical sensitivities, we ask that you attend fragrance free. Upon request, the agenda can be provided in a format to accommodate special needs. Additionally, if you wish to attend this public meeting and will require assistance such as an interpreter for American Sign Language, Spanish, or other special equipment, please call the City Clerk's Department at 420-5030 in advance so that we can arrange for such special assistance. The Cal-Relay system number: 1-800-735-2922.

Public Safety Task Force meetings will be recorded for the purpose of preparing minute