



Minutes of the Northwest Area Community Policing Council

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, January 16, 2018

Northwest Area Command

10401 Cibola Loop NW

Albuquerque, NM 87120

Meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m.

Board Members Present:

Eric Jackson, Chair
Tom Borst
Jill Greene
Judy Kanester
Eric Nixon

Also Present:

Cmdr. Paul Szych, APD Aviation Unit
Cmdr. Donovan Olvera, APD NW Area Command
Pete Gelabert, APD Crime Prevention Specialist
Sandy Pino, APD Crime Prevention Specialist
Chris Sylvan, APD CPC Manager

Community Members: More than 20 community members were present.

The council said the Pledge of Allegiance, approved the December minutes and agenda for the meeting without any changes.

Area Command Update

- Commander Paul Szych explained he had been transferred to Commander of the Aviation Unit, overseeing the two airports (Sunport and Double Eagle II) and

working with the department of Homeland Security. The change was unexpected but represented an opportunity to work in a new environment.

- Changes were expected under the new administration and there may be more movement.
- Cmdr. Szych introduced the new NW Area Commander, Donovan Olvera.
- Cmdr. Olvera transferred from Valley Area Command. He has been an APD Commander for three years, having worked in the DWI Unit, the undercover narcotics unit, as a field supervisor, as a supervisor for the Crisis Intervention Team, and as a commander for the criminal investigations division.
- Cmdr. Olvera started out as a poor Chicano in Texas. He served in the military before beginning his career in law enforcement.
- He wants to change the stigma of talking to police officers so he speaks to many community groups. He looks forward to working as a team to increase the quality of life for all community members. Communication is the key, and we need the community to work with APD.
- Cmdr. Olvera invited people to speak to officers, shake their hands. “The officers do the hard work.”
- Cmdr. Olvera’s Plans for the Northwest Area Command include:
 - Establishing a “grid system” for the area around Coors & I-40, West Bluff.
 - Deploying bicycle officers in that area.
 - Officers will work exclusively in their grid area, only taking calls there.
 - Officers will have an opportunity to get to know their area and the people in it, such as apartment managers.
 - This approach has been effective in the Valley Area Command.
- Lt. Scott Norris provided an update on the work he is doing:
 - The first meeting of a new business coalition in the West Bluff area is scheduled for February 1st. The focus will be on education and advice to reduce crime. The goal is to build partnerships with business clusters.
 - West Bluff is the first coalition but there will be others, such as the Riverside Plaza area, and other clusters moving north.
 - A community member asked what type of crimes are being committed in the West Bluff area. Lt. Norris reported there are auto and home burglaries, “suspicious activity” calls, narcotics use, and other crimes.

There will be strict enforcement in the area. The goal is to prevent the seemingly minor crimes that affect quality of life. The crimes are often aimed at getting things that can be quickly converted into cash to support drug habits.

- A similar plan is in the works to facilitate communication among clusters of neighborhood associations, helping to create teams. Monthly to quarterly meetings would be held with association presidents or their designees. The goal would be to increase communication between the community and APD but also among the local associations.
- Cmdr. Szych reported the Pawnshop Ordinance is still a work in progress. There has been good community turnout at the recent City Council Committee meetings. He will continue to work on support for the ordinance. The goal is to slow down the time it takes for criminals to convert stolen goods into cash.

Old Business

- Suggestion box:
 - With the change in leadership and upcoming changes with administrative personnel, it is not clear where the suggestion box is in the acquisition process. The CPC will follow up with Cmdr. Olvera in the next few weeks to make new arrangements.
- New meeting day and location:
 - The NWCPC will be moving back to the Don Newton Taylor Ranch Community Center, 4900 Kachina NW. The meeting days will also be changed to the third Wednesday of each month. The next meeting, Wednesday, February 21, 2018, will be at the Community Center.

New Business

- Chris Sylvan was introduced as the new CPC Manager. He will be working to assist and support the CPC's. He is brand new to the position and is still working to become acclimated.

Matters from the Public

- Cmdr. Olvera was asked when the Court Accepted Settlement Agreement (CASA) would end. It will end when the reforms have been completed. The department is committed to the CASA and is actively working to meet its requirements.
- Cmdr. Olvera was asked about recruiting and increasing the number of officers. Cmdr. Olvera stressed that while we need more officers, the department will not compromise their high standards. One of the most effective recruiting tools is officers. People interested in joining APD can schedule ride-alongs.
- A community member said she had been disappointed that there were no officers available at the substation on two occasions. Cmdr. Olvera responded that it is better for the officers to be in the field, so they are not often in the substation. There should, however, be supervisors or detectives available to speak with the public. Cmdr. Olvera will retrain staff to find someone, such as a lieutenant, sergeant, or detective, to speak with community members.
- A community member expressed concern about speeding and reckless driving in the area of McMahon Blvd. and Maravillas Dr. The problems occur during rush hour and also when the local schools let out. Cmdr. Olvera will have his officers check the area and do traffic enforcement (radar). He also will drive that area himself to gain familiarity. The community member was encouraged to contact the City Council for more permanent solutions, such as traffic lights, stop signs, etc.
- Another community member complained of vehicles speeding in the area behind Cibola High School around 2:00 AM – 3:00 AM. Cmdr. Olvera requested the community member e-mail him with details so he can have officers check that area at those times.
- Cmdr. Olvera was asked what the current manpower is for APD. The most recent number is 841 officers.
- A community member asked about the security at Cottonwood Mall. APD has encouraged them to install camera systems but it appears the corporate management overseeing the mall is reluctant to do that.
- Communicating via the NextDoor app was discussed. APD cannot read what has been posted by community members. This was in the original design of the program to avoid a sense of being surveilled by law enforcement (Big Brother).

Information about crimes or suspicious activity can be forwarded to Pete Gelabert or Sandy Pino. Otherwise, people should call or email them directly. It was suggested that APD publish the fact they cannot read most posts and encourage people to make direct contact. It was further suggested the Office of Neighborhood Coordination could publish that information city-wide, too.

- A community member raised concerns about soliciting in the Paradise Bluffs area. “No Soliciting” signs are available for free at the substations. Pete Gelabert and Sandy Pino distributed signs to the attendees. Several people expressed their belief that having the signs posted had reduced the number of solicitors. Having the signs also provides more support for responding officers. Solicitors must be permitted by the city and must have photo ID. Reputable businesses will follow the rules. If anyone sees suspicious activity, they should call the non-emergency line: 242-COPS (242-2677). If they believe a crime is in progress, they should call 911.
- A community member also asked about seeing meter readers or other utility workers. Are they legitimate or criminals casing the neighborhood? PNM workers will be wearing vests and will have photo ID. They are trained on how to talk to customers and how to address concerns. If a person is not sure, they can call PNM directly and they will verify if the person is an actual PNM employee. Some agencies are now using remote meters or even binoculars to avoid having to walk around people’s homes. There have been reports of burglars wearing high-visibility vests and carrying clipboards to give the impression they are meter readers. If a person is not sure about the legitimacy of a person they see acting suspiciously, they should call 242-COPS (242-2677) and let the uniformed officers investigate them. If they believe there is a crime in progress, they should call 911.
- A community member asked about speeding on the freeways. The community would like to see more enforcement and more traffic units. APD has spoken about increasing the strength of the Traffic Unit as manpower increases.
- There was discussion of the Governor’s State of the State Address:
 - The governor reported the state has a budget surplus of approximately \$330 Million.

- The Bernalillo County District Attorney, Raul Torres, has requested \$5 Million for additional attorneys and a database system. Officers are doing the work, arresting criminals, but those offenders are processed and released. The money the DA asked for will allow “Intelligence Driven Prosecution” - focused deterrence, triaging of cases, and risk assessment. Community members were encouraged to contact their state legislators and encourage them to support the DA’s request. Eric Nixon will send additional information.
- Albuquerque has also requested money for a new emergency radio system. The current system is out of date, out of production, and out of warranty. It is difficult to have it repaired or serviced. A new system will require about \$2 Million. That cost would include new base units, new car units, and new personal radios for the officers, but also new repeaters and other equipment.
- Community members are encouraged to start Neighborhood Watch programs. Pete Gelabert and Sandy Pino are available to help. These are arranged on a block-by-block basis and you only need one-half of the block to begin. An individual needs to begin the process and then Pete and Sandy can then guide them through the next steps. Criminals have said they will avoid areas where they see the “Neighborhood Organized Against Crime” signs. Individuals should call (505-768-4850) or email Pete (pgelabert@cabq.gov) or Sandy (spino@cabq.gov).
- A community member suggested the CPC consider an online suggestion box for community input. The Council will research that possibility.

Adjournment

- The next NWPC meeting is scheduled for 6:00 PM, on Wednesday, February 21, 2018. It will be held at the Don Newton Taylor Ranch Community Center, 4900 Kachina NW.
- There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 PM.