

From: Alan Benson [mailto:albenson@adelphia.net]

Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2003 12:40 PM

To: Steve

Subject: Letter for March 25, 2003 HB City Council agenda for Written Communications, re: Community Watch program. From Al Benson

To: Steve Burrell
City Manager
City of Hermosa Beach, CA

March 11, 2003

From: Alan Benson
Hermosa Beach, CA

Re: This letter is for the city council agenda under Written Communications for the regular meeting of the Hermosa Beach City Council on March 25, 2003.

City Council Members of Hermosa Beach,

I ask the Hermosa Beach City Council to consider the advantages of a Community Watch Program for Hermosa Beach.

A Community Watch program would allow Hermosa Beach residents the opportunity to work together with the Hermosa Beach Police Department and participate in solving crime problems in their neighborhood.

Very often residents of a community are unclear as to the types of crime that should be reported. A Community Watch program will setup a structured dialogue with the Hermosa Beach Police Department to track crime patterns.

Studies have shown that criminals who commit serious crimes are also participating in minor crime in the same community. Hermosa Beach residents that have observed or who are the victims of minor crimes should have a well-known program to report community crime problems.

Community-based policing like a Community Watch program will provide residents with a usable and understandable approach to address neighborhood crime issues. The calls placed to the emergency 911 system were never intended to report or track minor neighborhood crime.

Public safety concerns of residents that are handled by Community Watch help to build a partnership between the public and the Hermosa Beach Police Department.

One Hermosa Beach Police officer or office could provide Hermosa Beach residents with a single point of contact for solving community crime problems.

Community-based policing allows Hermosa Beach residents to be brought back into the public safety process by participating in Community Watch.

Community Watch or Neighborhood Watch programs have been effective in other cities to report, track and control minor and serious crime.

Input and support from Hermosa Beach residents does not have to be limited to monthly neighborhood meetings with the Hermosa Beach Police Department.

Residents can maintain contact with the Hermosa Beach Community Watch program by phone calls, voice-mail, e-mails and meetings with law enforcement officers when needed.

Community Watch programs have been shown to be an effective way to extend limited law enforcement resources.

The Hermosa Beach City Council, City Hall, Police Department and Hermosa Beach residents would all derive benefits from the implementation of this type of community-based policing program.

Regards,

Alan Benson

This community-based policing article appeared in the July 11, 2002 issue of ***The Beach Reporter*** on page 59. And in the March 6, 2003 issue of ***The Beach Reporter*** on page 43.

Community-Based Policing

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The Hermosa Beach Police Department has provided the following information to inform the public about community-based policing.

Three components

Community-based policing has three components --- partnership, problem-solving and change.

Community partnership recognizes the value of bringing people back into the public safety process.

Problem-solving identifies concerns that community members feel are most threatening to their safety and well-being.

Change management recognizes that a police department will have to change its organizational structure to forge partnerships and implement problem-solving efforts.

Focus on prevention

In community-based policing, officers still maintain law and order, but they move beyond just "catching the bad guys" to examining specific conditions, including problems of disorder and neglect, that breed both minor and serious crimes. People talk about their concerns, which range from burglary to speed bumps, with the community-based policing officers who are familiar faces in the neighborhood and ask for help.

Many programs that support community-based policing are old news to crime prevention specialists --- Neighborhood Watch, citizen police academies, graffiti cleanups, neighborhood mediation centers, after-school programs for children and teens, school resource officers and citizen patrols.

Building trust

Community-based policing cannot work without trust. Residents who trust the police provide valuable information that can lead to the prevention and solution of crimes. Mutual trust leads to advocacy for police activities and productive partnerships that find solutions to community problems.

A police officer who studies and listens to the community respects residents' instincts and concerns. On the other hand, residents need to learn how the police department works, and what it can and cannot do. Then they need to work together.

Not a quick fix

Community-based policing strategies have evolved over the past 25 years, based on work by scholars and police research organizations. It's become the focus of policing in the 1990's, but community-based policing isn't a quick fix. Getting the public to cooperate with the police can be difficult, especially in neighborhoods with a record of antagonistic relationships between residents and police. Similar antagonisms may exist between community organizations and law enforcement.

The police must win the support of the public, through regular meetings with residents and delivering on commitments they make to solve problems. Community-based policing requires long-term commitment to work with community members and forge lasting partnerships.

Benefits

--- Using the community's talents and resources effectively helps extend severely strained police resources.

--- Citizens gain a voice in defining and prioritizing their law enforcement needs. Satisfaction with the police services increases.

--- Officers who develop creative solutions to community problems and find new roles also enjoy increased job satisfaction.

--- Crime has gradually decreased since the early 1990's. Police executives, government officials and researchers credit community-based policing initiatives as contributing to that decline.

End of article.

Thanks for taking the time to consider a Community Watch program for Hermosa Beach.

Alan Benson