

Fresno Police Department Chief's Advisory Board Minutes

January 28, 2010

Present: Kamal Abu-Shamsieh, Dee Berry, Roz Clark, Morgan Doizaki, Harry Gill, Zeva Hammack (for Judy Holm), Elias Loera, Jesse McDonald, Carol Mills, Jim Poptanich, Luke Raughley, Kenneth J Ryan, Don Weaver, Bob Willis

Absent: Doug Broten, David Cowin, Paula Farris, Tom Gentile, Pamela Kallsen, Edward Moreno, Brian King, Kelly Nellum, Lorraine Person, Rebeca Rangel, Enrique Reade, Bill Simon

Guests: Chief Jerry Dyer, Deputy Chief Robert Nevarez, Lieutenant Don Gross, Sgt. Mindy Casto, Ofc. Martin van Overbeek, Eddie Aubrey (Office of Independent Review)

Call to Order:

The meeting, held in the City Hall Annex Training Room, was called to order at 5:35 pm.

Minutes:

Minutes from November 19th were approved without correction.

Opening Remarks:

Deputy Chief Nevarez welcomed the new members to the board and introduced Eddie Aubrey from the newly formed Office of Independent Review.

Agenda Items:

2010 Gang Strategies

Chief Dyer: So far this year, there has been 27 shootings in the first 27 days of 2010. Of the 27, 15 were gang related and of the 5 homicides, 4 involved a gang member. As of late, African American gangs have come to the forefront, surpassing the Bulldog gang in activity. Additionally, gang members have been conducting counter surveillance at Police Headquarters, the MAGEC offices, and the Southwest District station. Another trend noticed is the use of Internet video on YouTube to challenge rival gangs. A key strategy the Department will focus on is targeting the most active & influential gang members to maximize the use of our resources and personnel.

This past Saturday, 31 firearms, drugs, and cash were seized during searches conducted at two residences. Some of the firearms seized were an AK-47 with a 50-round magazine, a machine gun, and an assault rifle. Suppression operations will become more frequent and more planned to curb this violence. The Department will be implementing Operation Cease Fire to bring together many components and it will continue to utilize the Mayors Gang Prevention Initiative. To date, Fresno has 94 validated gangs and over 10,000 validated gang members.

Mills: Has noticed an increase in activity, is the Department noticing alliances between gangs?

Chief Dyer: Yes, certain gangs have been aligning themselves with each other to target rival gangs.

Deputy Chief Nevarez: Last week two of the shootings involved members of tagging crews.

Chief Dyer: It is harder to pinpoint the feud between gangs due to the alliances formed.

Weaver: Will MGPI still focus on the younger kids?

Chief Dyer: MGPI is unable to at this point, and they will only be able to focus on adults due to funding cuts from \$1.2 Million to \$100,000.

Weaver: What connections will the Department have?

Chief Dyer: Life Skills instructors and a partnership between PAL and the Parks Department.

Gill: Has the number of gangs increased?

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Chief Dyer: All have increased membership except the Bulldogs, their numbers are declining.

Gill: Are those arrested over the last two years still in jail?

Chief Dyer: Majority of those arrested have been released with little jail time. Recently a person responsible for 20-25 auto thefts within the city was arrested and released from jail the next day. Burglars & felons are also being released from jail.

McDonald: Where is the Sheriff's Department at, are they on the same page?

Chief Dyer: The Sheriff's Department still partners with us through the MAGEC Unit but they have changed their criteria related to who gets released from jail.

Berry: What determines who gets classified as a gang member?

Lt Gross: There are ten criteria related to gang member classification. To be classified as a gang member, a person needs to meet at least three of the criteria and be involved in criminal activity.

Chief Dyer: Non-Revocable Parole (NRP) started 1/25/10, and it refocuses parole supervision. As a result, 25% of parolees will not be monitored and they cannot be re-arrested for violating their parole. For law enforcement, NRP still allows officers to search these parolees and they can be arrested on new charges.

Ryan: Do gang investigators pursue charges on firearms violations?

Chief Dyer: The Street Violence Bureau supervisor works these cases, submitting for prosecution those eligible to be filed federally.

Gill: What determines which inmates are released?

Chief Dyer: The Board of Prisons determines which inmates are eligible to be released from state prisons. Locally, the Sheriff's Department has a set criteria which checks their history. There are challenging times ahead and we will remain focused and relentless in reducing crime through the use of Crime Stoppers, Citizens On Patrol, Neighborhood Watch, and the Gun Bounty Program.

Downtown Homeless Issue

McDonald: What is the Police involvement with the homeless at Fresno/F Street, and what is the City doing with the monies it received?

Chief Dyer: Just spent the last 4 hrs trying to get people to move from a vacant lot in the area. The homeless individuals were previously given notice at the request of the property owners. This was after following the legal process which included a judicial review. A City representative was also on-site to qualify individuals for housing vouchers.

Poptanich: What are the vouchers good for? Are they looking at the whole package such as food & laundry?

Chief Dyer: The vouchers are good for housing only. Greg Barfield, Fresno's homeless czar, is working on a better solution. The majority of the homeless do not want the vouchers and some of them even had vouchers in their pockets. At one point, an employee from Med Mar, the marijuana dispensary in town, was trying to incite trouble between the police and homeless individuals. He cut a pad lock to a gated yard and let about 20 people inside.

Year-end Crime Statistics

Chief Dyer: There has been a 5.4% increase in violent crime overall and a 4.1% decrease in property crimes such as burglaries, thefts, auto thefts, and arson.

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ROUND TABLE:

Chief Dyer: To foster public trust, he recently distributed a memo to all personnel regarding the need for increased efforts in engaging in more positive contacts between officers and the public. The Chief also attended a community meeting in the Southeast Policing District to hear community concerns. Since the last CAB meeting, a modified uniform policy was enacted, requiring officers in tactical units to dress in regular class B uniforms so they will be more approachable. The only exception to this was the K-9 and MAGEC officers who still wear BDU uniforms as a matter of necessity.

Aubrey: Noticed the uniform change immediately and commended the Department on the willingness to change uniforms.

Abu-Shamsieh: What is the perception from the public so far, are officers more approachable?

Chief Dyer: Department hasn't seen any noticeable changes in perception yet but the uniform change was just enacted. (Chief Dyer had to leave the meeting for a previous engagement)

Deputy Chief Nevarez: We will continue to monitor this.

Loera: Inquired about the substation advisory committees.

Deputy Chief Nevarez: Meetings already taking place to include the Traffic Bureau.

Clark: Announced the Officer/Employee of the Year awards banquet coming up.

Loera: Since the parks Dept. closed the majority of their facilities down, who is going to pickup the slack with the youth programs?

Deputy Chief Nevarez: Terrence Frazier has started a movement in efforts to turn the Granite Park facility into a PAL facility.

Loera: FUSD has also cut funding for the after-school programs.

Deputy Chief Nevarez: Unfortunately, the PAL position was cut because the resources were needed for emergency and core services.

Loera: Has worked to save Little League in the S/E district, what about youth intervention?

Lt Gross: Chief Dyer was previously talking about focusing on the intervention of major players within gangs to curb the rise in violence, not youth at this point.

McDonald: Parks has been a staple for years, what about the City using the reserve monies?

Deputy Chief Nevarez: It will be difficult over the next 2 yrs and the City will need to save monies for other services.

Ryan: What about grants?

Deputy Chief Nevarez: The Department is actively pursuing various grants and has a unit dedicated to researching new grants and managing the grants currently in existence.

Ryan: Might be able to structure a grant as a gang interdiction versus parks funding.

Deputy Chief Nevarez: Currently the Parks Dept., FUSD, and the Department are looking for grants that we can partner together on.

Weaver: Grants aren't funding personnel anymore due to unsustainability after the grant ends.

Doizaki: Any reduction in youthful gang members?

Deputy Chief Nevarez: No, that is why youth programs are needed now more than ever.

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Berry: Numbers could increase with no programs to go to.

Loera: Suggested each District take ownership towards intervention.

Lt Gross: PAL officers have been removed and it is being done by volunteers & volunteer officers.

Deputy Chief Nevarez: Will discuss with the Chief possible coordinated efforts with Dr. Ryan.

Doizaki: Citizens have been feeding the homeless in an empty lot near Central Fish. It has become offensive to patrons & business owners that are trying to revitalize China town. Is there any other areas they can be moved to? Can Code Enforcement act on violations such as parking on dirt lots?

Lt Gross: Code Enforcement must act against the property owner for these type of violations.

Deputy Chief Nevarez: Maybe Greg Barfield can assist with coordinating services.

Raughley: Commended the Department's efforts and agrees tough times are ahead.

Loera: At a meeting with a cluster of eight pastors, a few expressed concerns over being racially profiled during traffic stops. At another meeting with Central pastors, he learned of five churches that have been broken into. Has also noticed car wash people for funeral funding are getting aggressive and believes they might be bogus after seeing multiple car washes with the same people.

Willis: Probably 100,000 people attending local churches weekly. If structure was put in place for parks type services, he believes church members would come alongside to volunteer.

Hammack: Learned a lot at tonight's meeting.

McDonald: Would like to see police pull back from homeless issue. Wishes City Council would not wait until the 9th year to implement a 10 year plan. This would free up police resources to handle safety issues. Stated being homeless is a culture and the culture needs to be changed. The Grand Jury in 2007/2008 suggested a plan to deal with these issues.

Poptanich: Commended the Department's grant writers and believes creativity will be needed now.

Mills: What does it mean when a police helicopter is hovering?

Lt Gross: Usually helicopters orbit in a circular pattern continuously when they are searching. They might be looking for a lost child, suspect, or providing a view of rooftops for officers on the ground.

Mills: As we see an increase in gang activity, what can average citizens do to be more proactive?

Lt Gross: Generally, they can be responsible by reporting crime, stepping forward as a witness when needed, participate in neighborhood watch, and get to know their neighbors.

Aubrey: Advised he is there to connect with the community and be a resource to explain police procedures. This is done with a two-prong approach. One is to speak with persons about issues they have with the police, and the other is to provide additional information for larger citizen groups.

Ryan: Discussed possible grant opportunities to include the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and even an unsolicited proposal to National Institute of Justice (NIJ).

Closing Remarks:

None

Adjourn:

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Next Meeting:

March 25, 2010