



Staff Report

BELMONT POLICE DEPARTMENT ANNUAL REPORT

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

Summary

This report is designed to share highlights of the work done by the Belmont Police Department during fiscal year 2010. The report is a summary designed to highlight meaningful events and milestones.

Background

Established in 1926, the Belmont Police Department is a full service agency. We take pride in our “Tradition of Service” motto, and in the synergistic relationship that we try to nurture with the community. Our community policing philosophy has deep roots in the organization. More than any specific program or unit, community policing and cooperative problem solving has become the model from which we operate on a daily basis.

Discussion

Through the efforts of the community, in partnership with Belmont Police Department staff, the City of Belmont continues to enjoy a relatively low crime rate. Below are some relevant statistics:

	<i><u>July '08 – June '09</u></i>	<i><u>July '09 – June '10</u></i>
Homicide	1	1
Rape	2	3
Robbery	9	9
Assault	95	97
Burglary	79	65
Theft	391	325
Auto Theft	52	37
Incidents requiring police action	23,272	23,171
Average incidents per day	63	63
Average emergency incidents per day	3	3
Average response time / emergency	4.5 mins	2.7 mins
Crime reports written	1,380	1,275
Collision investigations	200	275

Arrests 536 614

Burglary and thefts from vehicles were a significant concern for the past several years. Belmont Police Department staff made it a point to discuss this issue with several community groups in an attempt to better educate our citizens and increase our level of personal security. Neighborhood Watch groups have also served to unite the communities and increase communication. All of these facts may have contributed to a significant decline in burglaries (18%), thefts (17%), and stolen vehicles (29%) during the past year.

PARKING AND TRAFFIC

Parking and traffic enforcement continues to be an area of interest for our community. Our two motorcycle officers and two Community Service Officers work daily within a systematic process to focus enforcement where it is most requested and most effective. During this fiscal year, officers issued 3,566 moving citations, 62 administrative citations, and 2,106 parking citations.

While traffic volume continues to be an issue, Police Department resources available to monitor and regulate traffic have remained static or in some cases have been reduced. One of the most hazardous traffic violations is red light running. As a way of addressing these violations and freeing up limited officer resources for other enforcement issues, the department conducted extensive research into establishing an Automated Red Light Photo Enforcement Program. In May 2010, cameras were installed to monitor westbound Ralston Avenue at Old County Road and eastbound Ralston Avenue at El Camino Real. Though this program is in its infancy, it appears to be meeting the needs of the community. The system allows us to identify approximately eleven potential violations per day. Of those, we tend to dismiss approximately 38% for various reasons (poor quality photograph, unable to ID driver, questionable violations, etc.). The high quality violations are being cited into court at a rate of approximately seven per day, where only a small percentage of violators are challenging the citations. Of the 1,063 citations filed thus far, only 22 have been challenged by the violator, and the vast majority of those are being upheld by the courts.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Despite recent budget cuts, the Police Department continues to oversee a number of significant programs. Our School Resource Officers continue to run the GREAT Program (Gang Resistance Education and Training) as well as Project Safe Schools. In September, Chief Mattei hosted the fourth annual Safe Schools - Back to School Luncheon for all school principals.

CERT disaster preparedness continues to grow in usefulness and popularity. At the direction of the Belmont-San Carlos Fire Department, approximately 500 people, including dozens of City of Belmont employees, have been trained to assist our community in the event of a disaster. Neighborhood Watch and National Night Out are also gaining popularity in the city. In June, National Night Out grew to 5 individual neighborhood events citywide and the feedback was tremendous.

The Belmont Police Department has participated in the San Mateo County Pharmaceutical Disposal Program, since its inception in 2006. The program offers the public a convenient, viable and environmentally friendly alternative to flushing medicines into the wastewater stream or placing them in municipal landfills. Operating year round, the program provides the public with a way to legally dispose of all pharmaceuticals, including those defined as controlled substances. The pharmaceuticals are regularly collected from the Police Department, for incineration by a licensed hazardous waste disposal company. During this year, we collected approximately 1,896 lbs. of Pharmaceutical Waste that may have found its way into our waterways, or into the hands of our children.

REGIONAL EFFORTS

Regionally, Belmont Police Department members have been at the forefront of many projects such as local law enforcement's response to assisting those living with mental illness. We continue to provide Crisis Intervention Training for our officers. This program is coordinated with the assistance of local mental health professionals, and helps our officers develop the skills and resources to address these challenging cases. During this year we have noted an increase in the number of children who require police intervention due to mental illness. This is a disturbing trend that we are examining with the help of our mental health partners.

We have also taken an active role in the County's Gang Task Force, which resulted in the seizure of dozens of weapons and hundreds of arrests. Belmont Police officers also continue to participate in the Sheriff's Office regional SWAT team as trained operators, supervisors, and commanders. This participation, now over a decade old, provides Belmont with highly trained and experienced personnel who are better prepared for tactical operations within our city. Belmont Police Department personnel also played a significant role in the emergency response to the tragic fire in San Bruno. Dozens of staff members spent almost 200 hours at the scene from the moment of the blast until the Command Post was disbanded nearly two weeks later.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Opening lines of communication with the community remains a priority. Last year, at this time, we reported that Belmont Police Department had activated one of the first police Twitter sites in the County (www.twitter.com/belmontcapolice), and it has proven to be a useful tool. Since then, over 350 people and organizations have been linked with Belmont Police Department via Twitter. Staff has used this outlet to distribute press releases and send traffic and safety bulletins instantly.

Since our last report, we have also started posting daily Media Bulletins on the City website under the Police Department page. These links allow the media and citizens alike to review the daily activities of our officers and get a prompt perspective on the current events in our community.

At the request of our Neighborhood Associations, we recently added crime maps to the city website under “City Maps”. Under the Police section, citizens can now review criminal events reported in their neighborhoods and keep informed on current crime trends.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

Staffing is a key issue in our organization at this time. Currently, we are fully staffed considering that a Communications Supervisor and two Police Officer positions are frozen as part of the budget correction strategy. The effectiveness of our succession planning efforts will be tested very soon, as over 20% of the forty-two full time employees will soon be eligible for some level of retirement, and a good number of those expect to retire in 2011. Avoiding a potential staffing crisis and the associated economic and organizational impact is at the forefront of our mind. However, doing so during these fiscally complicated times will prove challenging.

Fiscal Impact

None

Public Contact

This item has been placed on the City Council agenda.

Recommendation

No formal action by the City Council is required.

Alternatives

1. Refer back to staff for further information.

Attachments

None

Respectfully submitted,

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