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## Orinda Police Chief gives update on low property crime in the city

By Sora O'Doherty

Compared to 2019 and 2020, property crime is down in the city of Orinda, according to Orinda Police Chief Ryan Sullivan, who gave a report to the City Council Subcommittee on Public Safety on Feb. 13. The report did not include crimes against the person.

In 2023 there were 23 residential burglaries, 12 commercial burglaries, and 20 automobile burglaries. Higher numbers were reported in 2019, when there were 29 residential burglaries and 46 automobile burglaries, although the high for commercial burglaries was 19 in 2021. Sullivan reported that the department has a good closure rate, with many burglaries solved and some still in court.

The rate of stolen vehicles was down from a high of 32 in 2021 to 24 in 2023, although 2019 and 2020 saw lower rates of 17 stolen vehicles for each of those years. Although the chief reported that five stolen vehicles were recovered in 2023, he added that not all of those vehicles had been stolen from within Orinda. In 2023, 151 suspects were arrested in Orinda. Most were not Orinda residents. Sullivan spoke about an arrest in a case where a check was stolen, washed, and cashed. The search warrant in that case yielded a lot of check equipment.

Sullivan also provided an update on personnel and equipment. Orinda has two new police officers, officer Nicholas Callejas and Officer Christopher Hamblin. Total staffing of the OPD includes the chief, a senior administrative assistant, an administrative sergeant, an investigations sergeant, a detective, a traffic officer, eight patrol officers, and a reserve officer. Patrol officers work three days a week for 12 hour shifts, day or night.

In 2023 the office purchased two Chevrolet Tahoes to replace two 2016 Ford Explorers, and another two older vehicles are being replaced this year as well.

Sullivan also talked about automatic license plate reader (ALPR) cameras in the city. Orinda, which has several ALPA cameras around the city, both mobile and stationary, is purchasing additional cameras for better coverage. There are also several privately owned ALPR cameras scattered throughout the city, Sullivan added. OPD vehicles are equipped with cameras and officers wear body-worn cameras.

Sullivan stressed the importance of good relations between the community and the police department. He spoke about the efforts being made by the department to have positive interactions with citizens. In 2023, the OPD hosted a National Night Out event at the police station and a Coffee with the Cops at the community center, in addition to participating in a campus safety and safe gun storage education night at Miramonte High School.

OPD has similar events planned for 2024, including a Lunch with Cops event at Orinda Intermediate School and Miramonte High School, and "Recess with the Cops" at the elementary schools. OPD will again host National Night Out and is planning monthly Coffee with the Cops events.

Orinda law requires that firearms be stored safely, and OPD offers free gunlocks. OPD will also take possession of and destroy any unwanted firearms and/or ammunition. An officer can come to your home to receive unwanted items, or you can bring them to the police department, but if you choose to bring them to the station, leave the items in your car until instructed otherwise by an officer.

Sullivan stressed the importance of neighborhood involvement. OPD Officer Johnson is assigned to Neighborhood Watch, and can be contacted at (925) 254-6820 by any neighbors who wish to form a Neighborhood Watch group. Neighbors looking out for any unusual activity, such as garage doors open when you know your neighbor is away, can help to prevent crimes or lead to the arrest of criminals.

Most importantly, Sullivan and the subcommittee members urged the public to communicate with OPD if they see anything suspicious, rather than posting to social media. For times when a member of the public doesn't feel it is appropriate to use the 911 emergency call line, Sullivan urged them to call the non-emergency dispatch number, (925) 646-2441.

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