

TOP OF THE HILL FORUM 13 April 2010

Information seminar on events in and around Newport, particularly concerning the Top of the Hill area

42 Attendees

Top of the Hill Community/Civic Committee Chairman Harry Elkin presided.

Guest Speakers:

Officer Jonathan Cortes - Community Oriented Police Unit (COP) Officer for most of Top of the Hill area (Touro to Kay Street, to Eustis Ave to Memorial Boulevard to Young Street)

phone: (401) 845-5862 or email: JCortes@cityofnewport.com

Sargeant John Barker - Traffic Unit Police Officer - City of Newport

Justin McLaughlin - Newport City Council Representative for 2nd ward encompassing TOH area
phone, email or visit to report and discuss a problem in the Top of the Hill neighborhood

Guest Attendees:

Edward Levallee - Newport City Manager

Officer James Winters - COP Officer for Top of Hill area encompassing the other side of Kay Street toward the Broadway area. phone: (401) 845-5863 or email: JWinters@cityofnewport.com

Jonathan Cortes & John Barker Discussion Topics

- Level of Crime in the Top of the Hill area and the community at large
- Noise, Boom Boxes, etc.
- Shoveling of Snow - Roads and Sidewalks
- Parking Regulations, especially in the Top of the Hill area

COP (Community Oriented Police Unit) Roles in the Community:

Prevent crimes and danger

Assigned to district schools and serve as school resource officers

Protect and improve quality of life issues:

parking

noise

parties

trash

educate residents and businesses about regulations

educate students in off-campus housing to supplement Salve Regina's own code of conduct for off-campus living

I. Level of crime in the Top of the Hill neighborhood

- Top of the Hill is a safe neighborhood

- #1 crime here is car break-ins:

- mostly occurs when cars left unlocked

- thieves look for easy targets to steal--goods they can turn over quickly

- crime deterrents:
 - lock cars
 - keep valuables out of view
 - always report break-ins/attempted break-ins even if nothing taken, or anything unusual or suspicious
 - a number of reports indicate a trend which will increase police presence and surveillance

II. Noise, Boom Boxes, Loud Mufflers, etc.

- Loud car stereos are a frequent nuisance
 - Change to a noise ordinance in 2004 enables tougher enforcement
 - Before 10 pm car stereos should not be plainly audible within 75 feet
 - After 10 pm car stereos should not be plainly audible within 25 feet
- Noisy mufflers on cars or motorcycles
 - mufflers exceeding state statute = \$85 ticket + a 5 day fix-it ticket
- Newport Police Department approach to this and most other enforcement:
 - first, education about the regulations and laws:
 - newspaper ads
 - variable message boards in town
 - seeking out affected groups
 - then enforcement:
 - publication of stop locations: residential & business
 - the word is out that Newport enforces noise ordinance and does not tolerate loud car stereos or noisy car/motorcycle exhaust pipes
- Copy of Regulation for radios, cassette and compact disk players and the like in public spaces and public rights of way, was distributed

III. Snow & Ice Removal

- Copy of codes regarding snow and ice removal, for owners, occupants or other persons having the care of any building, were distributed
- By 5 hours of daylight after snow stops falling, you are responsible to have your public sidewalks cleared, even if you are away
- Especially an issue for Access-ability Newport is to clear the walks wide enough for wheelchair navigation
- Child and Family Services gives COP officers a list of seniors who can't clean their walks
COP officers along with Salve Students will shovel their walks if possible

IV. Parking Regulations

- There is no 24 hour parking on the street in the city
 - If a vehicle on the street has not moved after a few days, call COP unit officer, who will chalk mark the tires
 - Then, if the vehicle is not moved after 24 hours, the COP will ticket the vehicle and will try to locate the registered owner and get them to move the vehicle.
 - Ticketed abandoned vehicles are subject to being towed in 3 days
- Parking at Intersections
 - No parking by yellow curbing or if posted no parking
 - Park 5 feet off from curb-cut for driveways
 - Park 5-15 feet from an intersection, or as posted

- Newport Police approach to parking violations:
 - First try get voluntary compliance, then enforcement
 - \$100 for illegal parking in a handicap space
 - Other parking violations = \$25 ticket
 - 24 Hour parking violation = \$25 ticket + tow charge (currently about \$110/tow)
- Other violations: Inspection non-compliance:
 - If inspection non-compliance for more than 5 days after being ticketed, vehicle registration will be suspended
 - If registration suspended then your vehicle insurance will be suspended, and you will be driving without insurance
 - Police cannot ticket parked vehicles for non-inspection, only moving vehicles

V. Other concerns:

- Notify department of other traffic concerns:
 - Stop Sign non-compliance - Officers will monitor the intersection for violations, for several weeks until situation is remedied or with periodic enforcement
 - Bicycle riding violations:
 - people 12 years or older are prohibited from riding on sidewalk or the wrong way on a one-way street
 - Police conduct education programs about bicycle regulations with high school students

VI. Other opportunities:

- City has a program available whereby you can ride with a city officer on his rounds

Justin McLaughlin Discussion Topics

- Condition of streets, especially after National Grid digs
- Trees and bushes impinging on public rights of way
- Graffiti
- Current happenings in the city that we in Top of the Hill should be aware of and monitor

Acknowledged attendance at this Forum of City Manager Ed Levallee

It is important to report issues to the appropriate city resources for action on a problem

I. Street Conditions

- A Pavement Condition Index has been assigned to each street in the city
- Be aware that the conditions of the utilities under each street have to be determined first, which delays or slows repair of a street
- Contact Justin for a list of streets slated to be resurfaced in the near future, or for any road problem
- Residents will be notified 2 weeks prior to start of resurfacing work
- \$35 million has been allocated for street repair within a 5 year period

II. Impinging trees and bushes

- Troublesome trees on public property - call Scott Wheeler
- Hedges impinging on sidewalk or street are a zoning issue - call Justin McLaughlin

III. Graffiti

- Call Kristin Littlefield, Clean City Coordinator or call Police Department
- Exceptions:
 - For Mailbox Graffiti - call Kristin Littlefield or Newport Post Office
 - City can't fix graffiti on private property, but can speak to private property manager

IV. Current happenings in the city that we in Top of the Hill should be aware of and monitoring

- Top 3 issues that Justin is most concerned about:
 - Do we build a new school? This is a \$35 million issue
 - Water improvement. How do we keep Newport water safe to drink?
This is a \$50-\$80 million issue
 - Our Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO's) are in violation of the federal Clean Water Act. This is an \$80-\$100 million issue to fix.
Decision point for this is 2010.
 - When the sewer plant can't handle all of the extra water from heavy rainfall, the overflow from the sewer plant flows into and contaminates Newport's bodies of water
- **All of these top 3 issues will require large expenditures to fix.**
Newport residents will have to make some tough decisions about allocating funds.
 - One such decision:
Fixing combined sewer overflows (CSO's) vs. providing clean, safe water to your home
It will be difficult for the city to afford both

Harry thanked the presenters and the audience for attending.

He reminded all to visit our Association website www.topofthehill.org

and to save the date of Sunday, 6 June 2010, 5-8 pm for the TOH Block Party.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Sunny Best, Top of the Hill Secretary