

## **BANKERS HILL COMMUNITY GROUP MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES**

Monday, Monday 18, 2019  
Bankers Hill Clubhouse, 3030 Front St.

BHCG Steering Committee member Susanne Carvalho called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. The following Steering Committee members were present: Jeanne Rawlings, John Lamb, Carvalho, Becky Veen, Ann Garwood and Nancy Moors. There were 42 people in attendance.

### **Announcements**

Volunteers were requested for the March 24 Bankers Hill Clubhouse luncheon.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Jeanne Rawlings announced the Bankers Hill Community Group has \$3,590.66 in the bank. She noted the group is still looking for public input on how best to spend the money. Garwood added that the padded chairs attendees were sitting in were paid for with a recent BHCG donation of \$500 to the Bankers Hill Clubhouse.

### **Non-Agenda Public Comment**

Friend of Maple Canyon Tershia d'Elgin thanked the group for its letter of support urging Mayor Kevin Faulconer to convince city staff to sign off on federal-disaster-funding approval so a restoration project, in collaboration with San Diego Canyonlands, can move forward this summer. She said nothing has changed so far, despite state and federal backing of the project. She urged attendees to write to the mayor's office voicing support.

Steven Whitburn spoke to attendees about his run for the District 3 seat on the San Diego City Council. The current councilmember, Chris Ward, has announced he's running for Gloria's Assembly seat in 2020. Gloria is running for San Diego mayor. Whitburn said he knows each neighborhood is unique but shares similar problems,

### **Government representatives**

Nick Serrano, representing state Assemblyman Todd Gloria, provided updates on a few of the approximately 2,000 bills he said are under consideration in the Legislature this year. Gloria's legislation related to the 2017-18 Hepatitis A outbreak in San Diego, Assembly Bill 262, would allow local health officers to issue directives to cities when trying to control a potential similar public-health emergency. The legislation would also require information sharing with cities affected. In addition, AB 1184 and AB 1555, also proposed by Gloria, would require public agencies to maintain email records for up to two years for public review and codify media outlet's right to listen to law-enforcement scanners, respectively. Serrano also invited attendees to an event honoring women of the 78<sup>th</sup> Assembly District and announced that this would be his last BHCG meeting as Gloria's field representative to take on more responsibility with the assemblyman's communications department. He introduced Javier Gomez, a University Heights resident, as the new local representative.

Maria Bojorquez-Gomez, the new staff assistant for Congresswoman Susan Davis, introduced herself. She talked about legislation that Davis is co-sponsoring.

### **Featured Speaker: San Diego Police Chief David Nisleit**

Chief Nisleit introduced acting Assistant Chief Scott Wahl. Nisleit said he's been with the San Diego Police Department for more than 31 years, serving in a variety of assignments. Starting as a patrol officer in Logan Heights during the height of the crack-cocaine epidemic, Nisleit said he was promoted up the ranks in the Mid-City Division from sergeant to captain. Spent 12 years on

the SWAT team. Worked undercover narcotics, sex crimes, internal affairs, gangs, robbery, homicide, vice. Before being promoted to assistant chief, Nisleit was commanding officer of robbery, gangs and homicide. He's been police chief for about a year, overseeing about 1,800 officers in a city of 1.4 million residents. Safest large city in the nation, declared by the FBI, adjacent to the world's most dangerous city, Tijuana, he said. In 2018, 35 homicides in San Diego, compared to 2,508 in Tijuana, mostly due to three cartels feuding to control the Tijuana Plaza. One of biggest money crops coming through the plaza is fentanyl, 100 times more potent than heroin, 10 times more potent than morphine. That's a huge crisis across this nation, he said. About 75 to 80 percent of that comes through the Tijuana Plaza. Most of it is not stopping in San Diego, instead heading to the Midwest or east. San Diego still has a methamphetamine problem, although no longer the meth capital of the world, Nisleit said. Most meth manufacturing is happening just south of the Mexico border. Marijuana is another cash crop. The chief mentioned legal dispensaries in the city, but he said the black market is still alive and a huge threat to San Diego. In 2018, San Diego did see some increases in rape, but he attributed it to the way rape is now defined. Also an increase in armed robberies and aggravated assaults and more and more gun violence. In 2017, about 40 percent of city homicides involved guns. In 2018, that number jumped to 60 percent. Seeing more and more folks shot, much of it happening in southeastern San Diego. Major increase in shootings there, he said. San Diego has about 3,500 gang members representing about 65 gangs in the city. Down from his gang-chasing days, when there were 5,000 members and 82 documented gangs. Nisleit said he expects those numbers to continue decreasing.

Nisleit said homelessness is really driving a lot of things in the department. Homelessness affects every neighborhood, and it's why Nisleit said he established the Neighborhood Policing Division, headed by acting Asst. Chief Wahl.

The police chief said "if you want a job, I'm hiring." He said he oversees a department in the 8<sup>th</sup>-largest U.S. city with the lowest per-capita police force. He said it means the department makes great hires, trains them well and works well with citizens to prevent crime.

He then took questions from attendees. He confirmed he is a native San Diegan, growing up in Bay Park, City Heights and Rolando. His father was a 36-year SDPD veteran. His son, referred to as "Little Baby Teeth," works in Central Division on day watch.

Nisleit was asked if there are resources for mental-health treatment for homeless individuals. He said money is being requested at all levels of government. But he said there are half the beds available now than when he first started on the force in 1988. He said from his experience the homeless problem is driven by drugs and mental illness. He said in places like Seattle and San Francisco where "you decriminalize everything, there's no incentive for help." He said it's driving property crime to feed their habits. Theft is on the rise across the country. In San Diego, too, he said. He said the county is being asked to address those issues and double PERT (Psychiatric Emergency Response Team) clinicians that assist officers with mentally distressed individuals.

One attendee said he was surprised to learn when he moved near Balboa Park that the park has no official hours of operation. Parking along Sixth Avenue, he said, is not well regulated. He wondered if it would be helpful for the park to be closed from 2 to 5 a.m. to give time to patrol the park. Nisleit said that would be a policy decision by the City Council, but it would "give us tools" to address problems in the park after hours. "It would be a good tool for us," he said, explaining it would give officers immediate probable cause to contact individuals still in the park.

Nisleit was asked about police academies. He said four are held annually. But he said over the next five years, more than 500 officers will retire. The attrition rate last year was 14 officers retiring per month. Currently, it's at 10. Hiring is going up. Currently, 78 officers are in early training. Another 82 officers are in field training, he said.

The police chief was asked what's the best way to report non-emergency crimes, for example a stunt bicyclist damaging areas in Balboa Park. Nisleit said that would be a low-priority call, adding the city needs more park rangers.

A resident asked if increased paperwork is keeping officers off the streets and hiring low and whether others can do the paperwork. Nisleit said reports have to be written by the observer of the crime scene. He did say he'd like to see a new classification of "transport officers" who would take suspects to jail. That alone would reduce by an hour or two the time an officer is out of service, Nisleit said.

He said young people he's spoken to don't want to become police officers because of "all the second-guessing," including on the legislative front. He singled out a bill from Assemblywoman Shirley Weber that would change use-of-force criteria where "if we shoot somebody with a replica firearm, she wants to charge us with murder. Who wants to do this job?" With that said, Nisleit added, "I'd do it all over."

He urged attendees to thank police officers for their service, particularly the younger ones.

One attendee asked if it's true if SDPD trains some officers and then loses them to the better-paying county Sheriff's Department. Nisleit said a study determined that SDPD pay ranked last out of 19 law-enforcement agencies in the region. A pay raise last year has helped boost that ranking, but upcoming negotiations with the city "will be critical" to maintaining ranks.

Moors asked if statistics show whether crime has dropped since the introduction of legal cannabis dispensaries and whether Nisleit had an opinion on so-called cannabis lounges. On the latter, the police chief said, "Yeah, I don't endorse it." He said he had little to say about legal dispensaries because there are so few of them, but he argued the illegal market is driving crime. He said the department is also fighting delivery services. At one time, he said, 200 illegal delivery companies operated out of the city. That number, he added, has been reduced to less than 100. Armed robberies of delivery services are a problem, Nisleit noted.

The police chief said he believes that cannabis is a "gateway drug," based on his years of law-enforcement experience. He did admit that he does get some pushback on that position. He claimed traffic fatalities in Washington and Colorado, where cannabis is legal, "went out of the roof."

Chief Nisleit and Asst. Chief Wahl spent the rest of their time fielding questions about San Diego's homeless crisis. Wahl said it was too early to tell if the new Connect Hillcrest service would be successful in alleviating the growing homeless population there, but added he welcomed additional outreach and new ideas. He said such outreach efforts were non-existent when he started on the force 20 years ago. So far, only one in 10 individuals contacted by police request services and help, Wahl said. SDPD partners with more than two-dozen service providers, and Wahl asserted that it is a national model of partnerships and outreach.

Wahl said the police will continue to clear encampments, intent on preventing another contagious outbreak and widespread public intoxication. He agreed that such practices can push the homeless into other neighborhoods, including Bankers Hill, but he insisted that such displacements are better managed now. Communities with the highest percentage of homeless, Wahl said, include East Village and the Sports Arena/Midway area.

Both Nisleit and Wahl agreed that more mental-health facilities are needed in the city as well as safe parking lots for people who live in their cars.

Wahl urged residents to use the "Get It Done" phone app to report non-emergency crimes. Wahl said it is the "best method" to communicate with police.

When asked if police could help remove parked cars along Fourth Avenue to permit better street cleaning, Nisleit said that is a subject best handled at the City Council level. "I'm 187 officers short right now," the chief said.

The police chief had a final message for the audience: "Be our eyes and ears."

Meeting adjourned at 8 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by John Lamb, interim Secretary.