

General Meeting Summary

It was standing room only as 136 residents attended the general meeting on Monday, January 24 in the cafeteria of Cory Elementary School. We had a triple play in store for them: Councilmember Ken Yeager, San Jose Police Chief Robert Davis, and Sonja Shurr, from the San Jose Unified School District. With a lineup like this you knew there were going to be some heated discussions.

Ken Yeager, Councilmember of District 6, went first and told us he is always amazed at how large our attendance is and how active the residents are in our community. He gave us updates in the district, said he was working with schools superintendent Don Iglesias regarding Cory being closed and is working with the police in regards to the recent crime spree. He then introduced Police Chief Robert Davis.

Chief Davis found the attendance gratifying because active communities deter crime. He could see we are an active community. He touched on the recent crime spree in the area but said Sergeant Robert Mendiola, SJPD would give the details. Chief Davis said that although there have been nine reports of crime in our neighborhood, this number is very low compared to the rest of the city. He said that right across the street in Santa Clara they had 25 reports of crime in the same timeframe. For four years in a row San Jose has been recognized as the safest city in America with over 500,000 people. He joked that San Diego was the safest city in America with over 1,000,000 people but that we would take that title away from them if 60,000 more people move to San Jose. He said our crime would have to go up 40% for us to lose the number one position and he doesn't see that happening.

He talked about the SJPD website and how you can get information regarding crime in your neighborhood. By clicking on an interactive map of San Jose in the area of your interest, crime statistics of that area would be displayed. You can even break the timeline down to years, months or weeks. He then introduced Sergeant Robert Mendiola, who is working the recent crime spree in our neighborhood.

Sergeant Mendiola went over the recent crime spree. Homes in the Redbush area were getting burglarized. Neighbors were having police reports done and talking with people in the community about what to do. One resident, Elizabeth Leonard, saw a man moving stuff out the front door of a neighbor's house. She didn't recognize the man so she called the police and they investigated. It turns out this was the robber, who was on parole from past robberies which he did in the same neighborhood. But the police didn't stop there. They continued their investigation and caught another man with stolen goods in his car. This was the accomplice who would fence the stolen goods. Sgt. Mendiola felt the SJPD had busted the crime ring and the string of robberies would end. Since these two arrests, no robberies have occurred in that area.

The next speaker was Kim Gaddis of the Crime Prevention Unit of the SJPD. She explained how the Neighborhood Watch Program worked. She brought handouts and stayed afterwards for questions but her main focus was explaining how to start a watch program. The first thing you have to do is get to know your neighbors. How many in their family, who are normal people that visit, normal times when they are home, how to contact them if someone strange is near their home. These are all things you should know about your neighbors and they should know about you. Since a watch program is

street by street, these questions should be known of all the neighbors on that street and not just the neighbors next door.

Carrie Holmberg, secretary of the Cory Neighborhood Association, introduced Sonja Shurr of the San Jose Unified School District to talk about Cory Elementary and the school closures. While Cory is high on this list for closure it is not definite. There is another public meeting on Thursday, February 3. Now it gets interesting! Let's assume that Cory does get closed, what happens then? Some thoughts were to sell the school but that might hurt in the long term. So they would lease it and it would go to the highest bidder. But that can cause problems in the community, such as traffic, noise and safety hazards.

So the SJUSD has gone to the state and asked for a waiver. This waiver would allow SJUSD to choose who would lease out the school and not just give it to the highest bidder. This way a tenant can be picked who will better fit the neighborhood. The second part of Ms Shurr's speech was about the 7/11 committee. This committee is in charge of what happens to the school after it has been closed. The problem with this committee is that there is no representation from the Cory neighborhood. This brought about some heated discussion. Ms Shurr guaranteed us she would keep us informed via Carrie Holmberg and at any time we could contact her with questions.

Ken Braly, president of Cory Neighborhood Association, came up and talked about changes to the association's bylaws. One change that got approved was the number of people on the board of directors. Instead of having 7 to 9 people on the board, it was changed to 5 to 11 people. This way in lean years we can still have a board, but in bonus years we can capitalize on our good fortune. The other change was tabled for more discussion. This change is for signing of association checks. Currently the rules say two signatures are needed on each check and the change would be to require only one signature. Since all the checks have to go through the board for approval anyway it seemed redundant to have to do it again when signing the checks. But the discussion made it clear that this proposal needed further study.

Other announcements were the winners of the holiday showcase, street captain update, next traffic committee meeting (Wednesday, February 9), and the upcoming yard sale this summer. Ken went on to acknowledge all the volunteers for their efforts in keeping this a great community and especially for Werner Field, the Volunteer of the Year. The meeting was then adjourned and we look forward to seeing all of you and more at the next general meeting in April.