



## Council Agenda Report

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**Department Name:** Police Department  
**Cost Center:** 8001  
**For Agenda of:** May 4, 2021  
**Placement:** Consent  
**Estimated Time:** N/A

**FROM:** Brian Amoroso, Acting Chief of Police

**SUBJECT:** POLICE DEPARTMENT 2019/2020 CRIME COMPARISON AND UPDATE

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Receive and file the 2020 Police Department crime report.

### **REPORT-IN-BRIEF**

On May 4th, staff will provide the City Council with a presentation (Attachment A) and update regarding Police Department activities for 2020. This update will provide Council with information regarding community outreach, crime, police operations, homelessness, traffic, noise and downtown.

At the conclusion of 2020, the Police Department saw a 10% increase in violent crime and a 7% decrease in property crime, with a 5% decrease in Part I crime overall. The presentation that will be presented on May 4<sup>th</sup> will highlight the department's efforts with intelligence led and community policing efforts, review some of the challenges the department faced in 2020, detail some of the reasons San Luis Obispo experienced changes in crimes, discuss the Police Department's continued community outreach, review noise related calls for service, and briefly discuss some of the continued challenges faced in 2021.

At the beginning of FY 2021, police staffing was at 91.5 FTEs. Staffing remained static through 2020, however the FTEs have recently been reduced by one Cannabis Detective position (90.5 FTEs) as the City transitions Cannabis application and processing to an outside entity.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Community Outreach:**

The Police Department is incredibly fortunate to have a community in San Luis Obispo that understands many of the challenges and routinely partners with the City to foster a positive public relation and to establish a safer community. One of the Police Department's primary goals is to reduce harm. SLOPD reduce harm by reducing crime and victimization, reducing traffic collisions, and increasing multi-modal safety, strengthening our regional partnerships, strengthening the health and well-being of our employees, and strengthening the relationship with the community SLOPD serves.

To meet our goal of reducing harm by strengthening our community/police relationship, we started the PACT (Police and Community Together) in January 2017. PACT represents a committed and diverse group of community members/advocates that partner with law enforcement to affect positive social change through dialogue, education and understanding. Currently, PACT has representation from major groups representing the Jewish, Black, Latino, Muslim, LGBTQ, Interfaith, Student and Homeless/Mentally Ill communities. The police department has Officers that serve as liaisons to each of these groups, then report back monthly to each other about what each group is working on. The liaisons connect with and learn about their respective communities, then serve as a conduit between the police department and the community. Additionally, the community works with law enforcement to develop training that is important for law enforcement to experience, and in turn, SLPD can educate them about policing.

In 2020, SLOPD continued the partnership with the Homeless Services Oversight Council (HSOC), Transitions Mental Health, County Behavioral Health, and the Sheriff's Office to address concerns surrounding homelessness and impacts within our community. The HSOC has proven to be a successful endeavor as the department all look for reasonable, fair, and common-sensed solutions to homelessness county-wide.

Lastly, police officers assigned to neighborhoods continued to attend neighborhood outreach meetings to discuss current issues and neighborhood safety. Outreach was already in place, such as the neighborhood officer program, neighborhood outreach and civility effort and Cal Poly partnerships, and those have and will continue to grow. The COVID-19 pandemic created challenges in the neighborhoods as many families social distanced by staying at home and the public health orders prohibited gatherings for most of the year. SLOPD anticipates that the second half of 2021 will be a busy time as life returns to normal activity.

### **Crime:**

Overall, SLOPD has had continued success with intelligence led policing efforts. The City of San Luis Obispo experienced an unprecedented increase in crime since 2015 (21% from 2014 to 2015), and that trend continued in 2016 (11% from 2015 to 2016). After starting a part time crime analyst in 2017, SLO realized a 13% reduction in Part I crime from 2016 to 2017. Based on the success of the part-time Public Safety Analyst, the Council authorized and funded a fulltime benefited position, which began in early 2019. The Department's Crime Analyst has continued to focus attention on high-crime places and high-rate offenders to effectively reduce crime within the community. The analyst continues to help SLOPD staff and officers understand when, where, and how to focus limited resources, as well as how to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies. Sound public safety analysis has been paramount to the success. In 2020, the Crime Analyst continued to work closely with City GIS to further refine the weekly crime reports and dashboard to convey near real-time analysis of violent and property crimes, interactive mapping, and case summaries. This dashboard has been very successful and was made available to the public in 2020 via the City's website.

By the end of 2020, SLO realized a 10% increase in violent crime and a 7% decrease in property crime, with a 5% decrease overall. Throughout 2020, SLOPD saw an 11% decrease in the number of reported sexual assaults over 2019. The trend reflects the results of the pandemic and is likely attributed to a lack of dating and celebratory opportunities due to the public health orders and the closure of the restaurant and bar scene for a large portion of the year.

In 2020 SLOPD saw a 9% increase in the number of residential burglaries, while commercial burglaries saw a slight 1% decrease. This is likely due to the pandemic with persons spending more time at home and less activities in commercial districts and establishments.

SLOPD continued to receive complaints regarding adverse homeless behavior in the downtown, City parks and other facilities and in the creeks and open space. Many of these behaviors can be attributed to substance abuse, mental illness, or a combination of both. In 2018 SLOPD added a full-time mental health specialist to the Community Action Team (CAT). Transitions Mental Health Association (TMHA) was awarded the contract from County Behavioral Health and worked with SLOPD to hire John Klevins. At the conclusion of 2020, after a second year of collaboration, SLO downtown had a 23% decrease over 2019 in calls for service and a 16% reduction in Downtown Homeless calls for service.

The COVID-19 pandemic is directly responsible for many of the call for service and crime trends seen in 2020. The City of San Luis Obispo was all but shut down for several months, which resulted in reduced calls for service, especially downtown. During the height of the pandemic, officers were responding to priority calls for service, but were not conducting proactive enforcement as the Police Department balanced continued enforcement with the need to maintain a healthy officer core to respond to emergencies. Conversely, officers responded to numerous public health calls regarding business operations, social gatherings, and mask regulations. The Police Department has continued to work closely with Code Enforcement and City Leadership to educate the public as to the evolving orders, rules and regulations as they relate to COVID-19.

Although starting the year fully staffed, the department suffered a decrease in staffing due to retirements, COVID leave including quarantine and illness, and numerous long-term on-duty injuries. Several specialty units have been operating at a reduced staffing level including CAT, Special Enforcement Team (SET) and the Traffic Unit.

Hiring to fill vacancies has continued to be extremely challenging for the Police Department. Like many law enforcement agencies, the department is having difficulty recruiting lateral employees. Hiring/retention continues to be a major challenge for both sworn officers and civilian communications personnel.

SLOPD has completed a recruitment video, strengthened the outreach on Social Media and within communities outside of SLO County, and implemented a hiring bonus for out of county laterals. Despite these efforts, the department saw several Officers accept jobs at other Law Enforcement agencies. SLOPD anticipates sending up to six new cadets to the Police Academy in June 2020 with an expected graduation of 12/2020.

## PART 1 CRIMES

### Violent Crime

	2019	2020	
	1st Half		% change
Homicide	0	0	0%
Rape	18	19	5%
Robbery	17	17	0%
Agg. Assault	58	73	26%

Total 1st Half	93	109	17%
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	2nd Half		% change
Homicide	0	1	100%
Rape	21	18	-14%
Robbery	17	11	-35%
Agg. Assault	56	66	18%

Total 2nd Half	94	96	2%
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Total Year Violent	187	205	10%
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### Property Crime

	2019	2020	
	1st Half		% change
Commercial Burglary	104	84	-19%
Residential Burglary	51	40	-18%
Theft from Vehicle	243	184	-24%
Stolen Vehicle	27	46	70%
General Theft	493	392	-20%

Total 1st Half	918	746	-18%
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	2nd Half		% change
Commercial Burglary	69	87	26%
Residential Burglary	53	73	38%
Theft from Vehicle	191	208	9%
Stolen Vehicle	47	71	51%
General Theft	460	435	-5%

Total 2nd Half	820	874	7%
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Total Year Property	1738	1620	-7%
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	2019	2020	% Change
Total Part I Crime	1925	1825	-5%

## Police Operations:

### Records:

In the Records Division, the number of reports processed went from 6,828 in 2019 to 5,685 in 2020. (17% decrease) The number of citations processed by the Records Division decreased from 4,683 in 2019 to 3,215 in 2020. (31% decrease) The number of Public Records Act requests increased, from 61 in 2019 to 66 in 2020.

**Property:**

In the Property Division, the number of Evidence Items booked increased from 7,294 in 2019 to 7,551 in 2020. (3.5% increase) Discovery Orders processed increased from 666 in 2019 to 939 in 2020. (41% increase). WatchGuard video recorded decreased from 74,294 in 2019 to 54,877 in 2020. (26% decrease) WatchGuard Video/Cases booked in as evidence increased from 1083 in 2019 to 1253 in 2020. (16% increase) The numbers are by case number, not by the number of videos in each case, which can be upwards of 10-15 videos per case.

**Dispatch:**

In the Communications Center staff saw an increase regarding the number of calls into the center. The number of calls received decreased by 6%, from 111,193 in 2019 to 104,636 in 2020. Calls for service increased by 1% from 37,943 in 2019 to 38,289 in 2020. Dispatch has had several vacancies throughout 2020 due to retirements and resignations. The department recently started training one new Dispatcher and a second is expected to complete the hiring process by the end of May 2020.

**Investigations:**

In the Investigations Bureau, the number of cases assigned for follow up by an Investigator went up from 276 in 2019 to 303 in 2020. (10% increase). The Special Enforcement Team (SET – four Officers) has been staffed at 75% capacity for 2020, and they have handled multiple complex investigations and special enforcement objectives including the resolution of a house in the downtown causing significant disruption to the neighborhood due to illegal narcotic activity. In 2020, the Investigations Bureau also had three of the five investigator positions turnover and start new in the unit, requiring additional training time to become a proficient investigator.

**Staffing:**

During 2020, the Police Department lost approximately 16,716 hours due to illness, vacation, on-duty injuries, and other assorted leave types. This total equates to a loss of eight officers for the year. The average uniformed officer handles roughly 900 calls for service per year assuming full staffing levels.

**Homelessness:**

This past year the police department responded to numerous complaints regarding the increase in transient camp occupancies and locations. In addition, City Park facilities have become an area of concern as homeless individuals have attempted to camp in the parks, erecting tents and other structures. The Community Action Team, City Rangers and patrol officers increased their presence in known transient camp locations and parks to enforce violations committed in their presence. The challenge law enforcement often faces is when there is no law or city code violation being committed, but there is considerable nuisance behavior. Being homeless in a space open to the public is not a crime. SLOPD has continued to educate and encourage the public and business owners to contact the police department when they observe violations being committed.

COVID-19 created additional challenges throughout the year as several court rulings and statewide guidelines prevented the booking of low-level offenders in County Jail and halted most of the camp cleanups, causing friction between homeless individuals and advocates and other city residents.

In evaluating calls for service pertaining to the homeless population during 2020 (to include contacts as suspects, victims or witnesses) these contacts increased by 312 for a total increase of 4% compared to 2019. In 2020 the police departments overall calls for service increased by the same 4%. Homeless related calls for service accounted for 22% of all calls for service citywide, equal to the percentage last year.

### **Traffic:**

The Police Department saw a significant systemic decrease in traffic related issues for 2020. Vehicle collisions decreased by 51%, pedestrian involved collisions decreased 39%, and collisions involving bicycles decreased 48%. SLOPD has continued to focus on public outreach related to bicycle safety and primary collision factors related to these accidents. The reduction in vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle collisions in 2020 correlates to the COVID-19 pandemic and the stay-at-home order and shutdown of most businesses and services throughout the City.

In 2020, SLOPD received a grant through the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) which funded 10 saturation patrols, 4 traffic enforcement operations, 4 distracted driving operations, 2 bicycle/pedestrian operations and one DUI Checkpoint. Most of the OTS grant activities were modified to solo patrol activities to comply with COVID-19 restrictions and ensure the safety of our staff. Traffic and patrol continue to collaborate with Public Works to examine collision prone locations in our City to address through education, enforcement, and engineering efforts. In 2020, there was a 38% decrease in traffic citations issued and a 44% decrease in warnings. In 2020 there were 5,155 traffic stops completed, compared to 8,853 in 2019, a 42% decrease. One traffic Officer position was vacant due to staffing for the entirety of 2020, and the department had severely limited staffing and proactive patrols due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These factors drastically reduced the amount of time and effort our Officers spent on traffic enforcement. DUI arrests decreased by 50% in 2020, from 226 to 114, largely attributed to the extended shutdown of the bars and restaurants in the City. Although the reduction in collisions and DUI's is great news, the numbers are likely to rise significantly in 2021 as the City experiences a more "normal" year in terms of population and visitors.

### **Noise:**

Party related noise complaints increased by 24% in 2020. This increase marks the first year that SLOPD has seen an increase after three straight years of decreases and an all-time low in party related noise complaints since tracking began in 1998. This increase is attributed to a variety of factors, primarily the suspension of the party registration program and factors related to COVID-19. 2020 saw many residents sheltering and working from home and generally spending much more time in the residence.

With more people being at home, there was a greater likelihood of noise being generated and a lower tolerance for noise as residents followed the public health guidance to prevent the spread of the virus.

The Police Department continued efforts building upon past initiatives and campus partnerships. Police Department staff continued to participate in a virtual summer orientation for incoming Cal Poly Freshmen and parents. These virtual presentations provided staff with the opportunity to “front load” incoming students and their supporters with information on living in SLO, city laws that are important to know and how to stay safe. Although most classes were virtual in 2020, there were many students that moved back to San Luis Obispo for the year but attended classes online.

Neighborhood officers continue to be engaged in community outreach, providing education, and conducting problem-oriented policing at locations before calls for service are generated. Neighborhood officers also visit properties that have had multiple noise violations to help educate residents and encourage wise social event planning.

A wide variety of messaging methods are used by the police department to reach residents: social media ads, doorhangers, posters/flyers, e-blasts, presentations, media releases and participation in the Student Community Liaison Committee (SCLC).

Lastly, the partnerships with Cal Poly and Cuesta College continue to provide many more opportunities for the noise and neighborhood wellness messaging. Information shared is dispersed through many different avenues including, student government, housing, Greek life, athletics, clubs, and off-campus programs.

### **Downtown:**

Downtown calls for service decreased by 23% in 2020. As previously mentioned, the department operated with several shortages in Motors and CAT units for portions of the year. Downtown will continue to be a priority for Bicycle Officers, CAT and all of patrol. In 2020, the department saw a 30% decrease in officer-initiated calls and a 45% decrease in downtown officer-initiated calls, which is directly attributed to the COVID-19 related shutdown and our direction to Officers to minimize proactive contact with the public to ensure emergency response readiness. Officers worked over 70 protests, rallies and marches throughout the year, ensuring public safety and the protection of the freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.

Downtown officers continue to utilize crime prevention through environmental design techniques while partnering with Public Works and local businesses to improve conditions such as lighting, landscape, building maintenance, fencing, programming, and traffic flow. By addressing some of these issues the city and local businesses can deter criminal activity. Currently there are 17 public cameras placed throughout the City, with the majority used in the downtown core and City parks, and three new cameras added this year covering the Jennifer St bridge and the new safe parking area next to the Railroad Museum.

**Conclusion:**

2020 proved to be an extremely challenging year for Law Enforcement as the department had to balance providing emergency services, maintaining a safe work environment for our employees, educating, and enforcing constantly changing public health order regulations and supporting community needs including several months of protests and rallies. Our staff has worked tirelessly throughout the year to ensure San Luis Obispo is safe and ready to rise out of the pandemic well-positioned for recovery.

Crime will continue to be a major priority for SLOPD. After significant increases in crime that peaked in 2016, the implementation of numerous crime reduction initiatives and community programs have resulted in a 19% decrease in Part 1 crime over the last 4 years. Property crimes continue to be a significant issue within the city, and throughout the state. Theft from unsecured vehicles and residences continue to be a problem within the city. Continued education has helped with decreasing the trend, which SLOPD will continue throughout 2021. These measures will include directed patrols targeted at problem locations, utilization of stings and undercover operations to catch criminals engaged in or looking for crimes of opportunity and using print media, social media, and community meetings to educate our citizens to reduce victimization and increase awareness.

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

The public will be allowed to submit comments in writing prior to the meeting regarding this item. No other public engagement was completed.

**CONCURRENCES**

None.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The California Environmental Quality Act does not apply to the recommended action in this report, because the action does not constitute a "Project" under CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15378.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Budgeted: Yes  
2020-21

Budget Year: 2019-20 &

Funding Identified: Yes

The Police Department is funded through the General Fund's annual budget appropriation adopted by the City Council. All efforts within the report are covered through the annual program allocations as outlined in the City's Financial Plan.



## **ALTERNATIVES**

***The City Council could choose not to receive and file the report.*** This is not recommended as the report provides a record of key crime related statistics and trends that are important for policy makers and the public to be aware of in our community.

### **Attachments:**

**a - COUNCIL READING FILE - 2020 Crime Update**