



BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

AB 6244
May 2, 2023
Study Session

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

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| TITLE: | AB 6244: Police Department Annual Report | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution |
| RECOMMENDED ACTION: | Receive report. No action necessary. | |

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| DEPARTMENT: | Police |
| STAFF: | Ed Holmes, Police Chief Mike Seifert, Operations Commander Jeff Magnan, Services Commander Chad Schumacher, Marine Patrol Sergeant Dominic Amici, Detective Sergeant |
| COUNCIL LIAISON: | n/a |
| EXHIBITS: | n/a |
| CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY: | n/a |

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| AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE | \$ n/a |
| AMOUNT BUDGETED | \$ n/a |
| APPROPRIATION REQUIRED | \$ n/a |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda bill is to highlight the activities of the Mercer Island Police Department (“Department”) in 2022. The report will focus on three areas:

- The “Who We Are” section will focus on the Department’s organizational structure, staffing, and training.
- The “What We Did” section will focus on general statistics, community outreach and partnerships, crime prevention, use of force, and de-escalation. This section will also highlight the Marine Patrol program.
- The “How Our Community Responded” section will highlight the support the Department has received from the community.

BACKGROUND

The Police Department provides an annual report summarizing the highlights of the previous year. The report includes information on personnel changes, patrol activity, investigations, use of force, records work, and community outreach.

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

WHO WE ARE

The Department has two divisions: Operations and Services. The Operations Division includes Patrol, Marine Patrol, and Special Teams. The Services Division includes Detectives, Police Records, Public Records, Evidence, Training, and Personnel.

In 2022, four employees left the Department; two departures were due to retirements, one was due to a relocation out of state, and one officer resigned while still on probation. During this same time, five new officers were hired to fill these four vacant positions as well as a vacancy from 2021. The hiring process has a number of steps designed to bring the best candidates forward to serve this community.

The Department continued its commitment to ensuring all the personnel are well trained. Officers attended over 2,000 hours of training, including classes on use of force, de-escalation, anti-biased policing, legal updates, autism awareness, special teams, and leadership development.

WHAT WE DID

Police Legislation

Command staff monitored new police legislation proposed during the 2022 legislative session. The following bills passed, and adjusted some of the police reform bills that were passed during the 2021 session.

- [HB 1735](#) Specifically allowed officers to once again use a reasonable amount of force to take someone into protective custody if the person is suffering from a mental health crisis.
- [HB 2037](#) Defined “physical force” as any act reasonably likely to cause physical pain or injury or any other act exerted upon a person’s body to compel, control, constrain, or restrain the person’s movement. Physical force does not include pat downs, incidental touching, verbal commands, or compliant handcuffing where there is no physical pain or injury.
- [HB 1719](#) Modified the prohibition on the use of military equipment. The bill still prohibited rifles of .50 caliber or greater (and a list of other military equipment) but allowed for other types of less lethal munitions that are .50 caliber or greater.

Command staff and the City Manager continue to monitor the bills proposed in the 2023 state legislative session.

Operations Division

Patrol

Patrol officers were very busy with proactive patrols and responding to calls for assistance. In 2022, officers:

- Responded to 11,919 calls for service ranging from simple theft cases to robbery and assault cases.
- Investigated 355 larceny cases including theft, mail theft, and motor vehicle prowls and 59 reported burglaries.
- Wrote 940 citations and made 210 arrests.

The Automatic License Plate Readers (ALPRs) continue to assist officers with identifying stolen vehicles and wanted individuals. The ALPR system also helps with the enforcement of parking violations.

The officers also continued to work with the City's ordinance that governs the use of public property. Officers maintained a compassionate approach when encountering people who were experiencing or potentially experiencing homelessness. No arrests have been made nor have any citations for violations of this ordinance been issued, but rather, this ordinance has been used as a way to get people connected to the resources they need. The officers are also able to call the outreach workers from two area shelters to streamline getting people the help they need.

Use of Force

The Department is well-trained in the use of force and continues to emphasize an approach to training that seeks to integrate de-escalation principles and tactics in all areas of policing. During 2022, there were only seven times when officers had to use some degree of force to gain compliance. All of these incidents involved a very low level of force, for example controlling someone's arms and legs to allow for the proper application of handcuffs. One of these incidents involved the officers displaying their firearms during a high-risk vehicle stop. The amount of force used by officers during these incidents was reviewed by the Operations Commander and the Chief, and deemed appropriate, justified, and within policy.

The Department continues to participate as a member of the Independent Force Investigation Team (IFIT) that investigates officer – involved shootings or serious applications of force. The Chief serves on the Executive Board and Sgt. Amici serves as an investigator. As a reminder, if a Mercer Island Police Officer is involved in an incident that warrants the activation of the IFIT, Mercer Island will not have any role in the ensuing investigation.

Marine Patrol

The Marine Patrol program provides service to Mercer Island, Renton, Bellevue, Medina, Hunts Point, and in 2023 began providing service to Yarrow Point as well. Most of the patrol officers are trained to operate the marine patrol vessels, so the Department can respond to emergencies throughout the year. The Marine Patrol Unit was exceptionally busy during 2022, responding to 325 calls for service including four vessel collisions with one fatality. The team also completed 270 vessel safety inspections. The annual Seafair event was a very busy weekend for the team, during which they made 21 arrests for boating under the influence. Despite the busy event, there were no drownings or major injuries that weekend.

The Marine Patrol supervisor, Sgt. Schumacher, became a state-certified marine patrol trainer. He now teaches classes to officers from across the state. His expertise has proven very valuable for Mercer Island's program.

Services Division

Records and Evidence

The Records staff processed close to 1,100 case reports and responded to approximately 600 public records requests. Staff also participated in the Drug Takeback event and was instrumental in the installation of the takeback bin in the police lobby. Oversight of property and evidence kept the Evidence Technician busy, especially managing the destruction of almost 400 items of evidence as per the state's destruction schedule.

Community Outreach

Outreach efforts continue to be a priority for the staff, particularly through the Department's social media platforms. The community is kept apprised of cases of interest, upcoming events, and introductions of the new officers. Recruiting new officers remains a priority for the Department, so staff focused efforts on attracting highly qualified candidates to consider working for the Department.

The Department continued community outreach via a number of events to include Coffee with a Cop, Battle of the Badges, Paws on Patrol, and National Night Out. The slow transition to in-person events has been particularly helpful in making personal connections with the community.

Emergency Management and Crime Prevention

The City's Emergency Manager/Crime Prevention Officer was very busy keeping emergency plans up to date, and training the City's volunteer teams on Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) courses, Emergency Well training, the Map Your Neighborhood program, and hosting Emergency Management informational booths. Managing the COVID-19 pandemic response continued to take staff resources, as did the preparation of the cooling center during heat events.

Detectives and School Resource Officer

The detective section was busy following up on criminal cases, and they welcomed their new School Resource Officer, Foster Barragan. SRO Barragan spent time meeting the students and staff and serving as a resource on matters related to juveniles.

Special Operations Team

The Special Operations Team participated in training sessions to maintain proficiency in responding to incidents that may require advanced tactics or specialized systems like Patrol Bikes.

HOW OUR COMMUNITY RESPONDED

Support from the Mercer Island community remains very strong. Community members routinely express their appreciation by dropping off baked goods and other treats, bringing in dinners around the holidays, and sharing their thanks via written expressions of their gratitude. Such support has a very positive impact on morale and retention. It is widely known that the Mercer Island community appreciates their police officers, as evidenced by the new officers often citing this support as one of the reasons they applied to work on Mercer Island. The Department greatly appreciates the strong partnership they have with the community.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Receive report. No action necessary.