



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE:

ITEM NUMBER:

SUBJECT: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

DATE: JUNE 8, 2004

FROM: POLICE DEPARTMENT

PRESENTATION BY: JIM WATSON, POLICE CAPTAIN

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jim Watson, Police Captain – (714) 754-4879

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the attached Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Costa Mesa and the Newport-Mesa Unified School District, concerning the extension of the School Resource Officer Program.

BACKGROUND:

In 1999, the Newport Beach Police Department entered into an agreement with the Newport-Mesa Unified School District (NMUSD) to provide two (2) officers to staff a new School Resource Officer (SRO) Program for the two (2) high schools and the one (1) intermediate school, located within their city. Their program was implemented on February 17, 2000, and is still in effect. To date, both their police department and district representatives have viewed the results of their program favorably.

Based in part on the success of Newport Beach's program and other articulated facts, in 2001, our department pursued a SRO Program to provide two (2) officers to staff a program for our city's two (2) high schools and one (1) intermediate school. The City along with district officials subsequently approved the implementation of our program on May 9, 2001, through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the City and District. Thus far in the three-years the program has been in place, both representatives from our department and the district have viewed it as being a successful program and a benefit to all parties involved.

ANALYSIS:

School Resource Officer programs have been utilized in various school systems since the 1950's. As early as 1973, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals recommended School Resource Officer programs be established in high schools. Several school districts in Orange County, including Irvine, Anaheim, Tustin, Santa Ana, as well as our own school district, have successful School Resource Officer programs. School Resource Officers provide improved law enforcement assistance to school administrators and faculty, due to their routine presence on campus. They also provide a valuable resource to students and faculty for law enforcement related issues and create a safer environment for our children.

Our program has provided an immediate and positive law enforcement presence on the campuses we service. The Costa Mesa SRO's have been responsible for handling many law enforcement related matters on campus and in the immediate vicinity. Their presence and immediate response to incidents have helped to combat criminal activity, such as thefts, use of drugs and potentially violent acts (e.g., assaults). Each SRO has also been responsible for handling a majority of the follow-up investigations generated from the incidents they handle on their campuses.

Another role of our SRO's has been to serve as a resource for students and faculty to enhance the educational experience of the students. Our officers have been responsible for assisting in classroom instruction as guest speakers on topics such as government, criminal law, child abuse, and gang deterrence. They have also provided education as it relates to drug and alcohol resistance and positive decision-making skills. In addition, each SRO has assisted in the career development of students through education and mentoring.

Another role that our SRO's have actively participated in is that of a liaison with parents and the community. They have made themselves available and have participated in counseling both parents and students alike. The familiarity developed through their contacts with parents has helped to better the communication between law enforcement and the community and have brought a better understanding to the parents on what their children have been involved with on school grounds.

The SRO's have participated in after school and extra-curricular functions with students, parents and faculty. Their presence has helped to foster a more community service oriented philosophy, and has developed a closer, more effective relationship with all stakeholders.

The School Resource Officer Program has been very successful. The most compelling information in support of the continuation of our School Resource Officer Program comes from testimonials of officials who are directly involved.

Mike Murphy, the Director of Student Services stated, "The School Resource Officer (SRO) program is one of our most successful partnerships. The City of Costa Mesa and the Newport-Mesa Unified School District have created an exemplary program. The administrators of TeWinkle Middle School, Estancia High School and Costa Mesa High School have expressed a firm desire to continue this program. It is definitely one of their highest priorities in planning for the next year. School security plans depend upon the availability and visibility of the SRO's on campus. The ability of the SRO's to interact and build a rapport with students provides a means of stopping an incident before it occurs or escalates. This preventative action provides a safer, more protected environment for our students. Although our schools have enjoyed an excellent response time from other Costa Mesa Police units, the presence of the SRO's on campus provides immediate response time to critical situations. The outstanding service of the SRO's on campus has provided a great benefit to our students, parents, staff and community members."

Dr. Fred Navarro, Principal of Costa Mesa High School wrote, "I have worked in three districts over the last 24 years. In that time I have worked in systems with and without SRO programs. Each had its merits and its shortcomings. However, the program in Costa Mesa is the most effective program and should be considered a model for other districts. The SRO program offers our school greater security, greater preventative

measures, and has changed our school's culture in a positive direction. The SRO program also provides administration with an increased level of expertise in legal matters. This input is greatly appreciated when dealing with serious student disciplinary issues or in explaining delicate matters to parents. In summary, our school would be greatly disadvantaged if we lost or SRO and the community would lose a valuable preventative program at the same time."

If approved, the Police Department will continue to staff two (2) officers. One officer is to be assigned to work with Costa Mesa High School (grades 7 through 12) and the other officer will divide his schedule time between Estancia High School (grades 9 through 12) and Tewinkle Middle School (grades 7 through 8).

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

A possible alternative would be to discontinue the program and handle any on campus calls for service or other police needs through the area/beat officer responding. Such an alternative could negatively affect staffing levels utilized to handle calls in other areas throughout the community. Discontinuance of the School Resource Officer Program would also adversely impact the current level of service and working relationships that now exist between the SRO's, students, faculty and administrative school staff.

FISCAL REVIEW:

The annual salary and benefits for the two (2) officers is \$245,680. The Newport-Mesa Unified School District will be responsible for half of the total salary cost, which is \$122,840. The City is responsible for the other half through the general budget funding.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The City Attorney's Office has approved the Memorandum Of Understanding as to form.

JIM WATSON
Captain, Field Operations Division

JOHN D. HENSLEY
Chief of Police

MARC R. PUCKETT
Director of Finance

TOM WOOD
Acting City Attorney

DISTRIBUTION: City Manager
City Clerk
City Attorney
Director of Finance
Chief of Police
Director of Administrative Services
Director of Public Services

ATTACHMENTS: 1 [MOU BETWEEN THE CITY OF COSTA MESA
AND THE NEWPORT-MESA SCHOOL DISTRICT](#)

School Resource Officer Agreement with 061004
NMUSD

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