

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: June 1, 2009

Reviewed by: BP

**SUBJECT: Mid-Year Progress Report -
Temporary Part-Time Community Engagement Specialist**

**REPORT BY: Mike McQuiston, Chief of Police
Karina Tindol, Community Engagement Specialist**

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Receive progress report on Community Engagement Specialist activity to date.

BACKGROUND

The Community Engagement Specialist (CES) is a temporary, part-time position that was created to assist in neighborhood-based community organizing in order to improve community emergency preparedness and crime prevention efforts. The position was modeled after similar successful positions currently in use in the City of Oakland, and is based upon the belief that door-to-door, community engagement, performed by a talented, motivated individual with training in community organizing may be the best solution to a lack of community interest in organizing neighborhoods for crime prevention and/or self-sufficiency during a large-scale emergency.

DISCUSSION

Following a very competitive recruitment, the temporary CES position was filled on December 22, 2008. As with any other newly created position, a period of training and familiarization was needed, however due to the planned short duration of this job assignment, the time between hiring and actual community engagement was very short. Training thus far includes eight training sessions with City of Oakland Neighborhood Services Manager Claudia Albano to strategize about the Community Engagement process (Albano has extensive experience in community social organizing and teaches Community Organizing as a faculty member of the UC Berkeley School of Social Welfare) and, nineteen hours of training with the Center for Strategic Facilitation on Technology of Participation Methods (how to better facilitate meetings). CES training was supplemented with orientation and information gathering, including meeting with Fern Tiger, attending joint meetings concerning the new Administrative Citation Ordinance, and familiarization on Neighborhood Watch and Neighborhood ALERT/CERT. Upon completion of outfitting, orientation and training, community engagement was begun in earnest during the month of January 2009. Ongoing training

has taken place, including attending an Oakland Neighborhood Watch meeting, Newark Emergency Preparedness Fair, and CERT program coordinator meeting in Dublin.

ANALYSIS

Community Engagement Activity to date includes the following:

- Conducted twenty five "one-on-one" meetings with Albany residents to assess the current state of their blocks & how the CES can help them
- Met individually with thirteen Block Captains
- Organized and hosted the first of an anticipated quarterly meeting of all Albany Block Captains at the Community Center. The second such meeting takes place on June 1st.
- Attended a neighborhood tree-planting, recruited a Block Captain
- Attended miscellaneous meetings to address neighborhood concerns
- Organized a full twenty-hour CERT course with ten community members signed-up (so far)
- Conducted the first Neighborhood Watch training for all five blocks of Madison as well as 1600 Marin/900 Ordway.
- Identified five other blocks who are interested in moving forward with Neighborhood Watch training
- Filmed a Disaster Drill on 1000 Talbot led by their block captains which will be edited, copied & distributed to other block captains as an example of how to organize such an event.
- Met with numerous residents who live near blight properties to hear their concerns and offer them tools to give them leverage with the property owners. This has involved a considerable amount of time & energy.
- Working with Chelle Putzer to hold "Movie Nights" on blocks during Aug/Sept to build neighborhood cohesiveness.
- Meetings with various city staff from Police, Fire, Parks and Recreation, Community Development and Environmental Resources.

The CES has been able to identify recurring concerns of community members, specifically neighborhood "quality of life" concerns, i.e. trash, non-operable vehicles, parking concerns, collateral effects of local businesses, etc. Additionally, many are concerned with the cost of purchasing special event insurance for a block party (\$174).

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT

The sustainability impact of the CES position is difficult to quantify however, the CES is willing and able to organize neighborhoods around any issue of mutual concern. This may include issues such as tree planting, neighborhood recycling, garbage clean up, etc.

The CES also serves as a conduit of information on available city services and programs that add to the community's ability to access sustainable services, events and educational programs. Organized neighborhoods provide sustainability synergies when they adopt sustainable practices and principles.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

None - Progress report only at this time.