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Moraga Police Department offers first Town Hall in over 40 years

By Vera Kochan



Photo Vera Kochan

During the Sept. 17 informational town hall meeting at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, Moraga Police Chief Jon King discussed the alarming trend of shoplifting and burglaries in Moraga in response to an audience question of whether the crime is committed by locals.

"The shoplifting, by non-locals, usually happens in the major stores. Once they get tired of stealing from them, they see the houses in the area and will begin to steal from homes."

Residents were reminded not to leave valuables in plain sight in cars. "It takes 10 seconds for thieves to break car windows, grab your belongings and run off without ever leaving fingerprints," King stated.

Another aspect of the town hall meeting covered emergency preparedness in the event of fire, earthquakes or public safety power shutoffs. While no new evacuation drills are scheduled for the near future, King said that any homeowners association interested in conducting one should contact the MPD for help in organizing it.

King reassured residents that if a serious incident happens in Moraga, other police departments in the surrounding cities are all on the same radio channel and can respond to support MPD and each other.

Over the past year the department - which comprises 12 officers, two support services employees and four reserve officers - has, among other things, updated emergency operations and evacuation plans; expanded the video surveillance program; deployed Naloxene and trained officers in its use; stepped up community outreach by getting officers into all of Moraga's schools to talk with students; and have issued 1,054 citations and made 98 arrests, according to 2018 statistics.

Moraga may be a small town, but the MPD is kept busy responding to fraud and theft reports; burglaries; mental health issues; felony crimes; school-related issues; loud party complaints; traffic issues; death investigations; suspicious activities and neighborhood complaints.

During the 2017-18 fiscal year, Moraga's population of 16,676 was protected and served by the MPD on a budget of \$2,866,833 at a cost of \$173.11 per resident, compared to Orinda's population of 18,970 whose annual police budget was \$5,074,233 at a cost of \$267.48 per resident or Lafayette's population of 23,893 with an annual police budget of \$6,715,105 at a cost of \$281.05 per resident.

On hand were several members of the MPD and a table of giveaways such as reusable water bottles, pens, stickers and various pamphlets covering a wide range of topics from identity theft to a home security checklist. The lucky attendees were treated to homemade chocolate chip cookies baked by King's wife, Stacy.

There will be another MPD Town Hall Meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 17 in the JMIS auditorium located at 1010 Camino Pablo in Moraga.

For information visit the MPD website: www.police.moraga.ca.us or contact Chief King at: king@moraga.ca.us or phone (925) 888-7049.

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[back](#)

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