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## Orinda police chief reports that cameras have led to arrests, convictions

By Sora O'Doherty

Orinda has agreed to a memorandum of understanding with Flock Group, a Georgia-based company, that allows the Orinda Police Department to access data from community cameras stored in the Flock system. The action was taken by the city council, authorizing the city manager to enter into the MOU, following an update on March 16 by Orinda Police Chief David Cook on crime in the city and the role of cameras in resolving cases.

Orinda commenced a pilot camera program in 2015 and made it permanent in 2016. In his update to the council, Cook said that he could clearly say that cameras have been instrumental in solving serious crimes that have occurred in the community. "In the past year alone," he said, "cameras have been instrumental in identifying suspects in crimes such as armed robbery, felony hit-and-run, and a felony assault on a police officer." As a result, he added, cases have been closed and criminals faced prosecution as a direct result of the city camera system.

In addition to the city operated cameras, more residents or neighborhood groups have been interested in purchasing cameras and sharing data with the police. One community association, the Wilder Homeowners Association, has purchased a camera system from Flock Safety, a private security company. According to the chief's report, Flock Safety has an advanced camera system that takes photographs based on motion, stores images for 30 days, and maintains an advanced searchable database of images. The homeowners association requested that OPD have access to search this data, and the MOU will allow for that. In public comments, Johnathan Young said that he is the chair of his HOA's Flock camera commission, and that they have found huge value in the cameras, and expect great value in having them connected to OPD.

Orinda city staff are also working with the police to evaluate the need for replacement cameras as the existing cameras age. Staff has proposed that the chief continue to work with the city manager to upgrade and expand the existing city automated license plate reader and still camera systems, which will include phasing out the use of the current Reconyx system.

In his update to the council, Cook talked about an officer walking through Rite Aid who was called upon to pursue a suspected thief to his car. In escaping arrest, the suspect hit and injured the officer. The suspect was later identified and arrested in Berkeley. The suspect, 28-year-old Delvente Murry of San Francisco, is being held at the Martinez Detention Facility on charges of assault with a deadly weapon on a peace officer, felony evading, obstructing a peace officer, and probation violation.

In connection with a recent home invasion robbery, a car was located and seized, and evidence was obtained from the car. The investigation is ongoing. As previously reported, a person is in custody in connection with numerous commercial burglaries in Orinda and Lafayette.

Cook also spoke about an incident where someone was trying to enter a home on Whitehall Drive. A search was conducted with assistance from Moraga, Lafayette, and the Contra Costa Sheriff. While the search did not locate any suspects at that time, video led to identification of a vehicle, Cook said, and detectives are following up.

Cook also reported an uptick in stolen cars and stolen catalytic converters and addressed questions from the council and the public including the use of Nixle and Nextdoor to communicate with residents about interagency support, neighborhood watch groups, and the benefits of using technology over employing more police officers. "You can't just hire one officer," he explained, "because there are four shifts; to add one more officer you need to hire four."

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