

April 7, 2006

Licton Springs Community Council Report for April

North Precinct Advisory Council Report for April 5, 2006

The April Meeting was called to order at 7:05p.m. by President Pete Rogerson. As the featured guest of the evening was running just a little late, we began with a quick report from our Crime Prevention people, Diane Horswell and Neil Hanson. We were reminded that we are now moving back into the season of better weather and that mean an increase in the number of break-ins and petty theft. (There will be more on this later in this report.)

Enter the featured speaker, Seattle Councilperson Sally Clark. After the usual introductions, Councilperson Clark was quick to point out that she was appointed to the Council (to replace Jim Compton) and will decide whether to run for the office or not this November. At this time Sally heads a new committee dealing with "community development." Her committee also has been looking into public safety issues as they relate to business districts (University, Aurora, Lake City, etc.). There has been some movement toward the revival of the "neighborhood plans" as well as trying to promote "living wage jobs." The idea there is to get people off of public assistance.

Once the floor was open to questions, the overwhelming preponderance came in the form of inquiries about "public safety" and some of the lack-luster response from the City Council. It was pointed out that as many times as the NPAC has sent letters to the City on public safety issues, we never seem to get a response. Noted also was the often heard claim by those running for office (from the top on down) that "public safety" was right at the top of their priority list . . . until they're elected. At this point I must hasten to point out that Sally Clark did a much better job of fielding these questions and giving a reasonable response than some of the other Council members that have visited past meetings of the North Precinct. (Nick Licata was another that faired well.) One of her first suggestions was that correspondence be in the form of "snail mail." E-Mail is great, but sometimes it just gets lost in the jungle (or cyber-space?). One of the more pointed questions had to do with the City "finding" money to fund the waterfront trolley but still not able to increase the number of uniformed officers on our streets. (This year the City funded 25 "new" officers, but these are "replacements" for those that have retired or have been called up for military duty - a net gain of zero.) There is some argument that the trolley issue is easier to justify because it generates income for the City - cops don't.

Some of the other more interesting questions involved the City's priority when faced with budget shortfalls. Since the first priority of the City is to provide for the safety of its citizens, in the time of tight money, does the City reduce spending for police and fire at the same rate as other services? It goes without saying that every agency that taps into the City for funds, certain that their "need" is as great as all the others. Sally hasn't been on the Council long enough to have answers for all these questions, but she did give a good accounting of the time she has been there.

There was also a suggestion that she come again (say January, if she remains on the Council) and bring us up to date on some of the more pointed public safety issues. Good plan!

Next up were a few words from Ed McKenna from the City Attorney's Office. Ed pointed out that the "test program" of trying car theft in the City's Court (with much longer jail time) has proven so successful that it is being expanded to include the entire City. (It was unique to the North Precinct.) He also related to us a recent experience with the Court in which he took the time to point out to the presiding judge the long history of a "tagger" who had been arrested AGAIN for more graffiti. After explaining to the judge how many times this individual has been caught doing the same thing, and the cost to the community, he asked that the individual's bail be set at \$50,000.00 (??). Hopefully this would keep this person off the streets and make them available for trial, something the City has never accomplished before. The judge (one of the newest on the Court) set bail at \$50.00! The "tagger" is out the door and painting your City again. Remember this the next time you get to vote for judges. Professional courtesy prevents Ed from mentioning the judge's name.

And now for a return to the opening statements about "Crime Prevention":

#### HOME SECURITY TIPS

First and foremost, be sure to use the locks you have and be consistent. About 40 percent of the time burglars do not need to use force to enter homes. This means that people are leaving windows and doors open or unlocked. Many people believe window screens offer some protection but they do not. It is also common for people to leave windows open or unlocked when they are only gone for a short time. The average burglary takes a total of five minutes, so develop the habit of making sure your home is secure every time you leave.

Most burglars look fairly average and "normal" for the neighborhood. Most are young men, from teens to twenties, mostly white (especially in a predominantly white neighborhoods) and are alone or in pairs. The standard method is to

knock on the door to see if anyone is home. If you are home it is a good idea to answer the door. Remember, you don't have to open the door to answer it; you can speak through the door. If the burglar gets no answer, he usually goes around to the side or back to break in. If you notice this behavior, do not hesitate to call 911. Yes, you could be mistaken but it is better to call and have police check it out.

The strongest, heaviest door and locks are usually on front doors, so burglars head for side and back doors that tend to be weaker and are more hidden from view. All doors should be solid, and protected with good quality dead bolts. If your back door has a plywood panel on the bottom and/or glass in the top you can reinforce it without having to buy a new door. You can install exterior grade plywood over the bottom panel and plexi-glass or lexan over the window. Additionally, all door frames should be reinforced with long screws that anchor the door frame to the supporting 2" x 4" next to the door. Deadbolt strike plates also need to be installed with screws that are long enough (usually 3" to 4") to reach the 2" x 4" stud. Currently, burglars are defeating deadbolt-protected doors by shattering door name material, as it is usually weaker than the door or the lock.

Windows, especially sliding windows, should fit snugly in their tracks. You can purchase plastic shims or install sheet metal screws in the upper track and leave them sticking out just enough to allow the window to slide but not be able to be lifted out of the frame.

Newer windows of all styles tend to have double glass and fit snugly. This is mostly for energy consciousness but it does make them more trouble to break. If you have single pane windows or any window in a particularly vulnerable location you may need to add window locks. Burglars very rarely break out enough glass to crawl through; it's too dangerous and time consuming. What they do is break out just enough glass to reach inside and undo the latch. They then open the window and enter. A keyed window lock or one installed in a way that is hard to reach can keep them out. However, be sure that you have adequate fire escape routes, especially in bedrooms.

Most burglaries occur during the day or the early evening and most of the small percentage that happen at night are to obviously empty houses or to occupied home that have left a door or window unlocked allowing for silent entry.

As the days shorten, many people do not arrive home from work until it has been dark for an hour or two. A completely dark house in the late afternoon says "empty" and will attract the attention of burglars especially if they familiar with the area and see it day after day. Use simple, inexpensive timers for lamps to

give the impression that someone is home.

If you have a lot of thick bushes or overgrowth you may be providing hiding places for burglars. Clear out, thin or bottom prune to strike a balance between security and privacy.

If you have questions or want more information please contact Neil Hansen, Crime Prevention, North Precinct, Seattle Police Department, at 684-4689 or [nei1.Hansen@seattle.gov](mailto:nei1.Hansen@seattle.gov).

Before you make security improvements, identify those entry points most likely to be used by a burglar. You can do this by answering the following questions:

Which entrances are hidden/out of view from my neighbors? If I am locked out of my house, where could I get in without too much difficulty?

Every door/window you list in response to these questions should be a number one priority. Other security improvements should follow, keeping in mind that your goal is to make it difficult for a burglar by forcing them to take more time and to make more noise!

Exterior doors should be strong enough to withstand excessive force.

All exterior doors should be secured with a deadbolt lock that has a minimum one-inch throw.

All strike plates and frames for exterior doors should be anchored to the home's main construction.

All exterior doors should fit snugly against the frame and all frames should be free of warping, cracks, and other signs of wear and tear.

The main entrance door should have a door-wide-angle viewer (180 degree peephole).

Sliding glass doors and windows should be secure against forcing the locks or from being lifted completely out of the frame.

High-risk windows (basement, garage, ground-level, partially or totally secluded, latched, etc.) should be secured sufficiently enough to discourage or impede possible intrusion.

Double-hung windows should be secured with pins or extra locks to discourage prying.

Trees and shrubs should be trimmed to allow visibility along the perimeter (particularly entries) of the house.

Timers (both interior and exterior) should be installed to activate lights in your absence.

All entrances (doors and windows) to your home should be well lit at night.

Your address should be posted on your house and be clearly visible from the street both night and day.

Security improvements should not be made at the expense of fire safety!

Remember to allow at least one door or window per room as a fire escape - meaning that exit via the door window can be made quickly and easily. There should also be fire escape routes established for your household. Family members should know where these are and they should be practiced periodically, especially if there are young children at home!

Ken Thompson