



CITY OF SAN MATEO

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Agenda Report

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TO: City Council
FROM: Alex Khojikian, City Manager
PREPARED BY: Police Department
MEETING DATE: September 16, 2024

SUBJECT:
Use of Former Fire Station 25 as Police Traffic Sub Station – Discussion

RECOMMENDATION:

Discuss potential re-use of former San Mateo Consolidated Fire Department Station 25 at 545 Barneson Avenue as a Police Traffic Substation and provide direction to staff.

BACKGROUND:

In 2021, the City celebrated the opening of a new, modernized Fire Station 25 at 1455 Shafter Street. The new facility replaced the former Fire Station 25 at 545 Barneson Avenue, which had become too small to accommodate modern fire equipment and personnel. Meanwhile, the former Fire Station 25 building has remained vacant.

During this time, concerns related to traffic safety in San Mateo have increasingly become an issue of citywide interest. Over the last several years, the San Mateo Police Department has made efforts to address this interest by restructuring staffing within the Field Operations Bureau to provide more police officers dedicated to the Traffic Unit to enhance safety for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. Staff wishes to discuss and receive the City Council's feedback regarding the potential to convert the former Fire Station 25 into a Police Traffic Unit Substation.

Officers in the Traffic Unit are separate from the regular Patrol Unit and focus on addressing all issues related to traffic safety such as neighborhood Traffic Action Plans (TAP), parking, moving citations and accident reporting. The Traffic Unit also receives and responds to a high volume of complaints regarding neighborhood traffic issues which are not currently assigned to TAP. Because of space constraints within the Police Department facility, Traffic Officers currently share a work area with the Records Division. The Traffic Sergeants are located in a separate area of the building, next to the Field Operations Captain and Lieutenants. This arrangement is not ideal, and providing a shared workspace for Traffic Unit staff would allow for better supervision and continuity of information. In addition, there is a variety of equipment utilized by the Traffic Unit (i.e. traffic message boards, speed trailers, etc.) which, because of space constraints, must be stored at the Corporation Yard. An arrangement where all traffic related equipment could be housed in one location would make deployment and maintenance more efficient. The proposal is to operate a small, traffic-focused unit at the facility; not a large-scale, high volume patrol station. It is estimated that not more than 3-4 traffic police officers would use the space at a given time. Staff does not anticipate a need to utilize any on-street parking for traffic motorcycles or employee personal vehicles; however, in the event an occasional beat officer were to stop by to utilize the facility to write a report, their police vehicle would need to be parked on the street. The staff who use the facility will be conscientious of the neighborhood.

The former Fire Station 25 would be ideal for a substation for the Traffic Unit as its location adjacent to Alameda de las Pulgas and Highway 92 provides several access routes to all corners of San Mateo. Alameda de las Pulgas is also one of the busiest areas for traffic related issues in San Mateo, with over 9 schools, Beresford Recreation Center and Park as well as the Senior Center all located along the corridor. To this end, the increased visibility and expanded presence of officers associated with establishing a substation at the old Station 25 could be beneficial to the overall traffic safety on the west side of San Mateo. The substation could be open to the public during normal business hours and available to beat-patrol officers after-hours for report writing, potentially allowing for better response times throughout the day.

To make the space functional as a substation, there would be costs associated with upgrading technology and infrastructure such as upgrading internet service and adding desks and workstations. In addition, the interior of the building is outdated and would need a thorough cleaning and paint, as well as the addition of alarm and surveillance equipment. Staff proposes allowing the Traffic Unit to occupy the space at a minimal level initially, and then tackle these projects in time, on an ad-hoc basis as funds become available.

Staff sought initial feedback of the neighborhood on this idea by distributing a flyer (Attachment 1) to 300 nearby residential homes in July 2024, encouraging residents to share their thoughts. Responses (Attachment 2) included comments in support citing the beneficial location relative to traffic routes and school zones, with concerns expressed primarily related to parking, noise, and further compounding traffic in an already busy area. Staff is seeking direction from the Council on whether the concept of repurposing the old Fire Station 25 property to a Police Traffic Substation should continue to be explored and evaluated for further consideration.

BUDGET IMPACT:

There is no budgetary impact at this time.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

This study session is not a project subject to CEQA, because it is an organizational or administrative activity that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment. (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5).)

NOTICE PROVIDED

All meeting noticing requirements were met.

ATTACHMENTS

Att 1 – Flyer

Att 2 – Responses

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