



CITY OF
T O R R A N C E

GEORGE K. CHEN
MAYOR

August 4, 2025

The Honorable Rob Saemann
City of Hermosa Beach
1315 Valley Drive
Hermosa Beach, CA 90254

Dear Mayor Saemann:

Since 1921, the Torrance Police Department has lost four police officers and one crossing guard in the performance of their duties. Over the years, many ceremonies have taken place to remember their sacrifice. This year, during Police Week (May 11-17), the Torrance Police Department endeavored to place commemorative signage at the locations where these heroes paid the ultimate sacrifice. They were successful in placing the signs at locations throughout Torrance but have not yet been able to place a sign at the location of one of the fallen officer sites in the City of Hermosa Beach.

It may be helpful to first share some history to provide context to our ask. On December 21, 1968, Officer Gary Elton Rippstein and his partner attempted to arrest an auto-theft suspect. They were invited inside a home near the intersection of 8th Street and Ardmore Avenue, in the City of Hermosa Beach, by the suspect's wife and were immediately met by gunfire. Officer Rippstein was struck by one of the suspect's bullets and killed. His partner and assisting officers from the Hermosa Beach Police Department engaged the suspect and he too was killed in the exchange of gunfire. At the time of his murder, Officer Rippstein had been with the Torrance Police Department for six years. He was the agency's first chaplain and was survived by his wife and three children.

As our police department prepared for their Police Week commemoration this year, they engaged with City of Hermosa Beach staff in December of 2024. Dialogue continued through April of 2025 with the ultimate direction from Hermosa Beach staff that a formal permit application be submitted for this request. That request is still pending with the City of Hermosa Beach. In order to honor Officer Rippstein, we posted his commemorative sign in front of the Torrance Police Department; we are hopeful, however, that the sign can be moved to the location where the incident occurred.

I am writing to request your support in placing a sign commemorating the life and service of Torrance Police Officer Gary Elton Rippstein at that intersection 8th Street and Ardmore Avenue in the City of Hermosa Beach.

August 4, 2025
The Honorable Mayor Rob Saemann

The proposed commemorative sign for Officer Rippstein follows the same design as those dedicated to all of the Torrance Police Officers and the Torrance Crossing Guard honored this past May. It also is an adaptation of a design used nationally for the same purpose.

These signs are purposefully designed to avoid resembling standard street signs, ensuring there is no confusion for drivers, especially in Hermosa Beach given your iconic street sign design. Enclosed is what the commemorative signage looks like that is ready to install to honor Officer Rippstein along with additional images of the commemorative signs that were installed earlier this year in the City of Torrance to give you a reference and show how it could be envisioned in the City of Hermosa Beach.

It is not our intention for this project to negatively impact the City of Hermosa Beach in any way. The City of Torrance Public Works Department would create, install, and maintain the sign for its lifetime. Our staff is available to liaison with your staff throughout the permitting process and, once approved, I would be honored to extend you and your Council colleagues an invitation to join us when we honor Officer Rippstein, at the location of the incident in your city, with a brief installation ceremony.

Enclosures:

1. Sgt. Robert Lewis (EOW: August 23, 1959)
Location: Hawthorne Blvd/Carson St. (Northwest Corner)
2. Officer David Seibert (EOW: August 10, 1967)
Location: Crenshaw Blvd/Artesia (Southeast Corner)
3. Officer Thomas Keller (EOW: April 17, 1986)
Location: Marcelina Ave/Sartori Ave (Northwest Corner)
4. Crossing Guard Hazel Kenny (EOW: December 17, 1986)
Location: Palos Verdes Blvd/Ruby (Northeast Corner)
5. Officer Gary Elton Rippstein (EOW: December 21, 1968)
Suggested Location: 8th Street/Ardmore Avenue

Sincerely,



George K. Chen
Mayor
The City of Torrance, California