

Pay and Compensation

- Sworn personnel, including the command staff, say that they are the lowest paid in the South Bay and among the lowest paid in southern California.
- Sworn personnel have not had any pay raises in several years. Officers point to the fact that the city needed to raise the compensation level for both the city manager and the police chief in order to attract the most qualified candidates.
- Officers did not feel that they needed to be among the highest paid, but felt that there was no recognition or respect for the work that they do. They pointed to Manhattan Beach, which has more personnel and who handle fewer calls (it was unclear as to whether they meant in total or per officer), yet whose personnel make significantly more money.

Miscellaneous

- There is a concern that the City Prosecutor is not pursuing prosecutions vigorously enough.
- There is a perceived disconnect between the police department and City Hall.
- There is a belief that the CALEA accreditation is not very realistic in terms of the staffing hours required to maintain it. It was described as being a slogan to put on the side of the cars and not something that actually makes a difference.
- The police facilities are very inadequate. There is an occupied office directly under the condemned fire tower. This would appear to be a very serious safety issue. Several officers mentioned the lack of a range training facility.

The Pier Plaza Area

- All stakeholders agree that the single biggest challenge facing the city is the alcohol-related issues being generated by the Pier Plaza bars. The Pier Plaza area is perceived as being out of control and stakeholders also perceive that there are not adequate resources to deal with the situation.
- A very common phrase, again used by all stakeholders, was that the city had created the “beach party culture” downtown and now doesn’t want to provide adequate resources to deal with this issue.
- A brief review of the daily logs suggests that alcohol abuse and other related issues are the greatest drain on patrol resources.
- There are two downtowns; one before 10:00 p.m. and one after.
- There does not seem to be any type of strategic approach to dealing with this situation.

Examination of CFS volume reported by the HBPD indicates that more than 20 percent of the entire CFS volume can be attributed to the downtown area. Additionally, of all the CFS logged in the downtown area, more than 22 percent of those calls are “disturbance” calls of various types. Essentially, one out of every twenty calls received by the HBPD are disturbance calls downtown.

Currently, the HBPD dedicates one sergeant to the downtown area. This “Community Lead Sergeant” works a shift of 1500 hours x 0300 hours, and follows the 3 on-4 off schedule, working every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evening. Complementing this position, the HBPD staffs three overtime shifts every Friday and Saturday night from 1900 hours to 0300 hours.

First, it is recommended that the primary responsibility for covering this area be removed from general patrol and a specific unit be created. A Downtown Unit, with one sergeant and four police officers, should be created and charged with providing seven-day coverage to the downtown area. The unit would have flexible hours and days off to maximize coverage. Flexibility in coverage would permit these officers to start their shifts at 2:00 p.m. or 5:00 p.m., thus doubling-up coverage during peak times, and ending their shifts at 2:00 a.m. or 5:00 a.m. when the conditions in the area end (or any variation that meets the need). Similarly, the consistent assignment of personnel will increase familiarity with the area and improve service. It is noted that the HBPD already assigns a sergeant to this area on a steady basis. This sergeant has been very successful in establishing relationships with stakeholders in the area and understands the area conditions very well. Removing a cadre of officers from the patrol division and allowing them to specialize and focus their efforts to a greater extent would only enhance their performance.

Second, the dedicated unit would provide a vehicle for long-term planning and a coordinated approach to problematic locations in this area. Recently, the HBPD created the “Late-Night Establishment Action Plan” to deal with the issues downtown. Examination of this plan indicates numerous excellent tactical recommendations to regulate the nightclub experience in the area. The plan calls for the exploration of creating a “Business Improvement District” downtown, quarterly meetings with the Restaurant and Tavern Association, coordinating with other law enforcement agencies, engaging in more proactive enforcement, reevaluating Conditional Use Permits, enforcing the “closed window” ordinance, and conducting club/bar checks each weekend. In addition to these important steps, the HBPD might also consider the following tactics:

- Conduct bar checks **simultaneously with** other oversight and regulatory agencies to maximize enforcement (police, code enforcement, fire, health, alcohol control, etc.)
- Conduct underage drinking sting operations
- Conduct training for owners, bartenders, and security personnel on running an orderly establishment
- **Ensure the City Prosecutor and District Attorney provide “enhanced” prosecution of ALL cases occurring in the downtown area**
- Conduct undercover narcotics enforcement in and around nightclubs
- Enact a “nuisance” statute to better regulate disorderly locations

were to be reduced to from 120 to 160 cases that could be investigated effectively, the detectives' performance would be similar to a high-performing unit (45 cases filed out of 120 = 37.5 percent).

Compounding this issue is a technical limitation in the case management system. When a detective closes a case the information system being used does not allow for the categorization of that closure. In general, cases assigned for investigation should be closed in several possible ways: cleared by arrest, exceptional clearance, unfounded, or closed with no further investigation possible. The system only permits an entry marking the case closed without allowing for the specific reason. The detective must indicate in the narrative of the disposition how the case was closed. Without this categorization it is impossible to track and evaluate the performance of the detectives either individually or collectively. As it stands now, there is no management of how many cases are assigned or how effective each detective is in solving cases without individually inspecting each case log.

Fortunately, the entire detective unit works very closely together and the sergeant has an intuitive understanding of the performance of the team. While this is a strength of the unit's operation, it is strongly recommended that case management policies (both technological and procedural) be implemented immediately. The current process in place in the HBPD with respect to case management needs improvement.

In addition to solving cases by arrest, cases must be prosecuted successfully to ensure the full value of the criminal justice system. If an arrest is made and the defendant is not prosecuted, then the deterrent value of the law is undermined and the effectiveness of the police department is compromised. During the ICMA evaluation of the HBPD, anecdotal information was obtained that indicated improvements could be made in the area of case prosecution. It is well beyond the scope of the ICMA study to assess the full spectrum of the criminal justice system in Hermosa Beach; however, descriptive data is presented here that highlights an important issue that warrants further examination by the HBPD, the City Prosecutor, and the city administration.

Using the same detective's case log from 2012 it is readily apparent that a significant number of cases filed with the City Prosecutor are rejected for prosecution. In 2012, 45 cases were filed by this detective, but 13 cases were rejected for prosecution. Of the 58 cases brought forward for prosecution, 36 were filed with the District Attorney and 22 were filed with the City Prosecutor. Of the 36 cases filed with the District Attorney, two were rejected for prosecution (5.6 percent). Of the 22 cases filed with the City Attorney, 11 were rejected for prosecution (50 percent). Based upon the cases filed by this one detective in 2012, the City Prosecutor rejected cases nine-times more than the District Attorney. While it is impossible to draw conclusions based upon one detective's experience in one calendar year, the information presented here supports the anecdotal information presented in meetings with officers and during the town hall meeting with the public. Clearly, however, there is enough information here that warrants a closer examination of the cases filed and rejected by the City Prosecutor.