

PROPERTY OFFICER

Public Safety Committee Meeting

October 1, 2014 Wednesday

Room 1010 Main City Hall

Date: 10-1-14
Submitted in PS Committee Gail 45
Council File No: 14-0600-5164
Item No.: 1
Deputy: Public Speaker

The current status of Property Division and how it is affecting departmental operations:

Out of 21 locations, only 5 geographical area rooms are now left open, leaving only a total of 10 evidence intake/storage facilities open to include the Commercial Street Warehouse, the Evidence Control Section at Erwin C. Piper Technical Center on Ramirez St, Davis Hertzog Forensic Science Center near Cal State L.A., Van Nuys Property, and the Metropolitan Detention Center Property on Los Angeles and Temple Streets. The only area rooms that are still open are at 77th, Olympic, Pacific, Harbor, and Topanga Divisions.

There has been no hiring of new personnel or promotion to supervisory positions since 2007, and the number of property officers has since dwindled from about 115 to less than 50. A number of young and capable property officers have taken more promising and better paying jobs in other departments within the city. There is an existing mindset among employees that the chances for promotion are not found in this division, and longer serving employees are opting for a quiet and early exit. As a result, we have administrative difficulties due in large part to our decimated ranks and causing personnel morale to slide rock bottom.

In spite of our severely diminished numbers, the requirements placed on our division and the volume of work has not decreased. With our current numbers, we are compelled to constantly put out one small fire after another, so to speak. While we continue to make do with increasingly less employees, other divisions are constantly being supplied with

authorizations to fill their vacancies. Our requests for replacement personnel are continually being denied. Currently, we are interviewing for six emergency positions, but that is not nearly enough to close the ever increasing gap in our divisional continuity. We have 10 supervisors and at least half of them are retiring in less than five years and so is about approximately on third of our remaining property officers.

This highly critical situation has also had a negative ripple effect on the sworn personnel. They now have to travel clear across town to sign-out what often turns out to be just one or two packages for court appearances or for investigative purposes, or often to book hundreds of items of unpackaged or incompletely inventoried evidence. Their precious patrol and investigative time is wasted because of this incredible height of inefficiency. Often, they also have to go back to the booking division to make corrections on property reports because of the above mentioned discrepancies. On search warrants and large seizures of evidence, booking officers will spend 24 hours or more from the time of the arrest up to when all items are accurately inventoried and reported, and then sometimes have to come back from miles of distance to correct newly discovered discrepancies. I have no clear idea of how all this translates to protecting and serving the public, but I hear that a lot of commanding officers are highly frustrated with this kind of situation. Another incredulous idea is for the LAPD higher ups to build property rooms into brand new and modern divisions but deciding to leave it empty. These rooms could serve as quick access points to sworn officers, and thereby releasing them from those unnecessary encumbrances I have mentioned.

I respectfully submit to you that our function is as vital and important as any other part of the department, and the stability of our division will only serve to help us remain in solid supporting role to the whole department. Overall, civilian employees like us are hardworking, loyal

and love working for the department and the city. I believe that it is high time both the city and the department recognized the intrinsic value we provide and not look at us as expendable items in the city budget.