

13-0084

PUBLIC SAFETY

Motion

Residents of the San Pedro and Wilmington communities, in collaboration with the 15th Council District office, have created a number of Facebook-based Neighborhood Watch groups with the intent of keeping residents up to date on crimes or police activities occurring in their neighborhoods. Participants in the group are able to share information with each other on topics ranging from crime patterns, tips, suspicious persons or activity, and discussions of police activity that might have been cause for alarm that are now in need of clarification. The groups have shown to be popular with the residents, with hundreds of registered users who participate 24 hours a day in virtual neighborhood watch groups. Residents have asked for the participation of their Senior Lead Officers, who can respond to resident questions and concerns as they appear in the group. However, in spite of the popularity of the groups, under current department policy, participation in social media websites by individual officers is limited, with only gang unit officers having regular access to Facebook and other pages.

The Los Angeles Police Department is making great strides in utilizing social media to investigate and prevent crimes and engaging in resident contacts and general information sharing. Examples include the recent use by the department to unitize a Facebook page and Twitter account to help identify dozens of women depicted in photographs obtained from the house of the suspect charged in the "Grim Sleeper" case. Given the important role Senior Lead Officers play in support of Community-Based policing activities that have reduced crime to levels not seen in decades, the department should consider updating policies to reflect 21st century communication expectations.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Los Angeles Police Department be INSTRUCTED to report to the Public Safety Committee within 45 days with recommendations to modify department policies on use of social media outlets while on duty to allow Senior Lead Officers to use Facebook and other similar social media tools to communicate with their residents and participate in online Neighborhood Watch Groups.

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Seconded By [Signature]

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