

This issue---SR Gang Activity, SRPD officer costs, and the District #1 Supervisor race. Share with others...!!

TITLE-----San Rafael's Gang Activity Spiking Upwards...!

"Neighborhood Speak"-----by Steve Patterson—Federation of SR Neighborhoods

Many local citizens have become aware that violent crimes in San Rafael have spiked up recently. The worst and most recent was the murder of a woman on C St. And while this is not a gang related incident, most of the violent crime spikes are due to gang activity, much of it in the Canal area. The increase of murders, armed robberies, prostitution, assaults and other incidents is often the direct result of two gangs and their activities.

The Norteno and Sureno gangs are very much engaged in adversarial activities aimed at each other as they fight for turf. Much of the violent activity is described as "gang on gang" where large areas of the Canal become gangs staking out their territories and areas that they control. According to SRPD officials, while SR's gang activity has surged it is still considered a low level of activity compared to other urban areas. These same officials indicate that the number of officers assigned to maintain the police presence with gang members, has been increased. Most of the so-called "hot spots" that gangs seem to be fighting over are located in the Canal area. It is also a place where gang graffiti (tags) is often seen to indicate areas where each gang controls their real estate or turf (oops, the City fired the graffiti abatement officer).

Officers from this unit indicate that they know who the gang members, are in most cases. This enables monitoring to occur and officers feel that violent activity can be more easily suppressed when identities and recognition are aggressively managed. The unfortunate part of the gang activity in SR, is that it is part of an overall bigger problem that affects all of Marin and surrounding counties, as well. Much of it comes down to money, drugs and control with tactics that take "no prisoners."

Cost of Police Public Safety:

In San Rafael, it has been estimated that it costs approximately \$175,000 per year to employ a police officer. Yep, seems crazy doesn't it. This includes not just salary, but also benefits including medical and pension costs. So if we assume that this is true, the police profession has priced itself beyond what is affordable, sustainable or commensurate with what is delivered for public safety services. They have effectively priced themselves beyond what is affordable for taxpayers. It would be cheaper to hire a private police force effectively outsourcing the entire function.

Since there are few relationships with police officers by the residents like there was in the past, there would be little lost since most officers are completely anonymous. In fact a few municipalities have considered firing police officers and rehiring them back as lesser salaries and benefits. If enough municipalities did this it would be an effective tactic with the union agreements which bind and strangle many counties, cities, and towns. This requires a strong spine by elected officials since public safety unions are exceptionally strong and have been known to work aggressively against local politicians running for election or re-election who they view as threats to their benefit stream or anti-union.

San Rafael's finest recently refused to take a 5% pay cut that most other City employees absorbed. The refusal cost added jobs within the City and also contributed to the elimination of services, most notably many affecting neighborhoods. As our municipalities continue to slip towards financial Armageddon, you can

partially thank police unions and their out-of-whack compensation/benefit plans for strangling municipality's ability to deliver many services.

San Rafael is not really different from any other town or city in California. The State is being strangled by issues like this. In fact, a Baron's study has estimated the unfunded liability issue for pensions and benefits throughout California could likely top \$2 trillion dollars. Heads in the sand are no longer working as the public sector heads to a depression.

District #1 Supervisor race:

Wow, things just got interesting in District #1 with Susan Adams being challenged for re-election by fellow Democrat, Kerry Mazzoni. Adams has been a two-term Supervisor and assumed there would be no challengers as she embarks on her third election. Mazzoni, a former Marin Assemblywoman and California Education Secretary, seems to be making this a referendum on Marin Clean Energy and the attempt by many Marin municipalities to provide green/clean energy. Look for PG&E and other corporate interests to be heavy bankrollers of Mazzoni. Also, look for a spirited campaign that could get intense. The Federation will be hosting a candidates night sometime in early May.

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