

Topic: Crime Prevention in Parkland County

Introduction:

Parkland County Enforcement Services is aware that County residents are expressing concerns with the rising crime levels in Alberta – and more particularly in Parkland County. Enforcement Services intends to work within its appointments to reassure residents, and in partnership with the RCMP, invigorate local crime watch groups. With a number of proposed initiatives, Enforcement Services hopes to empower County residents through a common communication method with the future intent to include County employees and utilize County vehicles, from all departments, in high visibility patrols.

Facts (Background Information):

According to RCMP statistics, crime has increased in the province of Alberta by over 100% in recent years. Parkland County residents, concerned about rising crime, have stated that they would like to see more frequent and a more visible presence of law enforcement throughout the County. Community Peace Officers with Parkland County have the authority, under the Municipal Government Act, to enforce County Bylaws. Through their appointments with the Alberta Solicitor General, Community Peace Officers also have the authority to enforce Alberta Acts and Regulations, including the Traffic Safety Act. Although Community Peace Officers do not have the authority to enforce Criminal Code matters, Enforcements Services can work within its appointments to provide the quality of services residents require.

Analysis:

Parkland County Enforcement Services (PCES) currently has a dedicated part time position that allows a Community Peace Officer to provide community programs in local schools. PCES believes that these programs are important in making contact with our local youth, and providing guidance on such matters as junior driver training, animal control and care, OHV safety, Bicycle safety, School Bus safety and cyber bullying.

PCES is now proposing that resources from two of the community program areas be reallocated to more actively address crime prevention. Specifically:

- The Drug and Alcohol Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program provided exclusively by PCES in local schools; and
- The Safety Training program, which rendered a Municipal Award of Excellence in 2017, offered exclusively to our municipal partners.

With Council's approval, PCES proposes to launch a comprehensive crime prevention program involving a social media page, based on the overwhelming success of the Parkland County Animal Shelter Facebook page. The focus of this social media page will be to create an environment where residents can be made

aware of criminal activity in their respective areas of the County. By heightening public awareness, residents will be more inclined to monitor their own communities and potentially reduce the fear of crime.

PCES has met with the RCMP, who have agreed to provide location information and types of criminal activities for inclusion on the social media page. The social media page, which is maintained and monitored by PCES, will then allow targeted high visibility patrols as a deterrent and reassurance for our residents in areas identified as crime “hot spots”. By acting on the information from the social media page, PCES can also expand our reporting statistics to include patrol information by zones or areas for ease of reference. Information gathered in the patrols and gained through the social media page will then be relayed to the RCMP.

Local crime watch groups, who are largely dependent on emails to receive their information, would also now be able to access the same information. PCES notes that crime watch groups have seen a marked decline in attendance at local meetings, and believes that the social media page may inspire a renewed sense of public interest. After the closure of some crime watch groups in the east of the County, PCES believes it is important to support the remaining crime watch groups through collaboration and information sharing.

Signs could be erected throughout the County to identify areas as “crime patrol areas” (similar to a neighbourhood watch) that could include matching logo / signage on County vehicles. PCES supports both initiatives, and suggests further consultation with other County departments responsible for fleet vehicles and/or signage.

PCES is also expanding the role of the current departmental Assistants so they are able to manage some of the clerical and court document requirements in order to free up Officers to conduct the necessary patrols and investigations. Finally, PCES is also proposing to have a Community Peace Officer stationed in the Public Works building in Entwistle. PCES believes that this will serve as a reassurance to the public, and deterrent to potential criminal activity.

Alternatives:

- I. To continue providing the services that Parkland County Enforcement Services has provided to date, without addressing resident concerns

Conclusion/Summary:

Parkland County Enforcement Services supports the development and implementation of a Social Media site to monitor and record criminal activity in the County, while providing a transparent account of the Enforcement Services activities with residents.

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