



City of Cambridge Police Department

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Robert C. Haas
Police Commissioner

Richard C. Rossi
City Manager

To: Richard C. Rossi, City Manager

From: Robert C. Haas, Police Commissioner

Date: Tuesday, July 1, 2014

Ref.: City Council Order #5 - dated June 30, 2014

Dear Sir:

As requested, I am responding to City Council Order #5, dated June 30, 2014, which relates to the issue of bicycle thefts taking place within the City, and further requests information relative to how this issue is being addressed, identification of prominent theft areas, and the implementation of bicycle recovery programs.

Prior to this order, the Police Department had identified this issue as a high priority for the summer months of 2014. The Department has already devoted one of its problem-solving meetings to this issue in anticipation of an increase in this type of crime. Thus far, there have been fifty-eight (58) bicycles reported stolen within the first five months of this year. Although still very much of a concern to the department, this actually represents 22% below the number of bicycles reported stolen during this same time frame in 2013, and 28% below the five-year average of thefts. As suggested in the Council Order, the department has been using various tactics to work on reducing that number, and in part, the data suggests that we are moving in the right direction. Some of those measures include hot-spot analysis, the use of bait bicycles that are GPS equipped, directed patrol activities in those areas where we have seen a pattern of bicycle thefts in the past, along with a public information strategy through our various social media outlets.

We know that this type of crime is largely dependent upon seasonal trends. In fact, it is the one crime that has the highest correlation to seasonal patterns. There have been thirty (30) bicycles reported stolen during the course of May and the early part of June across the City. Mid-Cambridge has had the most reported bicycle thefts during this time frame with six (6) thefts, followed by Riverside with five (5) reported thefts. The majority of the bicycles reported stolen

(66% of the 58 bicycles stolen) were locked or secured in some fashion. Most of these bicycles have been secured in public places.

The Crime Analysis Unit has done extensive research on the bicycle theft patterns and the chronic offenders from previous years. Presently, there are no emerging trends or patterns with respect to the bicycle thefts for this year. The Crime Analysis Unit will continue to actively monitor this situation in effort to isolate the locations, method of thefts, and potential suspects. All of this analysis will be factored into how we direct our police resources in pushing the number of thefts down. It is my belief that a concerted effort on the part of our patrol officers to step up enforcement will make a difference. This was evident in the recent arrest of several males attempting to steal two bicycles by cutting off the locks of two bicycles at the corner of Gilmore Street and Western Avenue. In addition to the directed patrol activities of our patrol officers, officers from the Investigations Section will play a significant role in performing bait operations and surveillance activities. Officers from the Community Service Unit in conjunction with our social media outlets will continue to inform the public in the best ways of securing their bicycles and playing a more active role in reporting any observed suspicious activity.

In terms of identifying a more effective way of having bike owners register their bicycles, and thereby serve as an added deterrent, we have been working with a small group of CRLS students who have developed a proposal of establishing a web-based registration program within the Boston metropolitan region. We have been meeting with these students over the last few months for the purpose of providing recommendations and assisting them to think about how best to market this concept. We have organized a regional meeting with area police departments to gauge their interest in participating in this concept and to provide some advice on how to best use this application. We see this venture as promising and we have been encouraging the students to pursue this enterprise (more information is presented the response to City Council Order #14, dated June 30, 2014).

Please let me know if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert C. Haas
Police Commissioner