



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:19-1640

Agenda Item Number: 3.

Agenda Date: 1/22/2019

In Control: Public Safety Committee

DEPARTMENT: Police Department

DEPARTMENT HEAD: William P. McManus, Chief of Police

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Proposed Mail Theft Task Force

SUMMARY:

On June 20, 2018, the San Antonio Police Department briefed the Governance Committee on Department efforts related to investigating and preventing mail theft in response to a Council Consideration Request (CCR) submitted by Council members Greg Brockhouse, Ana Sandoval and Clayton Perry. The CCR sought consideration for the creation of a mailbox theft task force to review issues surrounding mail theft to include the investigative process and the creation of guidelines to address best practices in reducing theft from cluster mailboxes. The SAPD currently works in coordination with the United States Postal Inspector's Office and various local, state and Federal law enforcement agencies to prevent and investigate mail theft crimes which has resulted in a significant decrease in mail theft compared to 2017.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Mail Crimes

Since 2017, there have been a total of 514 mail crimes reported with 20 individuals arrested. The table below provides a breakdown by service area. It is important to note that there was an overall 24% decrease in mail crime in 2018 compared to 2017, with the most significant decrease in the North service area:

Service Area	2017	2018
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North	155	55
Prue	66	86
East	26	16
West	22	23
South	11	22
Central	9	15
Bad Address	3	5
TOTAL	292	222

SAPD Response & Investigation

The SAPD Property Crime Detail investigates criminal mischief offenses which includes damage done to mailboxes for the purpose of stealing mail.

The SAPD Financial Crimes Unit, which includes the Forgery and White Collar Crimes Details, are responsible for investigating fraud and credit card abuse that may result from mail box break-ins and mail theft in coordination with the USPI. Investigations of this nature require considerable coordination and communication due to the potential for shared jurisdiction based on the individual characteristics of each case. For instance, the USPI is responsible for investigating crimes involving unopened mail whereas the SAPD oversees crimes in which mail has been tampered with or opened.

Outreach

SAPD through the SAFFE Units has provided information to HOA's on how to target harden mailboxes. Stronger locking mechanisms, new mailbox design, and increased lighting are some of recommendations that have been implemented in a few neighborhoods. SAPD will work to provide public service announcements via social media providing the public with the nature and scope of the problem with mail thefts while also supplying them with a reminder to report suspicious activity. The overarching message to the public is a better understanding of the multitude of crimes associated with mail theft.

Legislative Initiatives

Ultimately, the creation of more severe penalties for postal-related crime is necessary to discourage this type of criminal activity. During the 85th legislative session, San Antonio State Representative Ina Minjarez introduced HB 1747 that would make mail theft a state offense and establish penalties for the offense ranging from a state jail felony to a second degree felony depending on the number of pieces of mail appropriated. The bill, which was supported by the Texas Major Cities Chiefs, failed to pass.

The City has confirmed its support for the bill during the upcoming legislative session and has included the bill as part of its legislative agenda which was approved by the Intergovernmental Relations Committee during its October 10 meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

The SAPD will work to distribute information to the public and the neighborhood associations about the best practices to prevent mailbox theft to include: types of mailboxes utilized, location of mailboxes, lighting and related considerations. SAPD will also provide public service announcements discussing the nature of the

problem and ways to prevent.