



Memorandum

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Mayor Sam Liccardo

SUBJECT: PARK RANGER PROGRAM. **DATE:** January 29, 2019

Approved

Date

1/29/19

RECOMMENDATION

1. Accept the Park Ranger Program Status report and direct the City Manager to add Saturdays/ weekend hours to the Joint Patrols routine, or at least to SJPD-only patrols in the creeks.
2. Return to Council during the Budget process to discuss and determine whether to shift Joint Patrols out of voluntary assignment via Secondary Employment Unit, and into standard patrol.

BACKGROUND

Thank you to the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department (PRNS), Police Department (PD), Park Rangers, and to the citizen participants of the Working Group.

I have significant concerns regarding the safety of our Park Rangers where we have any expectation of engagement in law enforcement in a context where there exists a significant risk of assault. The joint patrols model has shown promise. Rangers provide expertise on the geographical areas and are subject experts for environmental protection laws, with police officers offering safety and enforcement.

I urge that we include Saturday patrols to provide safety for our creek partners and their volunteers, who provide a vital service in keeping our creeks clean and in helping us meet our legal obligations. Volunteers have reasonably expressed concerns about their safety. Additionally, we expect that our creek trail system should be heavily used for active recreation on weekends. Joint Patrols—or at least SJPD-only patrols—need to occur on the weekends, particularly Saturdays, to provide support to our partners, volunteers, and trail users.

Approximately 50% of the Joint Patrol shifts remain vacant because SJPD officers decline to bid on them. This raises the question about whether, if we believe that these patrols have a high priority, we should keep them voluntary. It should tell us something that we see such a high percentage of the Street Crimes Unit's activity—nearly half of its felony and misdemeanor arrests, and more than half of its warrant arrests in the first five weeks of SCU patrols—on the trails and in the creeks. Homeless residents in the creeks appear particularly vulnerable, and suffer too-frequent assaults and victimization. Rather

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

January 28, 2019

Subject: Park Ranger program

than making it a voluntary assignment through SEU, this should become part of SJPD's standard patrol duties, and we should discuss through the budgetary process what it takes to make it so.