

Jul 9, 2025

Summary

Lewis Allen, as chair of the Mission Grove Neighborhood Alliance, provided updates on community engagement, city fines, and legal matters, including the ongoing pursuit against the city's elimination of video for public speaking.

Scott Richmond from the fire department discussed new fire hazard maps, Fourth of July fireworks mitigation, the recent Dollar Tree fire, and the department's new master plan.

Lieutenant Brandy Merrill informed attendees about Senate Bill 602 requiring notarized trespass authorizations, while Lashon Halley announced recruiting for a youth court program and highlighted the citizens' academy.

Mike McCarthy, Vice Chair of R Now, reported a victory with the March Joint Powers Authority regarding the West Campus and discussed R Now's community input initiative.

Jessica Qattawi, Chair of the Riverside Neighborhood Partnership, announced an RNP lunch fundraiser, the Good Neighbor Awards, and a back-to-school backpack giveaway.

Brian Kerr also presented an update on the Western Mutual Water District customer portal, announced a "City Hall Insider" training session, and provided an update on the Kmart project.

Larry Gonzales, the police chief, updated the community on staffing levels, plans for a new police headquarters, and legislative developments affecting law enforcement, including AB1331 and SB 805. The Chief also discussed legislative concerns such as SB 634 and AB 992, explained Prop 36's impact, addressed jail overcrowding and AB 109, clarified ICE operations, detailed protest management strategies, and outlined the department's CCW policy. He also shared the long-term vision for police station development, acknowledged challenges in the Magnolia corridor, reported on crime trends, and highlighted mental wellness initiatives.

Lewis Allen, MGNA Chair, paid tribute to Erin Snyder, who volunteered in the Community for over 25 years.

Details

- **Meeting Overview and Community Engagement** Lewis Allen, as chair of the Mission Grove Neighborhood Alliance, welcomed attendees to the meeting, emphasizing the inclusion of surrounding communities like Woodrest and parts of the county ([00:00:00](#)). He highlighted the importance of signing in for email notifications and noted that a \$12 annual fee allows for voting membership. He also mentioned the legal fund, which exceeds \$6,000, despite settling issues related to the Kmart project. The Alliance continues to pursue other legal matters, such as the city's elimination of video for public speaking, which they consider a First Amendment violation, and the theft of their signs ([00:04:23](#)).
- **City Fines and Fire Maps** Lewis informed the community about new city fines, including a \$45 charge for overpacked trash cans and a \$105 fee for trash can replacement more than once every 10 years ([00:05:45](#)). He also shared updates on new fire maps, noting that some residents have seen their annual fire insurance costs increase significantly, from \$1,200 to \$3,400. He pointed out that Mission Grove is on the edge of a red area on the fire map, making it vulnerable to fires from both directions ([00:06:51](#)).
- **Fire Department Updates** Scott Richmond from the fire department provided updates on the new California fire hazard severity zone maps, which have expanded high and very high-hazard areas, impacting communities like Mission Grove ([00:09:09](#)). He explained that these maps redefine the city's responsibility for fuel mitigation in undeveloped areas and that the fire prevention department is developing a plan to address this. Scott also proudly announced that the local fire department is an ISO Class 1 city and internationally accredited, which often results in reduced insurance costs for consumers ([00:10:25](#)).
- **Fourth of July Fireworks and Master Plan** Scott discussed the fire department's efforts to mitigate fireworks use during the Fourth of July, emphasizing the extreme fire danger in Southern California due to its topography, temperature, and Santa Ana winds ([00:12:49](#)). He described the successful operation this year, which involved arson investigators working extended hours and the use of drones by police partners, resulting in many citations. Additionally, Scott mentioned the fire department's new master plan, led by Chief McKinster and developed by Trident, which aims to create a 5, 10, and 15-year outlook to meet the city's growing needs for infrastructure and personnel ([00:14:08](#)).
- **Dollar Tree Fire Incident** Scott provided details on the recent Dollar Tree fire, which occurred in a small arroyo behind the Dollar Tree, between Kohl's and a commercial strip mall. He reported that the fire covered about 1.8 acres, took two hours to control, and caused no damage to any businesses. Scott noted that the fire is under investigation, and its early occurrence in the season with relatively high fuel moisture made it unique ([00:16:17](#)).
- **Trespass Authorization Updates** Lieutenant Brandy Merrill from the police department provided an update on Senate Bill 602, which requires trespass authorizations for private property, typically businesses or shopping centers, to be notarized ([00:23:51](#)). This change

means that all previously submitted forms are invalid and need to be redone. The Police Department and the city are hosting free workshops for property owners and business owners to facilitate this notarization process and ensure continued enforcement of trespassing laws ([00:25:03](#)).

- **Community Programs and Initiatives** Lashon Halley announced recruiting efforts for a youth court program aimed at teenagers, which allows them to participate in real court cases as jurors, bailiffs, and attorneys. She also highlighted the citizens' academy, a 10-week program that provides participants with an in-depth understanding of the police department's operations, noting that Brian and Lewis are graduates of this program. Brian Kerr reiterated the value of the Citizens Academy, calling it a great program ([00:29:36](#)).
- **March Joint Powers Authority and Land Use** Mike McCarthy, Vice Chair of R Now, reported a significant victory with the March Joint Powers Authority's decision on May 12 not to entitle the West Campus with warehouses ([00:30:32](#)). He noted that the land use authority for this area has since been transferred to the county, and R Now is now proactively seeking community input on future land use. Mike explained their "green dot" and "red dot" system for collecting community preferences on development ideas, encouraging residents to participate ([00:31:57](#)).
- **Western Mutual Water District Customer Portal** Brian Kerr presented a quick update on the Western Mutual Water District customer portal, which allows residents to monitor their water usage ([00:34:28](#)). He demonstrated how to access daily and monthly water consumption data, highlighting features such as setting alarms for unusual water usage. Brian mentioned that he would post the portal link and Gregory's, the customer service representative's, phone number on the website ([00:35:42](#)).
- **Riverside Neighborhood Partnership Events** Jessica Qattawi, Chair of the Riverside Neighborhood Partnership (RNP), announced an RNP lunch fundraiser at Anton Italian restaurant, with 15% of net sales on Saturday going to the organization ([00:40:32](#)). She also promoted the 13th annual Good Neighbor Awards, an event recognizing individuals who have made a difference in the community, and encouraged nominations via a QR code. Jessica also detailed a back-to-school backpack giveaway on August 9th, where RNP and SoCal Youth United aim to distribute 100 backpacks, specifically focusing on youth aged 13 and older ([00:41:31](#)).
- **City Hall Insider Training** Brian Kerr announced a "City Hall Insider" training session on July 22nd at 5:30 PM in the city hall chambers, led by the city clerk ([00:42:29](#)). This session aims to educate citizens on how city hall operates, including meeting procedures and how to effectively speak or submit comments. The goal is to make residents more comfortable participating in city affairs ([00:43:34](#)).
- **Kmart Project Update** Lewis Allen provided an update on the Kmart project, noting that new plans have been submitted for 180 units, configured as three-story townhouses with garages. This is a significant reduction from the initial proposal of 347 units and the negotiated 250

units, and the project now includes 400 parking spaces within the development. He thanked Catherine Barrett Fischer for their help in negotiating the previous reduction in units, and mentioned the new project aligns more with the area's aesthetic and appears to circumvent certain parking regulations due to attached garages ([00:44:59](#)) ([00:47:44](#)).

- **Police Department Staffing and New Headquarters** The police chief updated the community on staffing levels, reporting that the department is close to being fully staffed with 410 sworn officers, compared to 376 last year, and expects to reach full staffing of 432 by the end of the year ([00:54:00](#)). He also announced plans for a new police headquarters, which will involve tearing down the current 60-year-old Orange Street station and building a new one in its place. The chief indicated that the department will need to relocate for approximately a year and a half during the construction period ([00:55:53](#)).
- **Legislative Updates Affecting Law Enforcement** The chief discussed ongoing legislative developments, particularly those at the federal level concerning ICE and immigration, which he noted were unexpected after previous legislative victories ([00:57:40](#)). He highlighted AB1331, which is in its early stages and proposes to restrict law enforcement access to business cameras, a measure the department is advocating to include carveouts for. He also mentioned SB 805, which deals with face coverings and is currently in its nascent stages of development ([00:58:41](#)).
- **Legislative Concerns** The chief discussed several legislative concerns, including Senate Bill (SB) 634, which aims to reverse the "Grants Pass" decision and allow cities to create anti-camping ordinances, and AB 992, an educational requirement for officers that has since been significantly watered down ([00:59:52](#)). He also highlighted SB 274, which concerns the retention period for camera system data, noting that law enforcement is urging people to monitor this bill ([01:02:03](#)).
- **Prop 36 and Public Safety** The chief explained that Prop 36, despite some challenges, serves as a useful tool for law enforcement by reclassifying repeated misdemeanor thefts and hard drug possessions as felonies after two convictions. This addresses previous issues where individuals faced no consequences for multiple arrests related to petty theft or drug possession, particularly after Prop 47 reclassified simple possession as a misdemeanor ([01:03:26](#)) ([01:05:33](#)). However, he noted that Riverside County faces a specific problem with jail space for non-violent felons, hindering the immediate impact of Prop 36 ([01:05:33](#)).
- **Jail Overcrowding and AB 109** The chief addressed the critical issue of jail overcrowding in Riverside County, stating that while state prisons have ample space, county jails are forced to release approximately 50 non-violent felons daily due to limited capacity ([01:06:36](#)). He emphasized the goal of undoing AB 109, a realignment bill intended to alleviate overcrowding, and pointed out that a significant portion of beds in the Indo jail remain unoccupied due to lack of funding ([01:08:36](#)).
- **ICE Operations and Local Jurisdiction** The chief clarified the Riverside Police Department's limited jurisdiction over federal agencies like ICE, stating that while ICE previously notified local

law enforcement of their presence when serving felony warrants, their standard operating procedures seem to have changed, leading to unannounced operations ([01:09:30](#)). He also explained that Senate Bill (SB) 54, which designates California as a sanctuary state, has not significantly altered their operations, as their existing foreign nationals policy aligns with its provisions ([01:11:27](#)).

- **Protest Management** The chief detailed the police department's approach to managing protests, emphasizing their strategy of monitoring large-scale events, allowing protestors to exercise their First Amendment rights, and intervening only when an antagonist or problem maker is identified ([01:12:34](#)). He highlighted the use of technology like drones and undercover officers to enhance real-time monitoring and response capabilities during protests ([01:14:31](#)). He also discussed the concept of a "host ordinance" to hold property owners accountable for incidents during protests, drawing parallels to ordinances used for unruly college parties ([01:15:40](#)).
- **CCW Policy and Gun Seizures** The chief outlined the department's policy for interactions with CCW holders, stating that individuals should notify officers during traffic stops or other engagements, but not in casual encounters ([01:18:12](#)). He noted that while gun seizures significantly increased in 2022 and 2023, those numbers have since been cut in half, without a clear reason for the change ([01:19:37](#)).
- **Future Police Station Development** The chief shared the long-term vision for police station development in Riverside, aiming for four freestanding police stations with patrol components in each of the city's districts, similar to the model used in Los Angeles ([01:21:53](#)). He mentioned the current progress with the North Neighborhood Policing Center and expressed hope for continued development to accommodate future growth and decentralization ([01:23:07](#)).
- **Magnolia Corridor Challenges** The chief addressed the ongoing challenges in the Magnolia corridor, identifying it as an area with high rates of homelessness, mental illness, and drug activity, largely due to its proximity to county facilities for the mentally ill and sobering centers ([01:24:02](#)). He noted the collaborative efforts with the sheriff's department to address the high volume of calls for service in this area ([01:25:27](#)).
- **Crime Trends and Gang Activity** The chief reported that overall crime in Riverside has decreased across all categories, including property crimes, which was a surprising outcome given initial concerns regarding Prop 36 ([01:29:09](#)). He also stated that gang activity has remained steady, attributing this to the aggressive efforts of their gang unit to build cases and incarcerate individuals ([01:27:57](#)).
- **Mental Wellness and Specialized Training** The chief highlighted the department's focus on mental wellness and substance abuse issues, noting that their specialized teams, such as the SBAT and PET teams, are specifically trained to handle calls involving mentally ill or homeless individuals ([01:30:32](#)). He emphasized a shift in response protocols, prioritizing de-escalation

and gathering information about an individual's history and medication before engagement ([01:31:27](#)).

- **Community Tribute and Upcoming Election** Lewis acknowledged Erin Snyder, a long-time community volunteer and activist, for her contributions to Riverside and shared news of their life-threatening illness, extending thoughts and prayers to them and their family ([01:33:33](#)). The speaker also announced an upcoming meeting in August with the two finalists for the 63rd Assembly District election, two weeks prior to the election, and requested assistance in ensuring Natasha, one of the candidates, confirms their attendance ([01:34:47](#)).

