



## **Questions and Answers About Fulton-El Camino Recreation and Park District Police Services**

### **What is happening with the District's park police service?**

FECRPD's Board of Directors is considering options for how park safety services should be delivered in the future. This review is based on findings and recommendations of two assessments conducted by independent law enforcement experts for the District in recent years.

### **What staffing and hours do the park police maintain?**

The FECRPD park police is made up of 10 part-time staff. Typically, one or two officers are on duty per day for approximately 6 hours in total.

### **What services does FECRPD park police provide?**

FECRPD park police patrol an area that is 38 square miles and includes 44 parks located in the District, as well as other park and recreation districts that contract with FECRPD. In addition to patrols, FECRPD park police are dispatched by Sacramento County Sheriff's Office to certain calls at parks.

### **What police protection is provided when FECRPD park police are not on duty?**

Sacramento Sheriff deputies are dispatched to all serious incidents and suspected criminal activity at the parks, regardless of whether FECRPD park police are on duty. When FECRPD park police are not on duty, Sheriff's deputies are dispatched to all calls.

### **Why does FECRPD operate its own police department for an area served by Sacramento County Sheriff's Office?**

It is not typical for a recreation and park district to have a police department. In fact, FECRPD is one of only three in California with a police department and is the smallest. The current police department evolved from a reserve park ranger program started in the 1960s, which developed into an armed ranger program around 2000, followed by the creation of an officer position in 2012.

### **What are the costs for park police services?**

Park police costs have increased from \$570,000 in the 2021-22 budget to \$811,000 last year. Significant increases include higher dispatching charges from the Sacramento County Sheriff, which recently increased these charges by nearly \$370,000 for the past two years. The District currently faces up to \$1 million in additional costs per year to bring the police program up to modern policing standards (not including new equipment and technology). This additional funding would need to be taken from other District programs and services.

### **Do neighboring recreation and park districts in our region help pay for FECRPD police?**

There are other districts that contract for services from FECRPD. However, these contracts do not cover the cost of the services provided. In addition, four neighboring park and recreation districts terminated their contracts for park police services in recent years. As a result, contract revenue has declined from \$415,000 in 2021-22 to \$195,000 in 2024-25. The District has approached neighboring park and recreation districts about forming a formal partnership to share the cost and management of a park police department. However, no other districts expressed interest in forming a partnership.

### **What role does park police spending play in FECRPD's funding challenges?**

Due to the decline in contract revenue and increase in costs, the amount of money FECRPD must directly spend on park police has increased from \$104,000 to \$443,000. These additional funds (approximately \$338,000) have been taken from other areas of the District's budget or reserves. Like many small park

and recreation districts, FECRPD faces general funding shortfalls for its programs and facilities because our tax revenue is insufficient to cover our operating expenses, leading to a significant amount of deferred maintenance at our parks. The District is working to reduce this deferred maintenance by asking voters to approve a facilities bond in November 2024.

**Why did the District spend money on independent assessments of the park police program?**

There have been significant changes in law enforcement in recent years, including new mandates from the State of California, as well as changing community expectations and rules around policing practices, training requirements, equipment and transparency. Since FECRPD is a recreation and park district, it sought outside experts in law enforcement to advise on whether its part-time park police program was meeting modern standards.

**Why were multiple assessments completed?**

The District commissioned an initial review by the former Chief of the Sacramento Police Department (retired). Based on this review, the District engaged a firm that specializes in evaluating law enforcement agencies to conduct a comprehensive assessment. This review included interviews with park police staff and other districts that contract for FECRPD park police services.

**What did the assessments find and recommend?**

Both assessments found deficiencies in numerous areas, including hiring practices, background checks, training certifications, data tracking, and inconsistent protocols. The assessments also identified deficiencies in department leadership, communication, and other areas. Both assessments concluded that the current part-time park police model does not meet standards for modern policing. The assessments offered a range of options for consideration, including bringing the part-time department up to modern standards, transitioning to a full-time department, and transitioning to alternative service models, such as a contracted security service.

**What has been done since the assessments?**

Beth Johnson, a retired chief from the City of Novato, was hired in 2023 to serve as new, interim chief. The District contracted with a consultant to evaluate and document prior background checks on all officers. Many of the additional recommendations from the assessments would require substantial additional funding (in excess of \$1 million annually), which would need to be reallocated from other areas of the District's budget.

**What options are being considered?**

Options for park safety services are being formulated now for the Board's consideration. The options will also indicate the potential impacts on funding for parks and recreation programs. In August, FECRPD's Security and Community Relations Committee discussed some initial options based on the recommendations made by the independent assessments. These included creating a full-time police department, contracting with a private security company, and/or adding new community enrichment and ambassador positions at FECRPD.