

Commissioner Charley Lu

COUNCIL LIAISON: Councilmember Janet Braun

PUBLIC COMMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

The City Council welcomes public input. If you would like to comment on an agenda item, members of the public may participate by means of one of the following options:

Option 1:

Participants will be able to “raise their hand” using the Zoom icon during the meeting, and they will have their microphone un-muted during comment portions of the agenda to speak for up to 3 minutes per item.

Option 2:

Email public comment(s) to pscpubliccomment@southpasadenaca.gov.

Public Comments received in writing will not be read aloud at the meeting but will be part of the meeting record. There is no word limit on emailed Public Comment(s). Please make sure to indicate:

- 1) Agenda item you are submitting public comment on.
- 2) Submit by no later than 6:00 p.m. August 11, 2024.

NOTE: Pursuant to State law, the Commission may not discuss or take action on issues not on the meeting agenda, except that members of the Commission or staff may briefly respond to statements made or questions posed by persons exercising public testimony rights (Government Code Section 54954.2). Staff may be asked to follow up on such items.

1. **Public Comment**

PRESENTATION

2. **Presentation of South Pasadena’s Community Emergency Response Training (CERT).**
Discussion on South Pasadena’s Community Emergency Response Training.

ACTION/DISCUSSION

3. **Minutes of the Public Safety Commission Regular Meeting of May 13, 2024**
Consideration of the minutes of the Public Safety Commission Regular Meeting of May 13, 2024.

INFORMATION REPORTS

4. **Discussion on Catalytic Converter and Copper Thefts**
Receive and File Report on Catalytic Converter and Copper Thefts.

COMMUNICATIONS

5. **City Council Liaison Communications**
6. **Staff Liaison Communications**
8. **Commissioner Communications**

ADJOURNMENT

PUBLIC ACCESS TO AGENDA DOCUMENTS

The complete agenda packet may be viewed on the City's website, www.southpasadenaca.gov.

Meeting recordings will be available for public viewing after the meeting. Recordings will be uploaded to the City's YouTube Channel no later than the next business day after the meeting. The City's YouTube Channel may be accessed at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnR169ohzi1AlewD_6sfwDA/featured

ACCOMMODATIONS

The City of South Pasadena wishes to make all of its public meetings accessible to the public. If special assistance is needed to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Clerk's Division via e-mail at CityClerk@southpasadenaca.gov or by calling (626) 403-7230. Upon request, this agenda will be made available in appropriate alternative formats to persons with disabilities. Notification at least 48 hours prior to the meeting will assist staff in assuring that reasonable arrangements can be made to provide accessibility to the meeting (28 CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA Title II).

I declare under penalty of perjury that I posted this notice of agenda on the bulletin board in the courtyard of City Hall at 1414 Mission Street, South Pasadena, CA, and the City's website at www.southpasadenaca.gov on August 9, 2024 as required by law.

August 9, 2024

Date

Davit Ghazaryan for Chief Brian Solinsky
Brian Solinsky, Chief of Police



CITY OF SOUTH PASADENA
VIA HYBRID / IN-PERSON
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
1424 MISSION STREET, SOUTH PASADENA, CA 91030

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Monday, May 13, 2024, at 8:30 a.m.

CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting of the South Pasadena Public Safety Commission was called to order by Chair Cervantes on Monday, May 13, 2024, at 8:31 a.m. in the Amedee O. "Dick" Richards, Jr. Council Chambers, located at 1424 Mission Street, South Pasadena, California.

ROLL CALL:

<u>PRESENT</u>	Chair	Walter Cervantes
	Vice-Chair	Armando Munoz
	Commissioner	Ed Donnelly
	Commissioner	Marcos Holguin
	Commissioner	Charley Lu

<u>ABSENT</u>	Commissioner	Bethesda Gee
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Tanya Brittin, Police Clerk II, announced a quorum.

OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Brian Solinsky, Police Chief, Paul Riddle, Fire Chief, Janet Braun, Councilmember
Tanya Brittin, Police Clerk II, Kevin Tiet, Management Assistant were present at Roll Call.

OFFICIALS ABSENT:

None

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Gee entered the dais at 8:33 a.m.

1. Public Comment:

Zoom Public Comment

PRESENTATION

No items.

CONSENT AGENDA

Items listed under the Consent Agenda are considered by the City Manager to be routine in nature and will be enacted by one motion unless a public comment has been received or Councilmember requests otherwise, in which case the item will be removed for separate consideration. Any motion relating to an ordinance, or resolution shall also waive the reading of the ordinance or resolution and include its introduction or adoption as appropriate.

2. Crime Statistics April 2024

ACTION/DISCUSSION

No items.

INFORMATION REPORTS

4. Update on the City of South Pasadena Hate Crimes

Detective Richard Lee gave update on City of South Pasadena Hate Crimes.

COMMUNICATIONS

5. City Council Liaison Communications

No items.

6. Staff Liaison Communications

Police Chief Brian Solinsky updated the Commission on recruitment efforts and officers in training.

7. Commissioner Communications

Commissioner Lu spoke highly of the diversity of police officers, highlighting Asian officers.

Commissioner Donnelly touched on the incident that occurred on Brent Ave.

Chair Cervantes spoke regarding the recruitment of retirees of the armed forces for Police Department employment and Detective Lee's presentation at the Senior Center.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further matters, Chair Cervantes adjourned the meeting of the Public Safety Commission at 9:25 a.m., to the next Regular Public Safety Commission meeting scheduled for Monday, August 12, 2024 at 8:30 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Tanya Brittin
Police Clerk II

Approved By:

Walter Cervantes
Chair



Public Safety Commission Agenda Report

ITEM NO. 5

DATE: August 12, 2024
FROM: Brian Solinsky, Chief of Police
SUBJECT: Discussion on Catalytic Converter and Copper Thefts

Recommendations

It is recommended that the PSC receive and file this report on catalytic converter and copper thefts.

Background

The incidence and frequency of catalytic converter and copper wire thefts in South Pasadena have escalated significantly over the past four years, leading to considerable hardship and expense for the community and further victimizing law-abiding citizens. This issue extends beyond South Pasadena and the surrounding region, having reached a national scale of epidemic proportions.

According to State Farm Insurance, catalytic converter thefts have decreased in recent years. In 2022, the company paid over \$50 million in claims related to catalytic converter thefts. This amount decreased to \$41.7 million in 2023. State statistics for copper theft have not been calculated.

The surge in thefts can be attributed to the high market value of the precious metals—rhodium, palladium, and platinum—contained within catalytic converters and copper wire from electrical utility boxes.

Catalytic converters can be easily removed from vehicles using a reciprocating saw, a process that does not require sophisticated criminal expertise. Once removed, the catalytic converters are sold to scrap metal dealers or recyclers for immediate cash. Just as catalytic converters, the theft of copper wire from electrical utility boxes or lighting equipment takes minutes to complete. Recyclers typically pay between \$50 and \$250 per catalytic converter and then extract the precious metals for substantial profit.

The quantities of these metals vary by model; however, on average, one catalytic converter contains approximately 1-2 grams of rhodium, 2-7 grams of palladium, and 3-7 grams of platinum. As of the current market rates, rhodium is valued at \$4,725 per ounce, palladium at \$893 per ounce, platinum at \$915 per ounce and copper at \$4 per pound.

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Catalytic converter and copper wire thefts pose significant challenges for law enforcement agencies due to the absence of serial numbers or other identifying markers. Under current California law, a police officer encountering an individual in possession of a catalytic converter or copper wire under suspicious circumstances must identify the rightful owner before making an arrest for theft or possession of stolen property. If the officer is unable to determine the rightful owner, the individual in possession of the property may be released in the absence of additional evidence of criminal activity.

Police departments nationwide, including those here in South Pasadena, have promoted "Etch and Catch" events where residents can have their identification information etched into their catalytic converters to facilitate owner identification if stolen. However, the limited number of events and resources available make this an insufficient long-term solution.

To curb the rising thefts and ease prosecution requirements, several cities across the state have adopted municipal ordinances that make the possession of a catalytic converter without proper documentation a misdemeanor. While this makes it easier to prove the elements of the crime, it still requires a willing prosecution team to file criminal charges.

Several states, including California, have already enacted legislation aiming to stifle rouge-recycling entities by requiring proof of ownership when purchasing catalytic converters and bulk copper, better documentation, fingerprinting, photographing, and imposing stringent reporting requirements.

In the past three years, the number of catalytic converter thefts in the city of South Pasadena is as follows:

Year	Number of incidents
2021	97
2022	106
2023	107

Discussion/Analysis

In February 2022, following the direction of the City Council, staff presented a report on catalytic converter thefts to the Public Safety Commission (PSC) and proposed a letter of support for several legislative bills. The PSC approved the letters, which were subsequently sent to various elected officials, including the State Senator, State Assemblymember, Governor, and State Attorney General. The letters requested support for enhanced legislation to address illegal operations within the scrap metal and recycling industries related to the recycling and processing of catalytic converters.

The letter of support submitted encompassed the following:

1. A request to establish a task force or Blue-Ribbon committee to meet and hear testimony from key stakeholders before the end of the year.
2. Express support for Senate Bill 919 (SB919), Vehicles: catalytic converters, which required:
 - a. New and used motor vehicle dealers to permanently mark the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) on the catalytic converter of any vehicle before they sell it.
 - b. Allow metal recyclers to only buy catalytic converters with a clearly visible and untampered VIN. They also would have to maintain detailed records of the seller for each specific catalytic converter and make those records accessible to law enforcement.
 - c. Sales documentation on catalytic converters, as well as increasing fines, intended to discourage theft.
3. Expressed support for Senate Bill 366 (SB366), which extended the operation of California's Vehicle Dismantling Strike Team. The Strike Team is a multiagency collaborative effort under the purview of the California Department of Motor Vehicles with the mission of enforcing regulatory laws related to unlicensed and unregulated automobile dismantling, including tax evasion, environmental, and public health impacts.
4. Express support for Assembly Bill 1659 (AB 1659), changing the definition of an auto dismantler to anyone who keeps two or more used catalytic converters that are not attached to a motor vehicle. The Bill includes making it a crime for a person to act as an automobile dismantler without having an established place of business and having a current, valid license. In addition to the definition changes and clarification, the Bill amends Penal Code sec. 13899, and requires the California Highway Patrol to organize a regional property crimes task force to assist local law enforcement having elevated levels of property crime, including, but not limited to, organized retail theft, vehicle burglary, and theft of vehicle parts and accessories. The task force shall provide local law enforcement in the identified region with logistical support and other law enforcement resources, including, but not limited to, personnel and equipment.

Although SB 919 did not pass during the legislative session, both SB 366 and AB 1659 were approved and have become law.

Catalytic Converter Theft Prevention

The most common methods of catalytic converter theft prevention include:

Strategic Parking

- Utilize Secure Garages: If possible, park your vehicle in a secure garage. Position the exhaust pipe side close to a wall, making it more difficult for thieves to access the catalytic converter.
- Park Lower Clearance Vehicles Outside: If you own multiple vehicles, park those with lower ground clearance outside, protecting vehicles with higher ground clearance (such as SUVs) from being targeted.

Paint Your Converter

- Use bright, high-heat car spray paint on your catalytic converter. This can deter theft and alert resellers or authorities to a potentially stolen part.

Add Your VIN or a Label System

- Engrave Your VIN: Have your catalytic converter engraved with your vehicle's VIN. This makes it easier to trace if it is stolen and sold. Brightly painting the converter can also prompt authorities to search for the engraved VIN or other identifiers that lead back to you.
- Use a Label System: Consider purchasing a catalytic converter label system. These labels usually display a website that authorities or resellers can visit to identify the registered owner of a stolen part.

Set Your Alarm

- If your vehicle is equipped with an alarm system, configure it to respond to vibrations. Since catalytic converters are often stolen using a saw, the vibration from this activity may trigger the alarm.

Add a Shield or Lock

- Install a Shield: For some vehicles, you can fit metal panels that serve as a shield between the catalytic converter and the road, significantly increasing difficulty for thieves.
- Use a Lock: Catalytic converter locks are also available, making it much harder for someone to remove the part. Professional installation by a mechanic may be required.

Weld Your Converter in Place

- Bolted-in catalytic converters can be more vulnerable to theft than those that are welded in place. Consult with a mechanic to see if your catalytic converter can be welded securely. Note that some vehicles may already have catalytic converters that are welded by the manufacturer.

Copper Wire Theft Prevention

Penal Code Section 487j state, "Every person who steals, takes, or carries away copper materials of another, including, but not limited to, copper wire, copper cable, copper tubing, and copper piping, which are of a value exceeding nine hundred fifty dollars (\$950) is guilty of grand theft."

Bulk copper and wire thefts often target utility junction boxes, public lighting poles, and construction sites. To effectively combat such thefts, it is advisable to implement a comprehensive neighborhood watch program that encourages the reporting of suspicious activities. Additionally, any loose wire or piping at construction sites should be securely locked when not in use.

Discussion on Catalytic Converter and Copper Thefts

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Cities like Los Angeles and Pasadena have introduced reward programs for information that leads to the arrest and conviction of copper theft suspects. Furthermore, several law enforcement agencies have established specialized task forces dedicated to addressing heavy metal thefts.

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact associated with the discussion of this report.