

Hi folks,

First, I'd like to thank all the CyberWatch members in South Shores for helping make our community one of the safest in the South Bay.

As of today, CyberWatch has 612 members. All of them are South Shores residents. Their vigilance, involvement and using CyberWatch as a conduit between themselves and the Harbor LAPD is what makes things happen. It's what keeps us all safe.

Cyberwatch has also been blessed to enjoy a long term partnership with the Harbor LAPD's Burglary division...and most important...our Senior Lead Officer Melody Shortle. We're indeed lucky to have Melody join us this evening.

Last month, CyberWatch began its 10th year helping keep South Shores safe. A far cry from that 1st year when we had 17 burglaries.

Annual Summary of Criminal Activity in South Shores for 2021

Home Burglaries: 4

Two in January in the same vacant house. Two in December from garages with garage doors left open.

Attempted Burglary: 1

In May at Bogdanovich Park Office.

Stolen Vehicles: 3

Two in March on Vallecito and Amirante. One in July on Anabas.

Stolen Bicycle: 1

This occurred on Cumbre Drive.

Grand Thefts (\$950.01 or more): 3

Petty Thefts (\$950.00 or less): 3

Theft from Person: 1

Last April on Moray at 7-11.

Vehicle Break-in Thefts: 14

Four on 25th St. Two on 37th St. One each on 22nd St. Mantis, Grenadier, Gurnard, Paseo del mar, Baleria and Palacios.

The Trend Now:

Times have changed, but the bad guys are still out there. They still want our stuff...without paying for it. So, they've shifted their criminal activities from burglarizing our homes to burglarizing our cars.

If you consistently park your car on the street or driveway, accept the fact that between 2 and 4 in the morning...somebody's looking into your car for something to steal. Most victims don't bother filing a police report...because of the time it takes...and the losses being relatively small. Often a handful of change from the console.

The bigger, more costly crime is the theft of catalytic converters. This auto part contains precious metals. Platinum, palladium, rhodium, gold. Easily removed from many cars with a small, battery-powered hand tool. Takes only a minute or two.

If you have your car on the street or in your driveway, you may want to consider having a rebar cage built around your catalytic converter. This cage will deter crooks from removing them. Each stolen converter nets the thief a few hundred dollars in the precious metals' resale market. Your cost in replacing them: anywhere from \$700 to 800 dollars up to several thousand.

Local body shops have quoted us \$125 to 200 dollars for installing a rebar cage. Something to think about, folks...

On a separate subject, over the past couple of years CyberWatch has been receiving a lot of calls, emails and personal contacts from members desperately asking for our help about that eyesore we all know as Western Ave. Especially the stretch approaching South Shores. But really, the problem runs the entire corridor from 1st St. to 25th St.

The complaints have to do with litter thrown from cars, trash dumping, car tires, overgrown weeds...all with an eye level view of certifiably dead trees. Some folks are calling Western Ave....."Tobacco Road".

Last July, Rich and I reached out to Councilman Buscaino's office. After much back-and-forth conversation, there was a Zoom discussion last September among Ryan Ferguson, Rich Scandaliato and myself to address the topic.

In that meeting, we learned that this visual pollution on Western Ave. stemmed from the fact that the City of LA's Street Services Dept. had abandoned their regular clean-up and maintenance schedule of this stretch for over a year.

Why? Western Ave. is a state highway. There had been a contract in place for CalTrans...a state agency...to reimburse Street Services..a city agency... for cleaning up and maintaining Western Ave.

Then, nearly 18 months ago, Caltrans stopped sending reimbursement funds to Street Services.

So, Street Services...said. "OK...no money...no work." And the trash and litter piled up. And the dead trees...well, they're still dead. Ryan explained that he was attempting to have California Conservation Corps replace the dead trees. "They have the trees. They have the staff ready to install them. The stumbling block now is they can't do the work without a lane closure permit. This has to be obtained through CalTrans. It could take quite a while. It's like pulling teeth without being a dentist and without tools to do the job."

Ryan stated that he expected the replacement trees would be planted sometime in November (2021).

(Two weeks ago, the 7 dead trees were removed. Workers stated they had no idea when new trees would be installed)

Ryan also explained part of the problem in getting Street Services to do their job is that the contract between the state's CalTrans and the City's Street Services Dept. had long ago expired. "A new contract would have to be brokered and that was being worked on". Ryan said he was reaching out to State Assemblyman Patrick O'Donnell for his help in the matter.

That Zoom meeting conversation with Rich, Ryan and me took place last September. After months of inaction, CyberWatch tried following up with several emails, voice mails and telephone calls to Councilman Joe.

As of today, there's been no response.

Our message to Joe: There is so much we can accomplish for South Shores by having a productive dialogue. When calls are not returned and you go dark on us...nothing gets done. South Shores then loses.

If we can get the communication going again, South Shores will benefit.

I personally dislike being a pest. But thanks to the continuous encouragement from CyberWatch members, it's become my job. Somebody's gotta do it.

We hope you understand, Joe. Let's please reconnect and get some things done for South Shores...it's the place we both call home. Our neighbors deserve better treatment than being ignored.

Now, I'd like to introduce a young woman with a remarkable background. Officer Melody Shortle has been our Acting Senior Lead Officer for nearly 2 years. During that time, she partnered with Officer Paul Winter, who was on medical leave and has now retired.

Melody joined the LAPD at around age 21. She's been with the force for the past 18 years...most of that time as a patrol officer.

She began her career in the Devonshire Division, worked west Los Angeles, followed by service in the Hollenbeck Division and finally, is now with us here in the Harbor Division.

She's a great communicator and is called upon very frequently to train new rookies coming out of the police academy.

She comes from a long line of police officers. Her father is still a police officer. Melody's husband is a police officer as are also several cousins. She has a brother who is a deputy, as I recall.

It's been a real pleasure working with Melody as our CyberWatch partner. She has been especially responsive to our issues...and what's more impressive, she never gives up. Melody sticks with the issue until its resolved. She has a great work ethic and that rare spirit of wanting to help.

So, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you our Senior Lead Officer, Melody Shortle...