



Memorandum

May 13, 2020

To: Matthew Murray
Chief of Police

From: Linda Watts
Lieutenant-Patrol

Subject: Cruising Yakima Avenue Report

The purpose of this report is to outline the recent history of the Cruising Yakima Avenue event. Over the past few years community members have participated in “Cruising the Ave” a free, family- friendly event that has been a tradition for many generations. It is much like a flashback in time that provides a chance to relive part of our community’s past featuring classic and custom cars cruising up and down Yakima Avenue. “Cruising the Ave” has been part of an effort to engage and promote the downtown area on the second and third Saturdays in June, July, August, and September from the hours of 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM.

This event has not normally generated a significant amount of calls for service for the Yakima Police Department. The department generally increases staffing for cruising events by hiring two additional officers on motorcycles, working an overtime emphasis patrol. There are occasional fights, traffic and alcohol related offenses, and noise complaints from “Cruising the Ave”. The calls for service were minimal and not overwhelming the additional staffed officers couldn’t handle.

The department was notified late in the week of an ad hoc cruise event planned last weekend on Friday, May 8th, 2020. Captain Boyle contacted the organizer of the event and he advised there were to be about 20-25 participants. The event was advertised on social media and the number of people who attended grew exponentially.

This unsanctioned and unscheduled cruise event impacted our policing efforts and caused us to change the way we do business. As the event evolved, it became difficult for Yakima Police Officers to manage the volume of calls generated. Most of our resources were diverted to dealing with racing vehicles and traffic/noise complaints. This activity went well into the morning hours with reports of our C Squad officers dealing with aftermath until the end of their shift at 2:40 AM.

Around 11:00 PM a Yakima Sheriff’s Deputy entered our city attempting to stop a reckless driver, pursuing the vehicle throughout our city. At the same time officers were dispatched to clear the Yakima Cinema parking lot located on N. 16th Avenue. Officers were faced with

approximately 200 cars parked in the business parking lot. The Yakima Cinema business manager complained vehicles were doing burnouts and donuts and dumping trash in the lot. When the vehicles were moved from the Yakima Cinema lot, they congregated in the Hobby Lobby parking lot on S. 1st Street and the same series of events occurred.

On Saturday, May 9th, 2020 another cruise event took place on Yakima Avenue bringing out a large crowd of several hundred people. Officers reported this crowd was more rowdy than the previous night and vehicles left burnout patches on the roadway from spinning tires. Heavy traffic made it almost impossible for an emergency response.

The cruise was shut down at 10:00 PM and immediately following the 9-1-1 calls started coming in. For the next several hours the majority of patrol officers moved groups and vehicles of 50-300 cars from congregating in private lots that requested we remove them. YPD, UGPD, and YSO continued to stop speeding vehicles and respond to reports of racing cars throughout the night.

After last weekend's cruising events, it was determined we need to plan and staff for future events. We were fortunate that no significant incidents occurred last weekend that required an emergency response from YPD, YFD, and EMS. Open cruising caused congestion, blocked intersections, and would have significantly interfered with the passage of emergency vehicles driven from locations within the area.

The patrol supervisors and officers working both cruise nights mainly kept order along Yakima Avenue and remained available for emergency calls for service. Officers were outnumbered by the large crowds that congregated in private business lots, creating an officer safety issue. Based on the number of people that attended the event and congregated in the various lots, it is going to be challenging for the Yakima Police Department to staff large scale events like this throughout the summer. The number of officers assigned to the Patrol Division cannot adequately provide emergency services to our city and deal with the significant calls for service generated by the cruising events.

Moving forward, we are aware there is talk of further unsanctioned cruising events. Social media continues to be a resource for cruising activity and gathering points. Social media reports this weekend's gathering locations to be the Yakima Cinema, Majestic Theatre, Hobby Lobby, and the Yakima Valley Mall. Mercy Theatres have already advised us their lots will be blocked off to public access.

The Yakima Police Department's focus regarding cruising events will be centered on public safety that endangers the public and business owner's properties. Yakima police officers have been diligently working with business owners to obtain signed "No Trespassing" letters allowing officers to take enforcement action. We will continue to support the businesses that have asked for help removing trespassers from their property. We will coordinate with the Streets Department to have adequate signage available to block roadways in order to disperse the large number of vehicles from the avenue.

Yakima Police Officers will be taking enforcement action on criminal and traffic related matters with little discretion. We will not be taking any enforcement action regarding the gathering of crowds that violate the Governor's Orders. However, we will support the Yakima County Health District if they ask for our assistance.

It is difficult to plan for unsanctioned events, creating a dilemma as to staffing and potentially causing a risk to public safety. A roster has been created to staff additional

officers on overtime to deal with the cruising emphasis. The anticipated cost to staff additional officers for five hours is \$3,668.50 per event. Based on the amount of cars and large crowds that participated last weekend, this is the minimum amount of officers needed to assist with public safety and enforcement measures.

Cruise Emphasis Cost Breakdown 1900 hrs-2400 hrs					
Date	Officer	Hours	Pay Rate	Cost	Assignment
5/16/20		5.00	\$79.53	\$397.65	Motors-Sergeant
5/16/20		5.00	\$71.83	\$359.15	Motors-Officer
5/16/20		5.00	\$71.83	\$359.15	Motors-Officer
5/16/20		5.00	\$71.83	\$359.15	Motors-Officer
5/16/20		5.00	\$79.53	\$397.65	Bicycle-Sergeant
5/16/20		5.00	\$71.83	\$359.15	Bicycle-Officer
5/16/20		5.00	\$71.83	\$359.15	Bicycle-Officer
5/16/20		5.00	\$71.83	\$359.15	Bicycle-Officer
5/16/20		5.00	\$71.83	\$359.15	Marked Unit Rover-Officer
5/16/20		5.00	\$71.83	\$359.15	Marked Unit Rover-Officer
Total Hours:		50.00	Total Cost:	\$3,668.50	

Lieutenant Linda Watts

Approved:

Chief Matthew Murray