

Dear Editor – Community Meeting Sees Controversy Over BearCat Vehicle

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Dear Editor,

Last night's discussion at the Culver City Senior Center demonstrated that fear is a potent motivator. The Hawthorne Police Department displayed a Ballistic Engineered Armored Response Counter Attack Truck (BearCat), which the Culver City Police Department (CCPD) euphemistically calls a BearCat Rescue Vehicle. Old timers, who are familiar with John Wayne's movies, call it a "War Wagon." Those on the political right stated their fear that the large criminal element in Culver City might attack them at any moment. Those on the left fear the militarization of CCPD, and that its desired hi-tech tools might be turned against them and their friends. CCPD officers fear being injured or worse on the job. Some City Council members fear losing CCPD's love—and political support—if they dare to say, "No." Centralists fear that the City Council and CCPD are wasting taxpayer money.

Everyone needs to take a depth breath. The centralists presented a workable solution. CCPD's slide-show presentation demonstrated that CCPD can protect the public and itself, without incurring \$450,000 for a new War Wagon. For several years, CCPD has relied upon the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to supply War Wagons during the few instances "involving active shooters, barricade suspects and rescue missions." (I assume that CCPD has not recklessly abandoned that relationship before the City Council votes on the matter.) Continuing that relationship with the Sheriff is an equitable solution, i.e., no change.

Everyone can get what they want, but CCPD will have to control its territorial instincts. The right and CCPD will be protected by an available War Wagon—albeit borrowed. The left will not see a War Wagon roaming Culver City's streets. The City Council will save taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Why does CCPD oppose continuing its relationship with the Sheriff? CCPD has its reasons—all of which fall when the fear factor is removed.

CCPD is territorial. It does not want the Sheriff coming into Culver City to control operations. CCPD claims the Sheriff does not know Culver City residents as well as CCPD does. Hello?

CCPD claims that any delay in arriving on the scene might cost lives. And it might not. However, CCPD offered no statistics. Further, in horrific situations where the War Wagon is needed, the damage has already been done when the 911 call comes in.

Furthermore, CCPD wants to use the War Wagon when serving high-risk warrants on the drug king-pins and well-armed criminals who infest Culver City. Again, CCPD presented no statistics. CCPD may have forgotten that officers will have to get out of a War Wagon to knock on front doors to serve the warrants.

Lastly, CCPD claims that many local cities own a BearCat, so CCPD is entitled to one. It is the unpersuasive “everyone is doing it” argument. Furthermore, that only demonstrates that, if CCPD does not like working with the Sheriff, CCPD has many other choices.

So, will the City Council follow the centralist’s solution? Stay tuned.

Les Greenberg, Esquire