

City gains federal law enforcement funds

Money to allow 5 new officers

By Chris Sykes Staff Writer, Orange Transcript

Federal officials visited Orange last week to announce the city will receive federal funding to hire five police officers.



Orange has been slated to receive \$964,875 over three years through a federal Community Oriented Police Services grant, which receives funding through the federal stimulus program. City officials said the funds will allow them to hire five officers.

Orange was one of 18 municipalities in New Jersey which were selected to receive COPS funds. Sen. Frank Lautenberg joined Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. and other city officials Friday inside the Polhill Complex, the city's police headquarters, to discuss how it will affect Orange.

Photo By Barbara Kokkalis

With Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. watching, Sen. Frank Lautenberg discusses a law enforcement grant the city of Orange received from the federal government.

Photo By Barbara Kokkalis
LAUTENBERG AND LAWYERS — Sen. Frank Lautenberg speaks to Orange residents Friday before making an announcement inside the Polhill Complex, headquarters for the police department, that the city had received almost \$1 million to retain police personnel.



"Orange is proof that community policing works. We've reduced crime because the Orange Police Department works 365 days a year with community groups and individuals to identify criminals and crime hot spots and to bring criminals to justice," said Hawkins.

Hawkins said Orange's community policing effort has included a successful gun buyback program; Operation Park and Walk, where officers park their squad cars and walk along major thoroughfares, and a fast-response complaint system which enables police to monitor crime "hot spots" reported by citizens.

The mayor added the police department has expanded crime watch activities and energized neighborhood Police Community Council meetings with regular attendance by Police Director John Rappaport and "top police officials" on his watch.

Today, Hawkins said city police go into the public schools and teach students and their parents how to reject gangs and drug use. They also urge families to participate in a new Internet child- safety program in addition to the executive internship program for Orange High School students which focuses on the managerial and organizational side of police work.

Hawkins added the department has expanded the Junior Police Academy program for children in Orange.

"We also established liaison with immigrant groups," said Hawkins. "This is critical because unless a good police relationship exists with immigrant communities, crime in these communities too often goes unreported and crimes unsolved." Lautenberg said it seems as though Orange had been accomplishing more with less funding.

"With this grant funding, police officers in Orange will be better prepared to perform their duties," said Lautenberg. "The COPS grant is a proven program that has helped drive down crime and strengthen communities. After years of misguided budget cuts, I am pleased the program has the full support of the White House and will put officers to work enhancing safety and security in our neighborhoods."

Rappaport said the department is happy to get the help. "Budgets are difficult to manage in these hard economic times and police officers' jobs are at stake," he said. "This endeavor is important to the city and its citizens and the officers who will, I am sure, continue to provide both efficient and proficient service to our community."

The other Essex County municipalities that will receive funds are East Orange, Irvington and Fairfield. In all, 18 police departments in New Jersey will receive \$26.8 million to hire 123 police officers.

In a statement to announce the grants, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder said the goal is to keep police officers on the beat during the economic downturn.

"That means that police departments can add new officers or re hire officers who have been or are scheduled to be laid off as a result of local budget cuts," said Holder. He added that departments which accept grant funding must commit to the officers' positions for a fourth year at city expense.