

# Orange ready to get tough on student party houses; hopes Chapman University will help

By Daniel Langhorne

Chapman University students could face harsher punishments for hosting unruly parties, under a proposal recently floated by top Orange city officials.

Orange Police Chief Robert Gustafson told the city council on Oct. 13 that he, along with City Manager Rick Otto, recommend that Chapman suspend students if they ignore warnings and citations for throwing parties. The move ignites new discussion of how city staffers and university officials should address the proliferation of student-rented houses in local neighborhoods.

The council is expected to take up the issue at a future meeting.

Residents in various parts of the city have long complained about the noise, trash and intoxicated students that often spill into their neighborhoods from student-hosted parties.

"I think that will be a far more effective program than what Chapman has done in the past," Gustafson said.

busted for throwing parties.

"I don't think Chapman has taken a strident effort yet, but it's made some movement in terms of fining students for having parties," Gustafson said.

### Ask Chapman to act

Councilman Mark Murphy said he'd rather encourage good behavior than punish bad, and looks forward to hearing from Chapman's administration regarding the recommendation to suspend students.

"This is one of the areas where we are going to hear from the university," Murphy said. "We look forward to working collaboratively with the university to come up with solutions to address these issues."

While the issue of "town and gown" remains at the forefront of residents' minds, the Orange Police Department recently provided the *Foothills Sentry* with statistics that show a reduction in warnings and municipal code citations issued to Chapman students hosting parties over the past

three years.

Officers responding to a call about a party at Chapman students' houses can give the host a verbal warning regarding the noise, a written warning called a "first response," or issue a misdemeanor citation for hosting a loud and unruly party.

### By the numbers

In fall 2012 and spring 2013, police recorded 183 first responses and issued 43 citations. In fall 2013 and spring 2014, the number declined to 168 first responses and 29 citations; and in fall 2014 and spring 2015, police logged 157 responses and 26 citations.

However, Orange residents contend that the statistics don't mirror their experiences.

Jane Layton, a longtime Orange resident, has seen the party scene, from Thursday through Tuesday, escalate at the four houses on her street occupied by Chapman students.

Some weekends, more than 200 college-age adults pack into single-family homes and backyards,

keeping neighbors awake and disgruntled. Beer cans and red cups pepper sidewalks and yards the morning after the festivities.

### Suspended agitation

Layton is optimistic about the police chief's and city manager's recommendation to suspend students for hosting numerous parties. "What an incredibly intelligent idea," Layton said. "Maybe it would finally get the students to behave. However, this would mean the [police] would have to actually cite the parties."

The police department receives a high volume of party calls during the beginning of a school year (except during fraternity and sorority rush week, when alcohol use is not permitted), around Halloween, after the Undie Run, and at the end of the school year, said Sgt. Phil McMullin.

The party is often not the issue, but actually the loud groups of students walking through the neighborhoods, to and from gatherings, that cause a disruption, he said.

### A softer side

"Communication, consistency and enforcement are the keys to bringing peace to the neighborhoods," McMullin said. "Through our weekly meetings with [Chapman] Public Safety, our quick response to citizen complaints, and our enforcement, we have reduced the number of parties over the past three years, and more importantly, the loud and unruly parties."

Harold Hewitt, Chapman's chief operating officer and executive vice president, defended the university's response to parties in an October statement.

"Chapman has worked for several years with City of Orange officials and with neighbors to address concerns about student parties at private residences in areas surrounding the campus," Hewitt wrote. "Recently, Chapman officials met again with Chief Gustafson and other city officials to consider additional ways to work together, and we look forward to strengthening and continuing this partnership."

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### Who done it?

During the October council meeting, Councilman Mike Alvarez asked city staffers to investigate options to inform Chapman about enforcement actions against repeat-offenders. He also suggested that city hall should look into requiring landlords to report the names of Chapman students leasing their properties.

"I know what it's like to have two to three dozen students actually on my front porch, trying to get hold of Uber to get home," he said.

However, City Attorney Wayne Winthers told the council that requiring landlords to share the names of Chapman student renters with the city raises constitutionality questions that his office would need to evaluate.

"There are definitely some questionable constitutional issues when it comes to limiting the number of people who are living in a house," Winthers said. "There are some cases out there that say, 'cities, you can't legislate that.'"

Chapman officials did not respond to a request for comment on the proposal.

Gustafson acknowledged that the university has recently taken some steps to punish offending students by issuing fines to those

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