

From: [Peter Gelblum](#)
To: [Maria Orozco](#); [cityclerk](#); [City Council](#)
Subject: Re: Item 13.B on 5/27/25 City Council agenda -AB481 Report and Request from WPD
Date: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 7:57:45 AM
Attachments: [Outlook-2nqh2wbt.png](#)

Some people who received this message don't often get email from santacruzaclu@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Mayor Orozco and City Councilmembers:

I write on behalf of the Santa Cruz County Chapter of the ACLU of Northern California. We have been intensely involved in AB 481 issues since its enactment, and have worked closely with the Santa Cruz Sheriff's Office, the Santa Cruz Police Department, the Board of Supervisors, and the Santa Cruz City Council on those issues. We support and second all of the comments submitted by Pam Sexton regarding Item 13.B on the May 27, 2025 Council Agenda, set out below.

Two points Ms. Sexton made require particular emphasis because they go to the heart of ASB 481 - the lack of publicity for the mandated community meeting and the need for the Council to recognize and exercise its own obligations under the law.

First - the failure to adequately publicize the community meeting: Public knowledge and involvement are at the heart of AB 481. Section 1(b) states "***The public has a right to know*** about any funding, acquisition, or use of military equipment by state or local government officials, ***as well as a right to participate*** in any government agency's decision to fund, acquire, or use such equipment." Section 1(e) states: "***The lack of a public forum to discuss the acquisition of military equipment jeopardizes the relationship police have with the community***, which can be undermined when law enforcement is seen as an occupying force rather than a public safety service."

To satisfy these ends, AB 481 created Government Code Section 7072(b), which provides:

"Within 30 days of submitting and publicly releasing an annual military equipment report pursuant to this section, the law enforcement agency shall hold at least one ***well-publicized*** and conveniently located ***community engagement meeting***, at which the general public may discuss and ask questions regarding the annual military equipment report and the law enforcement agency's funding, acquisition, or use of military equipment."

It appears that the WPD did not comply with the statute in this regard. The Council can and should continue the hearing on this matter until a "well-publicized" community meeting is held. ***There is nothing requiring the Council to act on this matter today.***

Second - the Council's obligations. AB 481 places the burden of ensuring public safety on the council, not on the law enforcement agencies. The agencies must list all of their military-style equipment, create and apply a policy governing the use of each item of equipment, and report annually to the Council about uses of the equipment, their costs, any complaints received, etc. However, the legislature placed the burden of ensuring that the agency's actions comply with the law on the public's elected representatives - you. As Ms. Sexton said, the law prohibits the Council from approving the WPD's report unless it makes certain findings, including that:

"(A) The military equipment is necessary because there is no reasonable alternative that can achieve the same objective of officer and civilian safety.

(B) The proposed military equipment use policy will safeguard the public's welfare, safety, civil rights, and civil liberties."

Government Code Section 7071(d). We urge you to take these obligations seriously, and to take the time necessary to consider whether the WPD's information allows you to make the legally required findings. You might reasonably start by asking the WPD to help you by explaining how each item of equipment meets these two tests.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Peter Gelblum
Chair, Santa Cruz County Chapter
ACLU of Northern California

On Mon, May 26, 2025 at 4:01 PM pamelabeth.sexton <pamelabeth.sexton@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Mayor Orozco (Maria, with all due respect),
I just checked and see that approving the Watsonville PD Military Equipment (AB481) Report and Use Policy, including WPD's request for increasing military equipment, is on tomorrow's agenda. Eli and I do appreciate your attempt to meet with us on this matter, and given the immediacy of the issue, I want to share some information with you by email. I am not able to attend City Council meetings anymore because I currently teach night classes at Adult Ed.

We appreciate the reporting that WPD is doing and the fact that based on their report, it appears that they are barely using military equipment outside of training. This is very positive. We also have some concerns and share them in the interest of making our community safer now and in the future.

1) WPD is out of compliance with AB481 (State Law) on a few fronts, and without the transparency required by law, we can't be sure drone surveillance isn't violating our first or fourth amendments, or perhaps helping ICE

- * The WPD AB481 Policy does not mention drones, despite their active deployment.
- * The WPD 2024 AB481 report does not provide the state-required summary of use and purpose of use for drones and flash-bangs. Specific questions related to drones: How many times were they deployed? With or without a warrant? Were drones used in First Amendment assembly situations? Were they used in homes or places where individuals have a reasonable expectation of privacy? What is the drone footage retention policy? Can it be shared with other individuals, organizations or governments? Can it be sold? Is there any policy prohibiting sharing data with federal agencies, especially those acting on immigration enforcement?
- * They do not provide important details about their proposed new acquisitions, specifically there are no make/model numbers or use policies.

2) WPD proposes a significant increase to militarization in the department without any indication of need or other justification.

- * They are asking to nearly double their assault rifles (from 17 to 10) despite not using any

for the past few years, according to their own reports.

* They plan to dramatically increase purchases of flashbangs (84 similar to what they already have, and another 24 without specified make or model) despite using only one last year.

* They want to purchase new pepper ball weapons - with high capacity fast-fire capability - despite not using their current stock outside of training for the past several years.

We commend the WPD on their restraint in using these weapons and hope that this continues. There is no need for such an increase in weapons, and we know that having more weapons only increases the potential for misuse and escalation.

3) We appreciate that the public meeting for AB481 was held earlier this month, following a notice put up on the Watsonville City website. Despite being very interested in this topic, **we missed the public meeting due to what we view as a lack of good publicity for the meeting.** We wonder if anyone at all knew about or attended this meeting. We ask that residents interested in being informed about this issue be invited to put their name on an alert list, similar to the practices of other City Departments where public input is desired and/or required.

Finally, we want to remind you that the City Council is the oversight authority for AB481 and with that comes a bit responsibility!

We urge you to

- **pause all proposed acquisitions** until there is public and reasonable justification for it.

Please note the following (taken directly from [AB481](#)):

The governing body shall only approve a military equipment use policy pursuant to this chapter if it determines all of the following:

(A) The military equipment is necessary because there is no reasonable alternative that can achieve the same objective of officer and civilian safety.

(B) The proposed military equipment use policy will safeguard the public's welfare, safety, civil rights, and civil liberties.

(C) If purchasing the equipment, the equipment is reasonably cost effective compared to available alternatives that can achieve the same objective of officer and civilian safety.

(D) Prior military equipment use complied with the military equipment use policy that was in effect at the time, or if prior uses did not comply with the accompanying military equipment use policy, corrective action has been taken to remedy nonconforming uses and ensure future compliance.

- **Insist on a drone use policy and complete reporting**, consistent with AB481

- **Request that WPD establish a list for notifications about public events and reports** that can include both media and interested community members.

Thank you so much for your attention to this.

Pam Sexton

831-254-0451

ps. Why does all this matter? To answer that, I'll take directly from Section 1 of [AB481](#):

(a) The acquisition of military equipment and its deployment in our communities adversely impacts the public's safety and welfare, including increased risk of civilian deaths, significant risks to civil rights, civil liberties, and physical and psychological well-being, and incurring of significant financial costs. Military equipment is more frequently deployed in low-income Black and Brown communities, meaning the risks and impacts of police militarization are experienced most acutely in marginalized communities.

(b) The public has a right to know about any funding, acquisition, or use of military equipment by state or local government officials, as well as a right to participate in any government agency's decision to fund, acquire, or use such equipment.

(c) Decisions regarding whether and how military equipment is funded, acquired, or used should give strong consideration to the public's welfare, safety, civil rights, and civil liberties, and should be based on meaningful public input.

(d) Legally enforceable safeguards, including transparency, oversight, and accountability measures, must be in place to protect the public's welfare, safety, civil rights, and civil liberties before military equipment is funded, acquired, or used.

(e) The lack of a public forum to discuss the acquisition of military equipment jeopardizes the relationship police have with the community, which can be undermined when law enforcement is seen as an occupying force rather than a public safety service.

On Fri, May 23, 2025 at 10:39 AM pamela sexton <pamelabeth.sexton@gmail.com> wrote:

Thank you for your reply, Maria. For some reason I didn't see this before right now. I don't understand how I missed it because I did go through my email, but I'm very sorry I did. Any chance there's another time that works for you before the next council meeting? I will be careful to check my inbox thoroughly.

Pam
831-254-0451

When we dream alone, it is only a dream, but when we dream together, it is the beginning of reality.

On Wed, May 21, 2025 at 11:34 AM Maria Orozco <maria.orozco@watsonville.gov> wrote:

Dear Pam,

Thank you for your message—it was great seeing you at the May Day event as well. I appreciate you reaching out to discuss AB481 and the concerns related to the recent WPD report.

I'd be happy to meet in person. I'm available tomorrow (Thursday) between 10:00–11:00 AM or 11:00 AM–12:00 PM, and I'm also available Friday from 9:30–10:30 AM. Please let me know which time works best for you and Eli.

Looking forward to the conversation.

Kind regards,

**MARIA
OROZCO**

MAYOR - DISTRICT 3

OFFICE: (831) 768-3010

DIRECT: (831) 768-3003

CELL: (831) 254-1532



275 Main St, Suite 400, Watsonville CA, 95076

From: pamelabeth.sexton <pamelabeth.sexton@gmail.com>

Sent: Sunday, May 18, 2025 6:32 PM

To: Maria Orozco <maria.orozco@watsonville.gov>

Cc: Elias Gonzales <egonzales@milpacollective.org>

Subject: AB481 Report and Request from WPD

Dear Maria,

It was good to see you on May Day in the Plaza; that was a very good turnout.

I am writing to ask if you could make time for a half-hour meeting to go over AB481 and some concerns relating to the recently released WPD report and request for increasing the militarization of police officers. The meeting could be in person or virtual, and I'd like to include Eli Gonzalez from MILPA, as we've been talking for some time about these issues.

Please let us know a few times that would work for you.
Thank you so much.

Pam Sexton
831-254-0451

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Peter Gelblum
Chair, Santa Cruz County Chapter
ACLU of Northern California

From: cityclerk
To: [Irwin Ortiz](mailto:Irwin.Ortiz); [Alejandra Pacheco](mailto:Alejandra.Pacheco); [Roxanna Ibarra](mailto:Roxanna.Ibarra)
Subject: FW: Item 13.B on 5/27/25 City Council agenda -AB481 Report and Request from WPD
Date: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 11:19:58 AM

From: Ringler <sring@cruzio.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 6:19:36 PM (UTC+00:00) Monrovia, Reykjavik
To: Tamara Vides <tamara.vides@watsonville.gov>; Kristal Salcido <kristal.salcido@watsonville.gov>; cityclerk <cityclerk@watsonville.gov>; Ari Parker <ari.parker@watsonville.gov>
Subject: Item 13.B on 5/27/25 City Council agenda -AB481 Report and Request from WPD

Dear Watsonville City Leaders,

I am writing to share important information regarding WPD's AB481 report on policy and use of military equipment including the request for new military equipment. I wish to respectfully express three concerns:

1) WPD is out of compliance with AB481 (State Law) on a few fronts, and without the transparency required by law, we can't be sure drone surveillance isn't violating our first or fourth amendments, or perhaps helping ICE

- * The WPD AB481 Policy does not mention drones, despite their active deployment.
- * The WPD 2024 AB481 report does not provide the state-required summary of use and purpose of use for drones and flash-bangs. Specific questions related to drones: How many times were they deployed? With or without a warrant? Were drones used in First Amendment assembly situations? Were they used in homes or places where individuals have a reasonable expectation of privacy? What is the drone footage retention policy? Can it be shared with other individuals, organizations or governments? Can it be sold? Is there any policy prohibiting sharing data with federal agencies, especially those acting on immigration enforcement?
- * They do not provide important details about their proposed new acquisitions, specifically there are no make/model numbers or use policies.

2) WPD proposes a significant and dangerous increase to militarization in the department without justification.

- * They are asking to nearly double their assault rifles (from 17 to 10) despite not using any for the past few years, according to their own reports.
 - * They plan to dramatically increase purchases of flashbangs (84 similar to what they already have, and another 24 without specified make or model) despite using only one last year.
 - * They want to purchase new pepper ball weapons - with high capacity fast-fire capability - despite not using their current stock outside of training for the past several years.
- I commend the WPD on their restraint in using these weapons and hope that this continues. There is no need for such an increase in weapons, and we know that having more weapons only increases the potential for misuse and escalation.

3) I appreciate that the public meeting for AB481 was held earlier this month, following a notice put up on the Watsonville City website. Despite being very interested in this topic, **I missed the notification and the public meeting due to what I view as a lack of good publicity for the meeting.** I wonder if anyone at all knew about or attended this meeting. I ask that you post the information in the Pajaronian and that residents interested in being

informed about this issue be invited to put their name on an alert list, similar to the practices of other City Departments where public input is desired and/or required.

Finally, I want to remind you that the City Council is the oversight authority for AB481 and with that comes a big responsibility!

I urge you to

- pause all proposed acquisitions. Please note the following (taken directly from [AB481](#)):

The governing body shall only approve a military equipment use policy pursuant to this chapter if it determines all of the following:

(A) The military equipment is necessary because there is no reasonable alternative that can achieve the same objective of officer and civilian safety.

(B) The proposed military equipment use policy will safeguard the public's welfare, safety, civil rights, and civil liberties.

(C) If purchasing the equipment, the equipment is reasonably cost effective compared to available alternatives that can achieve the same objective of officer and civilian safety.

(D) Prior military equipment use complied with the military equipment use policy that was in effect at the time, or if prior uses did not comply with the accompanying military equipment use policy, corrective action has been taken to remedy nonconforming uses and ensure future compliance.

- Insist on a drone use policy and complete reporting, consistent with AB481

-Request that WPD establish a list for notifications about public events and reports that can include both media and interested community members.

Thank you for your attention to this.

Pam Sexton

831-254-0451

ps. Why does all this matter? The below is from Section 1 of [AB481](#):

(a) The acquisition of military equipment and its deployment in our communities adversely impacts the public's safety and welfare, including increased risk of civilian deaths, significant risks to civil rights, civil liberties, and physical and psychological well-being, and incurment of significant financial costs. Military equipment is more frequently deployed in low-income Black and Brown communities, meaning the risks and impacts of police militarization are experienced most acutely in marginalized communities.

(b) The public has a right to know about any funding, acquisition, or use of military equipment by state or local government officials, as well as a right to participate in any government agency's decision to fund, acquire, or use

such equipment.

(c) Decisions regarding whether and how military equipment is funded, acquired, or used should give strong consideration to the public's welfare, safety, civil rights, and civil liberties, and should be based on meaningful public input.

(d) Legally enforceable safeguards, including transparency, oversight, and accountability measures, must be in place to protect the public's welfare, safety, civil rights, and civil liberties before military equipment is funded, acquired, or used.

(e) The lack of a public forum to discuss the acquisition of military equipment jeopardizes the relationship police have with the community, which can be undermined when law enforcement is seen as an occupying force rather than a public safety service.

Thanks for listening,

Sarah Ringler

814 Cynthia Dr.

Watsonville, CA

From: [pamela sexton](#)
To: [Kristal Salcido](#); [cityclerk](#)
Cc: [Peter Gelblum](#)
Subject: Item 13.B on 5/27/25 City Council agenda -AB481 Report and Request from WPD
Date: Monday, May 26, 2025 4:24:58 PM

Dear Councilmember Salcido,

I am writing to share important information regarding WPD's AB481 report on policy and use of military equipment including the request for new military equipment. I wish to respectfully express three concerns:

1) WPD is out of compliance with AB481 (State Law) on a few fronts, and without the transparency required by law, we can't be sure drone surveillance isn't violating our first or fourth amendments, or perhaps helping ICE

* The WPD AB481 Policy does not mention drones, despite their active deployment.

* The WPD 2024 AB481 report does not provide the state-required summary of use and purpose of use for drones and flash-bangs. Specific questions related to drones: How many times were they deployed? With or without a warrant? Were drones used in First Amendment assembly situations? Were they used in homes or places where individuals have a reasonable expectation of privacy? What is the drone footage retention policy? Can it be shared with other individuals, organizations or governments? Can it be sold? Is there any policy prohibiting sharing data with federal agencies, especially those acting on immigration enforcement?

* They do not provide important details about their proposed new acquisitions, specifically there are no make/model numbers or use policies.

2) WPD proposes a significant and dangerous increase to militarization in the department without justification.

* They are asking to nearly double their assault rifles (from 17 to 10) despite not using any for the past few years, according to their own reports.

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* They want to purchase new pepper ball weapons - with high capacity fast-fire capability - despite not using their current stock outside of training for the past several years.

I commend the WPD on their restraint in using these weapons and hope that this continues. There is no need for such an increase in weapons, and we know that having more weapons only increases the potential for misuse and escalation.

3) I appreciate that the public meeting for AB481 was held earlier this month, following a notice put up on the Watsonville City website. Despite being very interested in this topic, **I missed the notification and the public meeting due to what I view as a lack of good publicity for the meeting.** I wonder if anyone at all knew about or attended this meeting. I ask that you post the information in the Pajaronian and that residents interested in being informed about this issue be invited to put their name on an alert list, similar to the practices of other City Departments where public input is desired and/or required.

Finally, I want to remind you that the City Council is the oversight authority for AB481 and with that comes a big responsibility!

I urge you to

- pause all proposed acquisitions. Please note the following (taken directly from [AB481](#)):

The governing body shall only approve a military equipment use policy

pursuant to this chapter if it determines all of the following:

(A) The military equipment is necessary because there is no reasonable alternative that can achieve the same objective of officer and civilian safety.

(B) The proposed military equipment use policy will safeguard the public's welfare, safety, civil rights, and civil liberties.

(C) If purchasing the equipment, the equipment is reasonably cost effective compared to available alternatives that can achieve the same objective of officer and civilian safety.

(D) Prior military equipment use complied with the military equipment use policy that was in effect at the time, or if prior uses did not comply with the accompanying military equipment use policy, corrective action has been taken to remedy nonconforming uses and ensure future compliance.

- Insist on a drone use policy and complete reporting, consistent with AB481

-Request that WPD establish a list for notifications about public events and reports that can include both media and interested community members.

Thank you for your attention to this.

Pam Sexton

831-254-0451

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(b) The public has a right to know about any funding, acquisition, or use of military equipment by state or local government officials, as well as a right to participate in any government agency's decision to fund, acquire, or use such equipment.

(c) Decisions regarding whether and how military equipment is funded, acquired, or used should give strong consideration to the public's welfare, safety, civil rights, and civil liberties, and should be based on meaningful public input.

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accountability measures, must be in place to protect the public's welfare, safety, civil rights, and civil liberties before military equipment is funded, acquired, or used.

(e) The lack of a public forum to discuss the acquisition of military equipment jeopardizes the relationship police have with the community, which can be undermined when law enforcement is seen as an occupying force rather than a public safety service.

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From: [pamela sexton](#)
To: [Eduardo Montesino](#); [cityclerk](#)
Cc: [Elias Gonzales](#); [Peter Gelblum](#); [SURJ SantaCruzCounty](#)
Subject: Item 13.B on 5/27/25 City Council agenda -AB481 Report and Request from WPD
Date: Monday, May 26, 2025 4:18:22 PM

You don't often get email from pamelabeth.sexton@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Councilmember Montesino,

I am writing to share important information regarding WPD's AB481 report on policy and use of military equipment and request for new military equipment. For more about why this issue matters/why I care, you can go to the bottom of this email. Here I will jump straight to respectfully expressing three concerns:

1) WPD is out of compliance with AB481 (State Law) on a few fronts, and without the transparency required by law, we can't be sure drone surveillance isn't violating our first or fourth amendments, or perhaps helping ICE

* The WPD AB481 Policy does not mention drones, despite their active deployment.

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(C) If purchasing the equipment, the equipment is reasonably cost effective compared to available alternatives that can achieve the same objective of officer and civilian safety.

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- **Insist on a drone use policy and complete reporting**, consistent with AB481

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Pam Sexton

831-254-0451

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