



CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH
CITY COUNCIL MEETING – COUNCIL MEMBER ITEMS REPORT

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MIKE POSEY, MAYOR PRO TEM
KIM CARR, COUNCILMEMBER

DATE: MARCH 1, 2022

SUBJECT: ESTABLISHING A MEMORIAL FOR OFFICER NICHOLAS VELLA

On February 20, 2022, the Huntington Beach Police Department (HBPD) helicopter, HB-1, crashed into the waters off Newport Beach with two officers on board, resulting in the injury of one officer and the death of the second officer, Nicholas Vella.

Officer Vella is survived by his wife and daughter, and the City joins his family and fellow officers in mourning his passing. Officer Vella was a 14-year veteran of the department who served our community with honor and dignity. His commitment to public safety was paramount, and it was clear to everyone that he loved serving Huntington Beach. As a pilot, Officer Vella provided critical information to help our first responders manage on-the-ground situations effectively and safely. It was with this purpose in mind that Officer Vella responded to his final call for helicopter support in Newport Beach.

The crash in Newport Beach reminds us of the risk that police officers undertake daily to protect our residents. As such, we wish to recommend that staff work collaboratively with the City of Newport Beach to determine all associated logistics to establish a memorial in honor of Officer Vella at or near the crash site. We have engaged in discussions with Newport Beach Councilmember Will O’Neill who has expressed support for this endeavor.

Officer Vella is the third HBPD officer who has died in the line of duty. In 2018, the City honored such officers with street sign dedications: HBPD Officer Leslie James Prince struck by a vehicle in 1974; HBPD Officer Leo Roy Darst killed in a crash in 1928; and Orange County Sheriff’s Deputy Ezra Stanley struck by a vehicle in 1940. As such, we wholly recommend continuing this effort with a memorial dedicated to Officer Vella.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Ask staff to work collaboratively with the City of Newport Beach to determine all associated logistics with the development of a memorial for Officer Nicholas Vella at or near the crash site. Furthermore, staff will inform Officer Vella’s family regarding the proposed memorial and seek their input throughout the process to ensure that it is reflective of his life and his commitment to public safety.