



The Town of Hilton Head Island Regular Public Safety Committee Meeting

Monday, October 3, 2011

10:00 a.m. – Benjamin M. Racusin Council Chambers

AGENDA

As a Courtesy to Others Please Turn Off All Cell Phones and Pagers during the Meeting

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Freedom of Information Act Compliance**
Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and mailed in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Town of Hilton Head Island requirements.
- 3. Approval of Minutes**
 - a. Regular Public Safety Committee Meeting of August 1, 2011
- 4. Unfinished Business**
 - a. Update on Lighting Issues Discussed in June 6, 2011 Meeting
- 5. New Business**
 - a. Proposed 2012 Public Safety Committee Meeting Dates
- 6. Adjournment**

Please note that a quorum of Town Council may result if four (4) or more of Town Council members attend this meeting.

TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING

Date: August 1, 2011

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Members Present: Bill Harkins, *Chairman*; Lee Edwards; Kim Likins

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Ken Heitzke, *Council Member*

Town Staff Present: Brian Hulbert, *Staff Attorney*; Rene Phillips, *Website/Court Systems Administrator*; Lynn Buchman, *Administrative Assistant*

Others Present: Captain Toby McSwain, *BCSO*; Kiera Morris, *BCSO*; George Breed, *Sea Pines Security*; Art Benoit, *Hilton Head Plantation Security*; R. Wilkerson, *Palmetto Dunes Security*

Media Present: Tom Barton, *Island Packet*

1. Call to Order

2. Freedom of Information Act Compliance

Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and mailed in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Town of Hilton Head Island requirements.

3. Approval of Minutes

a. Regular Public Safety Committee Meeting of June 6, 2011

Motion to approve the minutes of the June 6, 2011 regular Public Safety Committee meeting was made by Lee Edwards and seconded by Bill Harkins.

Although not in attendance at the prior meeting, Ms. Likins mentioned that a citizen had expressed to her a concern about responses to EMS calls by both ambulance and fire trucks. The citizen had questioned if a smaller vehicle equipped with fire apparatus could respond with EMS on small emergency calls. A discussion followed and Chairman Harkins requested that a query be made to Chief Lucas to explain further.

Motion to approve the minutes was approved by a vote of 2-0. Ms. Likins abstained since she was not in attendance at the June 6, 2011 meeting.

4. Unfinished Business

a. None

5. New Business

a. 2nd Quarter 2011 Crime Statistics – Captain Toby McSwain

Prior to presenting the Crime Statistics for the Second Quarter of 2011, Captain McSwain commented on the question about responses from Fire & Rescue. He explained that while there may be no injuries at a vehicle collision, the fire truck may still be needed to respond to damage to vehicles, leaks, spraying of roads if leaks occur, and extraction of victims – none of which is law enforcement related. That results in a lot of wear and tear on the vehicles, however, they do respond to all accidents, even minor.

Captain McSwain then presented the Second Quarter – April, May and June of 2011 – Crime Statistics. He commented that the Second Quarter presented quite a few challenges at the Sheriff's Office due to manpower issues. Captain McSwain discussed with Committee Members the loss of officers – not due to disciplinary action - but primarily because of relocations to be nearer family. He confirmed that although there is training reimbursement for those sent to the Academy who leave within two years, he could not recall this happening in the recent past.

Captain McSwain reported that overall he was satisfied with the Second Quarter Statistics. All areas – crimes against persons, property crimes, and vehicle collisions - were down, although still higher than he would like to see.

Crimes Against Persons

Captain McSwain reported no murders during the second quarter and 20 cases fewer than this same quarter last year. No charges were filed in the rape cases, as alcohol was involved and the victims knew their attackers. Significant arrests were made in robbery cases, with more expected this quarter, and one case is currently pending trial. The high number of incidents is still occurring in the South Forest Beach area, probably due to the volume of vacationers in that area. Overall the numbers are going down.

Ms. Likins questioned the drop in robbery numbers and whether this was the result of any particular focus on the part of the department. Captain McSwain indicated that during a 14-day period in the first quarter, a task force of part-time and off-duty status officers targeted areas in which the majority of the robberies were occurring. As a result 2 car break-in arrests were made, but no arrests involving robberies. However, the extra manpower on the road led to other arrests – some involving multiple offenders. Mr. Edwards commended Captain McSwain on the good progress made so far.

A discussion ensued among the Council Members and Captain McSwain concerning a recent incident involving an attempted robbery of a young waitress in the Shelter Cove area. The consensus was that poor lighting, bushy landscaping, and the age of the potential victims and their sense of invincibility all contributed to opportunities for such incidents to occur. Suggestions made included more proactive patrols and increased lighting in those areas, as well as education provided to commercial owners and their young employees of preventative measures and safe practices. Everyone recognized the fact that the lighting probably meets current Town Code requirements, but agreed that trying to create a balance between aesthetics and crime prevention was important. Ms. Likins suggested that the LMO Rewrite Committee might review the illumination issue, and Chairman Harkins agreed and suggested the question could also be relayed through administration to provide some insight into what could be done

administratively. Captain McSwain reported that he thought the high school resource officer offers a class before the end of the school year for those students who might be working part-time over the summer. He also outlined the escort service provided by the Sheriff's Department for bank drops.

Crimes Against Properties

Captain McSwain reported a total of 424 cases, with an increase in burglaries by 8 from the same quarter last year, although total crimes are down by 24 cases. He pointed out that the statistics are almost identical as to where these are occurring – South and North Forest Beach, Point Comfort, and Mathews Drive. He noted arrests made during the past quarter – some charged with multiple violations of car break-ins - in as many as 6 potential cases. Several cases have been made as a result of the cameras in the park, so these are obviously of great benefit.

Ms. Likins inquired if there were other places where cameras might be beneficial. Captain McSwain reported that the park cameras are being constantly monitored, adding and adjusting as needed, but more could be added to the parks, as well as major intersections, which would assist in locating robbery suspects trying to escape by vehicle and for evidentiary purposes in court. The cost of the cameras and wiring was discussed. The Committee members requested a list from Captain McSwain of items to be considered for the future, including augmentation of the camera system, to determine if funding is available.

Vehicle Collisions

Captain McSwain reported a total of 340 collisions, which is 33 incidents fewer than the same quarter of last year. As with property crimes, they are in the same locations. He reported that the county-wide traffic team, 7 officers at times teamed up with Highway Patrol on roadblocks, had been on Hilton Head Island this past quarter. Although he could not with certainty attribute the reduction to active enforcement given the manpower issue, he noted his pleasure in the reduction.

Mr. Edwards indicated his surprise at the high number of collisions in the Mathews Drive area, as that is a newly designed road with separated median. Captain McSwain speculated that the lights at the intersection with Highway 278 may be a primary cause. The tight quarters between the outside turning lanes may also contribute to the number of collisions occurring there, and indicated he would do additional research as to the types of accidents to determine the reason.

Tickets

Captain McSwain pointed out that substantially less tickets were written than in the same quarter of last year. The manpower issue was cited as a problem, with ticket writing secondary to calls for service. However, he noted that the current numbers were back on track since the traffic team is at full staff once again. He explained that the low figures for Marine Patrol reflect where the infraction occurred on the waterways, with the majority going to Magistrate's Court in Bluffton. However, he reported the Marine Patrol boarded 331 boats, making arrests for drug paraphernalia, drug use, intoxicated boaters, and unsafe equipment – with increased patrols on Daufuskie Island.

As a follow-up to his last appearance before the Committee, Captain McSwain reported nothing alarming had occurred in the past quarter in connection with bond amounts, and bonds appeared to be in accordance with others set throughout the County. He further reported that the high

presence of security in the bar areas, including private security, has made a huge impact, and tickets have increased accordingly. He also explained the proactive approach being taken through resident and business checks between 11:00 PM and 6:00 AM.

Captain McSwain recognized the volunteers in the community who calculated over 860 hours of free service and expressed his gratitude for their willingness to assist the Sheriff's Department.

A discussion ensued between Ms. Likins and Captain McSwain concerning the Palmetto Dunes private security, and their responses to initial and criminal calls. Captain McSwain reported that for a short time span they were not responding to initial calls, but relying on the BCSO to do so. However, they have since returned to handling all calls and only requesting additional assistance from BCSO if needed. He further reported that discussions between Sheriff Tanner and the Chief of Security for Palmetto Dunes had occurred, with ongoing discussions taking place with all private securities on the Island about whether or not BCSO can dispatch to private security calls. Several other issues were discussed, including the fact that the private security radios no longer work with the new radio system of the BCSO, with the result that only 1 radio is assigned to each PUD on Hilton Head Island for communication with BCSO; SLED certification and training of private security officers; and the need for continued call support from the 300 private security officers with only 9 deputies assigned to Hilton Head Island. Captain McSwain agreed to keep the Committee informed of any further changes that might occur.

Chairman Harkins discussed with the Committee a towing incident that occurred on Main Street, illustrating the fact that Hilton Head Island is not immune to misuse of towing activity, and reported that Bluffton is currently investigating a policy on this, as well. He suggested that guidance from Town Council be sought, and presented a motion to suggest to Town Council a review of the feasibility of creation of a towing policy for Hilton Head Island. Ms. Likens seconded the motion. The motion was adopted by a vote of 3-0.

Ms. Likins expressed her thanks to Captain McSwain for his assistance with Spring Break issues in the North and South Forest Beach area. She reported meetings with constituents, the BCSO, and Staff Attorney, which resulted in a plan that includes an increase in the police presence during that 4 to 6 week time period, increase in arrests rather than warnings, letters to Presidents of the Universities where the students are enrolled, and discussions with local rental agencies representing the homes where the activities occur. Chairman Harkins also expressed his thanks.

6. Adjournment

At 10:55 a.m. Mr. Edwards moved to adjourn the meeting and Ms. Likins seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Respectfully submitted:

Lynn W. Buchman
Administrative Assistant

Approved by:

Bill Harkins, Chairman

Town of Hilton Head Island, South Carolina

**2012
Public Safety Committee
Scheduled Meeting Dates**

Benjamin M. Racusin Council Chambers

**Monday preceding the 1st Town Council Meeting
10:00 A.M.**

JANUARY 9, 2012*

JULY 2, 2012

**FEBRUARY 6, 2012
4th Qtr. Crime Stats**

**AUGUST 6, 2012
2nd Qtr. Crime Stats**

MARCH 5, 2012

SEPTEMBER 10, 2012**

APRIL 2, 2012

OCTOBER 1, 2012

**MAY 7, 2012
1st Qtr. Crime Stats**

**NOVEMBER 5, 2012
3rd Qtr. Crime Stats**

JUNE 4, 2012

DECEMBER 3, 2012

* The January 9 meeting has been scheduled the 2nd Monday of the Month due to the observance of New Year's Day on Monday, January 2, 2012

** The September 10 meeting has been scheduled the 2nd Monday of the Month due to Labor Day, Monday, September 3, 2012.

Approved: _____

Date: _____