

**TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND**  
**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING**

**Date:** November 1, 2010

**Time:** 10:00 a.m.

**Members Present:** Bill Harkins, Chairman; Bill Ferguson, and Ken Heitzke, Alternate

**Members Absent:** George Williams

**Town Staff Present:** Gregory D. DeLoach, *Assistant Town Manager*; Brian Hulbert, *Staff Attorney*; Tom Fultz, *Director of Administrative Services*; Susan Blake, *Administrative Assistant*

**Others Present:** Captain Toby McSwain, *BCSO*

**Media Present:** Tom Barton, *Island Packet*

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**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 2, 2010

Mr. Heitzke moved to approve. Mr. Harkins seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 2-0-1. Mr. Ferguson abstained because he was not able to attend the August 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

**4. Unfinished Business**

a. None

**5. New Business**

a. **Proposed 2011 Public Safety Committee Meeting Dates**

Mr. Ferguson moved to approve. Mr. Heitzke seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

b. **3rd Quarter 2010 Crime Statistics – Captain Toby McSwain, BCSO**

**Crimes Against Persons**

Capt. McSwain noted that they were showing a decrease of about 16 cases in comparison to 2009. There have not been any homicides in the previous quarter in the Town of Hilton Head. There were 26 aggravated assaults, 7 robberies and 3 rapes reported. In the rape cases, the

offenders were known to the victims. Of the 7 robberies, two were armed robberies. Some arrests have been made; one of which they believe has been involved in several prior robberies.

### **Crimes Against Property**

Capt. McSwain said they had 42 more reported cases than the previous quarter. There were 94 burglaries, 385 larcenies and 20 auto thefts for a total of 499 property crime cases in the third quarter of 2010. Some arrests have been made and in one particular case the Sheriff's Department actually recovered stolen property in the possession of the suspect. However, because the serial numbers of the property had not been recorded by the victims of the stolen property, they were not able to determine the rightful owner. The Department felt they were making some headway in resolving these cases though.

The Captain noted the high number areas were in the Point Comfort, South Forest Beach, and North Forest Beach areas. In some of the car break-ins in previous quarters, the windows were not necessarily broken to get inside; people had left their vehicles unlocked. What they were finding this past quarter was windows were being broken to get inside the vehicle. Capt. McSwain thought it was indicative of the times that people were getting desperate and were actually damaging windows in order to steal the contents of the car.

### **Vehicle Collisions**

There were 22 more reported cases than the previous quarter of last year. There were 263 collisions without injury; 36 collisions with injury; 47 hit and runs without injury and 3 with injury; and one fatality at Wild Horse Road and 278 which was a motorcycle vs. vehicle accident. Not unexpectedly, William Hilton Parkway was the largest area of vehicle accidents. The Sheriff Dept. has been working with the Town's Traffic and Transportation Engineer, Darrin Shoemaker, to identify some areas that they felt needed some additional attention. Some of those places were areas covered with vegetation, like median trees in front of the Shoppes on the Parkway which obstruct vision. Mr. Harkins asked if the department has reported these areas of concern to the Town and Capt. McSwain replied that they are in the process of documenting them.

### **Tickets**

There was an increase of over 100 tickets issued in comparison to the same quarter in 2009. The Sheriffs were going to have some updated computer systems in the cars and he hoped that this would enable them to access the wireless ticket program. The number of warning tickets was not recorded in the crime statistics report but they do issue a significant number as well.

Mary Amonitti asked if the Sheriff's Department was receiving reports from the security chiefs of various communities as to the activities within the communities listed in the report. Capt. McSwain said the previous reports used to have the plantations' statistics broken out. But they now only break out in the report the index crimes; i.e., murders, rapes, robberies.

#### **c. Security Camera Update**

Tom Fultz, Director of Administrative Services gave the committee a brief update on the Town's camera surveillance program. This was initiated in full cooperation with the Sheriff's Dept. in 2007 with a pilot project in Chaplin Park, primarily due to smash and grab break-ins of cars in the parking lot. After an analysis of this pilot program, it was recommended that the program be expanded. The Town has done this over the last three years by adding several

additional sites, like Honey Horn, the Island Recreation Center. The Town staff monitor the cameras daily to ensure they are all in working order. If there is a problem, they notify the vendor who has a maintenance agreement with the Town to repair or replace non-functioning equipment.

There was a discussion about placing cameras on private property, such as the North and South Forest Beach areas which have a consistent volume of crime. Chairman Harkins noted that even though it's a private area, it is a public concern, especially when it relates to the Island's image. Captain McSwain cautioned about the need to respect privacy and camera placement pointed at private residences or structures could lead to an invasion of privacy debate. The Captain did mention that where cameras are legally installed they have been a huge asset to the Sheriff's Dept.

**d. Sheriff's Department Site Visit – Bill Harkins**

Mr. Harkins reported on a visit he had with Capt. McSwain a couple of months ago. The purpose of the visit was to sit down and learn what some of the key issues were that the Sheriff's Dept. was facing in terms of societal problems. He also wanted to get an idea as to how things were going and what some of the deficiencies were in the department either in terms of personnel or equipment. In terms of the key issues facing the department, one of them was immigration. While the department had certified officials who could detain illegal immigrants, the Federal Government was the only one who could deport them. Drug trafficking was a multi-million dollar problem. The Sheriff's Dept. had 13-15 personnel focused on trafficking and they were part of a multi-jurisdictional task force on a regional and state level. Property crimes were primarily car break-ins of unlocked autos. Department personnel turnover was very low and there was an employment waiting list of applicants who have already been vetted and ready to fill any vacancies. Mr. Harkins noted that there were cameras and laptops in each of the cruisers, but this equipment was getting old and needed replacement with updated technology. All vehicles were also equipped with shotguns but there was the stated wish that each cruise car be equipped with an assault weapon. There were only a limited number of tasers so personnel going off shift would transfer the tasers to on shift officers. There was a stated wish that each on-duty officer be provided a taser.

**6. Adjournment:**

Mr. Heitzke moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Ferguson seconded the Motion. The meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Kimberly Kominski, Administrative Assistant

Approved by:

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Bill Harkins, Chairman