

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

**Date:** August 6, 2012

**Time:** 10:01 a.m.

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

**Members Absent:** None

**Town Staff Present:** Greg DeLoach, *Assistant Town Manager*; Ed Boring, *Deputy Fire Chief*; Darrin Shoemaker, *Traffic & Transportation Engineer*; and Lynn Buchman, *Administrative Assistant*

**Others Present:** Captain Toby McSwain, *Beaufort County Sheriff's Office*; Ken Heitzke, *Council Member*; and Eleanor O'Key, *LowCountry Inside Track*

**Media Present:** None

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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**

Motion to approve the minutes of the June 4, 2012 Regular Public Safety Committee meeting was made by Lee Edwards and seconded by Bill Harkins. The Motion was approved by a vote of 2-0-1, with Ms. Likins abstaining since she was not present at the June 4th meeting.

**4. Unfinished Business**

None

**5. New Business**

**a. 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2012 Crime Statistics – Captain Toby McSwain**

Before starting the report on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2012 Crime Statistics, Captain McSwain on behalf of the men and women of the Southern Division extended a heartfelt thanks to the Town Council, Mayor, and Town Staff for providing the new building housing the Beaufort County Sheriff's Department on Hilton Head Island. He announced an Open House to view the facilities being held on August 16, 2012, and invited the Town Council members and public. Although construction is still being planned and is underway for the next few months, he noted the building gives the Department a professional appearance and provides additional needed space.

Captain McSwain reviewed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2012 Crime Statistics in detail with the Committee. Although it had been a busy summer, overall he was pleased with the decreased numbers shown on the report. He detailed the circumstances surrounding the two murders that had been committed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter in response to Chairman Harkins' inquiry.

Crimes against persons, assaults, and property crimes were all down from last quarter as noted by Captain McSwain, with several significant arrests having been made and warrants pending. Chairman Harkins asked if any crimes appeared to be from gang activity or clustering of teens, but Captain McSwain indicated that was not the case, but rather these were crimes of opportunity. Stolen cars were the result of keys left in the ignition, inside the car, or inside open garages rather than from car break-ins.

Ms. Likins inquired about the significant number of burglaries in the Forest Beach area, in spite of the meetings within the community encouraging them to lock doors, trim bushes, and change out lighting. Captain McSwain confirmed this area was still being targeted, with some arrests made and warrants pending as a result of aggressive patrols taking place during the summer. However, he noted only a few burglaries were forced entries, with the majority being cases of open doors and unlocked homes. Captain McSwain confirmed to Mr. Edwards that the majority of thefts were from rental properties.

Chairman Harkins noted that a shared concern is that one of our core businesses is tourism, and asked Captain McSwain's opinion on what help he might need to reduce crimes in the rental segment. Captain McSwain noted conversations held with Greg DeLoach, Assistant Town Manager, concerning sharing the Town's public time with WHHI-TV and splitting shows with the Chamber of Commerce. This would allow the Sheriff's Office to do a broadcast segment to welcome visitors, advise them to lock up, and explain beach regulations that apply during turtle season and otherwise.

Noting the positive cooperation with rental companies during Spring Break, Ms. Likins asked Captain McSwain if the Sheriff's Department could work with those rental companies to share safety information. Captain McSwain cited the brochures designed by the Chamber almost 10 years ago that were distributed in the rental packets and placed by phones in the units, along with Hargray public information segments. However, he noted little success with attendance at meetings from the rental agencies in the Forest Beach areas coupled with the difficulty of getting this information to the average tourist who is more interested in heading to the beach than reading a pamphlet next to the phone. He felt the airing of segments with the Chamber during tourist season would prove more successful.

Chairman Harkins and Captain McSwain discussed the recent case involving a realtor stealing from clients' homes and ideas to prevent this from happening. Noting this was a crime of opportunity, the only recommendation Captain McSwain could make would be not to allow anyone in your home without being there.

Captain McSwain noted vehicle collisions were down 49 from last quarter, with 2 fatalities occurring in one accident.

Captain McSwain reported that over the last 4 months, he had worked with the Town to provide a speed radar sign that can be positioned on the side of the road and attached to traffic signs, in addition to a desperately needed solar powered electronic message board for special events.

Their placement and wordage for the board will be determined in consultation with Darrin Shoemaker, Town Traffic and Transportation Engineer. Ms. Likins reported that the electronic speed signs positioned in the Forest Beach area in the early summer made a huge difference and the residents were sad to see it leave. However, they understand if the sign stays too long, it loses its effectiveness. Captain McSwain noted that the reports generated by the signs helped pinpoint the highest and lowest speeds, the times speeding was occurring, and enabled deployment of the traffic team during the most needed times.

The use of cameras, the areas where these are used, their limitations and effectiveness were discussed among the Committee members and Captain McSwain. A new reporting system to be implemented within the next 18 months was outlined by Captain McSwain. This new system would enable sharing of data with other counties and entities from the patrol cars, as well as providing the capability of viewing camera footage from the cars. Fixed mounted systems at traffic signals and portable car mounted systems enabling scanning, recording, and immediate database checks of license tags and costs for such systems were also discussed. Chairman Harkins indicated the Committee's desire that research and budgeting for such systems be explored by the Sheriff's Office.

Captain McSwain concluded his report with an update on the traffic tickets, changes to the traffic team, and issues with the wireless ticket books that are being worked out. He pointed out the great service provided by volunteers who worked over 1800 hours.

Chairman Harkins and the Committee members thanked Captain McSwain for his report.

Chairman Harkins asked for public comments, and Brady Jamison and Lindsey Crose, residents of the Bay Pines Community at the base of the Cross Island Bridge appeared before the Committee requesting a recommendation to Town Council that the speed limits on Palmetto Bay Road be reconsidered and the speeds decreased to 40 MPH or 35 MPH. They pointed out the danger to residents turning left onto the Bridge, as well the danger to children, bikers, walkers and runners in the area with cars traveling upwards of 60 MPH, in addition to the increased noise from the vehicles.

Mr. Edwards reminded the Committee of his previous concerns and his earlier objections to the speed limit change and expressed his disappointment that the reflector separation on the bridge requested by the Committee had not yet been addressed. He indicated similar concerns had also been expressed to him by other residents of the Bay Pines and Point Comfort communities.

Chairman Harkins noted the goal was to have traffic flowing at a reasonable speed, which the majority felt was 45 MPH. He asked Darrin Shoemaker, Town Traffic Engineer, to comment.

Mr. Shoemaker acknowledged that the normal mode of setting speed limits was to artificially set them low with the expectation that people will take liberties with the speed limit, thereby allowing a cushion for law enforcement. His feeling, however, was that 45 MPH was a safe speed limit, and selective enforcement associated with the recent speed limit change is warranted. Mr. Edwards noted that the wide lanes encouraged speed and discussed with Mr. Shoemaker what could be done to calm the traffic flow. Mr. Shoemaker indicated that enforcement was a critical aspect of encouraging compliance with the speed limit, aided by deployment of the interactive speed limit sign by the Sheriff's Office. He reported that efforts are being made to find a vendor for the treatments on the bridge recommended by the Committee, which includes refurbishing the white edge lines that divide the vehicles lanes from

the breakdown shoulders used by pedestrians and bikers with a raised profile that acts as a rumble strip with an audible noise.

Discussion followed among the Committee Members, Mr. Shoemaker, and Mr. DeLoach as to methods to determine if an unsafe condition or hazard has been created, which was not the intended result of the speed limit change. With additional input from Ms. Jamison and Ms. Crose, the Committee suggested that speed data be collected by the placement of tubes across the road, which would most accurately reflect the speeds occurring at this time. Upon analysis of the data collected, Town Staff would coordinate the placement of the interactive speed sign to provide additional data for use by the Sheriff's Office to deploy resources most efficiently for enforcement of the speed limits.

**Adjournment**

At 10:53 a.m. Ms. Likins moved to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Edwards seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Respectfully submitted:

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Lynn W. Buchman  
Administrative Assistant

Approved by:

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Bill Harkins, Chairman