

TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING

Date: September 10, 2012

Time: 10:07 a.m.

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

Members Absent: None

Town Staff Present: Scott Liggett, *Director of Public Projects and Facilities/Chief Engineer*; Brian Hulbert, *Staff Attorney*; Darrin Shoemaker, *Traffic & Transportation Engineer*; and Vicki Pfannenschmidt, *Executive Assistant*

Others Present: Frank Babel

Media Present: None

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 August 6, 2012 Regular Public Safety Committee meeting was made by Kim Likins and seconded by Lee Edwards. The Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

4. Unfinished Business

a. Update on Palmetto Bay Road Speed Limits

Chairman Harkins noted that concerns had been expressed at the last meeting about whether the increase in speed limits on Palmetto Bay Road had inadvertently created an unsafe condition or public hazard, which the Engineering staff was asked to research and report back to the Committee. Darrin Shoemaker, Traffic and Transportation Engineer, reported the profiles he had collected on-line from the South Carolina Department of Transportation Real Time Traffic Counter located at the south end of the bridge, collecting both vehicle count and vehicle speed data on an on-going, real-time basis. He presented the speed data on a typical 3-day period collected one month before the speed limit change in April, showing the volume and average speed of traffic with a weighted average of 47.8 MPH. Looking at the same data in July, approximately two months after the speed limit change on May 24, 2012, the weighted average at that point was 49.8 MPH, indicating an increase of 2 MPH. While he noted this is not an

insignificant increase, the weighted average speed of 47.8 MPH exceeded the original posted 40 MPH speed limit by 7.8 MPH, which was indicative of the need for a more realistic speed limit. With the newly posted 45 MPH, the weighted average of 49.8 MPH is only 4.8 MPH greater than the posted speed. Again he noted this is not an insignificant increase, but within the 5 MPH range that is indicative of a speed limit that is appropriate for conditions.

Ms. Likins questioned if the numbers of vehicles in July would have been more than seen in April, and Mr. Shoemaker noted that in recent years the visitor season has shifted forward, with July traffic volumes being about 15% more than the average and April traffic volumes being about 5% more than average. A discussion ensued among the Committee members and Mr. Shoemaker concerning the numbers of vehicles traveling during weekdays versus weekends and the collection of data for this year versus last year.

Chairman Harkins noted this was a matter of safety concern, particularly among mothers of young children in that area, and suggested that the Committee take another look at the figures in approximately 90 days. Mr. Shoemaker explained the propensity to exceed the posted speed limits in this transitional area from the freeway on the downgrade from the bridge, and how the feel of the road changes. While he noted this was not completely acceptable, it is likely something that would continue to warrant some level of attention from law enforcement. The cost of a blinking slow sign and the impact of such a sign were discussed. Ms. Likins suggested the use of the mobile unit that had been deployed at Forest Beach.

Mr. Edwards noted that while it seems like there is more of an increase than 2 MPH, he is encouraged that it does not appear to be as bad as he feared, but would like to revisit the issue again in a few months.

A motion was made by Lee Edwards and seconded by Kim Likins to review the situation again in a few months and in the meantime encourage the Town to monitor episodically with the mobile unit. The motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Mr. Edwards and Mr. Shoemaker discussed the status of the separation of the pedestrian/bicycle lanes along the bridge and the options available to obtain the pavement markings.

Chairman Harkins asked for public comments, and Frank Babel commented on the rubble strip issue and the potential danger to cyclists. Mr. Shoemaker clarified for the Committee that cyclists using the separated lane along the bridge want to stay on the road exiting the bridge and cross any separation treatment at that point, which he explained is being incorporated into the plans for the thermoplastic discs.

5. New Business

Although Chairman Harkins noted there was no new business, he asked for comments in terms of future new business for consideration. Ms. Likins asked for the opportunity in the future to add to the agenda updates from Solicitor Duffy Stone regarding the career criminal task force, as well as from Sheriff P.J. Tanner, in light of the incident last week involving the shooting of a young boy. Ms. Likins, Mr. Edwards, and Chairman Harkins all noted that they had received numerous calls from individuals expressing concerns for safety and the effectiveness of the career criminal program. Chairman Harkins expressed his desire for the Solicitor and Sheriff to share with the Committee their professional opinions about whether there are things we are not doing and outline those resources that are in place to help avoid such a situation in the future, understanding that they would be restricted in discussing an ongoing judicial case.

Ms. Likins also noted a citizens' concern expressed to her about the dilapidated and abandoned housing in the area and the ability of the Town to take any action, as well as continued concern expressed about the Metropolitan Hotel in the Forest Beach area. Although the Town has no public maintenance code, she expressed her desire to revisit that issue as buildings in the community continue to age and individuals are either unwilling or financially unable to maintain them and what the Town can do to make sure that at least the public safety is being insured. Chairman Harkins requested guidance from Brian Hulbert, Staff Attorney, as to how to proceed on such a discussion, recognizing that the tools to deal with such an issue is not in our Town Code. Mr. Hulbert and Chairman Harkins discussed the lack of support for a Property Maintenance Code that was previously before Council and the fact that it only addressed commercial properties. Mr. Hulbert explained the request to resurrect this issue would need to come from Town Council as a request to the Town Manager to begin work on such a Code. His recommendation was to raise the issue with the Mayor as a possible agenda item at the next Council meeting or see if there is support for it before going forward, as it could not begin at the Committee level. Ms. Likins and Mr. Hulbert discussed whether such Codes exist as to residential properties in other jurisdictions and the extent of involvement and tools available to enforce such a Code. Mr. Hulbert pointed out the efficient, in-place, enforcement mechanisms within the PUD covenants, and the fact that outside the PUD's is where the property maintenance issues exist for residential areas.

Ms. Likins and Mr. Hulbert discussed the complaints expressed by citizens in the Forest Beach area about the Metropolitan Hotel and the authority and options available to deal with such complaints.

The Committee members and Mr. Hulbert reviewed in detail the options as to how to determine if there is an issue, and if so, how to document the issue, determine the scope, outline what remedies are available or need to be established, what departments would need to be involved, and what Committee is the proper one to proceed.

Frank Babel offered additional comments about the goals of the Bike Advisory Committee to make Hilton Head Island safer and more bicycle friendly for everyone and its focus on safety. He noted the support received from Darrin Shoemaker and the Engineering Department, but commented that there is no public forum addressing the issues of safety for cyclists and requested that this Committee consider that at some future point.

Adjournment

At 10:58 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: 10/1/2012

Bill Harkins, Chairman