

TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING

Date: February 4, 2013

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Members Present: Marc A. Grant, *Chairman*; Bill Harkins, *Council Member*; John J. McCann, *Council Member*

Members Absent: None

Town Staff Present: Lavarn Lucas, *Fire Chief*; Randy Lindstrom, *Administrative Battalion Chief*; Ed Boring, *Deputy Fire Chief – Support Services*; Brad Tadlock, *Deputy Fire Chief – Operations*; Tom Dunn, *Emergency Management Coordinator*; Greg DeLoach, *Assistant Town Manager*; Rene Phillips, *Website/Court Systems Administrator*; and Lynn Buchman, *Administrative Assistant*

Others Present: Captain Toby McSwain, *Beaufort County Sheriff's Office*; Keira Morris, *Beaufort County Sheriff's Office*; and Eleanor O'Key, *Lowcountry Inside Track*

Media Present: Brian Heffernan, *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

None.

4. Unfinished Business

a. 2013 Fire & Rescue Strategic Plan

Chief Lavarn Lucas noted the updated Strategic Plan and Summary of Changes that is a part of the agenda packet. The Committee members indicated they had reviewed the updated Plan and only had a few questions. Mr. Harkins asked Chief Lucas to expand on the Recommendation for a customer satisfaction survey, since he has encouraged the telling of the Fire & Rescue story to not only demonstrate its value to the community and its taxpayers, but to create opportunities to highlight areas of ambiguity or concern and focus on education about their efforts. Chief Lucas outlined the paper survey conducted for several years, but stopped because of the staff time required and customer satisfaction reported being in excess of 95% positive comments. However, since it was the intent to reinstitute the survey when it could be done in a more efficient manner, this

Recommendation would do so and seek the customer's opinion on every aspect of service delivered, but in an electronic format, with use of the Town's website or email as a possibility, so that staff time is reduced.

Mr. Harkins also asked Chief Lucas to expand upon the change of direction being recommended in terms of false alarms. Chief Lucas explained that the Recommendation is for an ordinance to be established so that the careless activation of alarms, or repeated trips to the same locations for alarm malfunctions caused by lack of repair, would incur a levy to be charged for the express purpose of encouraging repair of faulty alarms. Mr. Harkins and Chief Lucas discussed what the specific number of incidents over a length of time might be before a levy is charged. Noting this would be determined upon drafting of the ordinance, Chief Lucas suggested that no fees should be charged for the first or second trip. However, three trips to the same location within a 6 month period for a malfunctioning or careless activation of an alarm should trigger the levy of a fee, with the fee increasing with each continued occurrence.

In response to Chairman Grant's inquiry about whether fines would be levied for alarms pulled in schools, Chief Lucas indicated these are considered malicious alarms, which occur not only in schools but in nursing facilities, and would not be included in the fee structure.

Mr. McCann suggested considering one warning notice, with a fine assessed on the second occurrence, noting if a consequence results, the matter will be resolved. Chief Lucas explained that there are occupancies with alarms who are not required by code to incur the expense of the alarm system, monitoring, and repair costs. If the rules are too stringent, alarms might be cut off, disconnected, or removed. He reported that typically it is the third time that convinces them to comply without creating a negative consequence or discouragement of alarm use. Mr. McCann agreed that the third time is a good compromise, but the third time in a year should result in a fine.

A motion that the 2013 Fire & Rescue Strategic Plan be recommended for approval to Town Council was made by Chairman Grant, and Mr. McCann seconded. Chief Lucas suggested that for clarification the motion be amended to recommend the Plan as amended and presented today. Chairman Grant withdrew his motion, and Mr. McCann made a new motion that the 2013 Fire & Rescue Strategic Plan with the amendments as presented today be recommended for approval to Town Council, and Mr. Harkins seconded. Chairman Grant declared the motion approved.

5. New Business

a. 4th Quarter 2012 Crime Statistics – Capt. Toby McSwain

Capt. Toby McSwain from the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office presented the 4th Quarter 2012 Crime Statistics. He noted the number of patrol officers, traffic cops, and other personnel called for under the Town contract. As of today, he reported being short one officer in the patrol division, but noted the position should be filled within the next month.

Capt. McSwain updated the status of the holding cells at the new building, noting the final architectural plans had been submitted to the State Department of Corrections for approval, as required by the State. He is anticipating the selection of contractor and project commencement within the next few weeks, which he described in detail, with 30-45 days estimated for completion of the renovation. He expressed appreciation for the new facility, which he described as awesome, and for the care and attention shown by the Town's Maintenance Facilities.

He cited statistics from the 2012 overall statistics for the Sheriff's Office which relate directly to the southern enforcement on Hilton Head Island, which included telephone calls, walk-ins, background

checks and reports processed, police reports copied for citizens, arrest warrants entered, and tickets issued. The report indicates this office is quite busy and generates a great deal of activity, similar to what is handled from the headquarters in Beaufort.

Reporting on crimes against persons, he noted there were 2 murders in the 4th quarter, with 5 murders reported for the year 2012. However, he reported arrests had been made in each of the murders that occurred in Hilton Head Island, and he identified each case. Capt. McSwain reported the quarterly figures for assault, robberies, and forcible rapes as compared to this quarter last year, and yearly figures comparing 2011 to 2012.

Referencing Pages 2 and 3 of the Report, he noted the locations where the crimes are occurring have not changed over previous quarters.

Capt. McSwain reported that the Sheriff's Office deals with more property crimes than anything else, with a significant decrease in burglaries and larcenies from 2011, and the same number of auto thefts in 2011 and 2012. He outlined significant arrests made in the area of property crimes over the last year. Several repeat offenders, including an individual who has been charged with 23 crimes since 2010 who has not yet appeared in a courtroom, were specifically identified and their crimes listed by Capt. McSwain. He expressed the hope that they can be taken off the street permanently soon. Capt. McSwain reported on the good working relationship the Sheriff's Office has with Chatham/Metro, and the exchange of information that is working well.

Capt. McSwain noted his frustration that even with all of the information distributed to inform citizens to lock cars and homes, a residential area in Bluffton recently had 14 car break-ins, but the cars were unlocked. In response to Mr. McCann's inquiry as to whether these are occurring outside of PUDs, he indicated that gates are only a small deterrent. Mr. McCann questioned whether the PUDs are cooperating in getting the message out, and while Capt. McSwain had no information on their efforts, Mr. Harkins reported that Hilton Head Plantation had on-going efforts to communicate the importance of locking doors to cars and homes, and he sympathized with Capt. McSwain and shared his frustration. He suggested continuing efforts with the press and PUDs to get the message out, and Capt. McSwain indicated they would continue to do so and hope for results in time.

Capt. McSwain reported on the vehicle collisions broken down between collisions with and without injuries, with a yearly decrease in collisions reported in 2012. Using this report to see where accidents occur, he noted that enforcement is directed to these areas. The fatalities involving vehicles were up from 2011, and Capt. McSwain reported in detail the locations these occurred.

The yearly total for traffic tickets, criminal tickets for shoplifting and anything outside of a motor vehicle indicated less written in 2012 than in 2011. However, Capt. McSwain pointed out the high number of warnings issued, and his belief that you can get the word across with warnings rather than tickets for every stop. The number of tickets also fluctuated because of injuries to members of the traffic team causing the team to be short for several months. In response to Mr. Harkins' inquiry about whether prior warnings issued are available to the officer when he makes a stop, Capt. McSwain indicated that information is not currently available to the officer. However, he reported a new reporting system will be implemented over the next 18 to 24 months so that computers in patrol cars can access all information about warnings issued, previous arrests, and violations.

Capt. McSwain reported on the bar patrol that is funded by the Town and operates on either Friday or Saturday night. Statistics for 2012 from the bar patrol were presented for assaults, traffic cases, drinking in public, minor in possession, public and disorderly conduct, and other crimes. He noted

the atmosphere changes when officers arrive and start walking around the area, and this program works and is effective and needed.

Capt. McSwain reported over 2,000 hours of volunteer service, for which he was grateful. He explained the use of reserve deputies, who go through extensive training, and provide a great benefit to the County and Town with no pay.

Drug cases for 2012 were highlighted, but he indicated that simple possession of marijuana cases were ticketed and released because of the volume. He also noted that although not funded by the Town, there are 3 officers at the airport from the time the first flight arrives until the last flight departs, with only 5 minor incidents at the airport reported last year.

Mr. McCann and Capt. McSwain discussed the crime statistics that appear in the Island Packet each day, which are provided by the Sheriff's Office, but the selection process is done strictly by the newspaper. Capt. McSwain indicated several PUDs that write State tickets under the Sheriff's Office origination number, and those PUD reports are brought to the Sheriff's Office. He noted that information is shared with the PUDs in a monthly meeting with security chiefs.

Mr. Harkins suggested comparative crime statistics to other cities would be helpful both for economic development and for someone contemplating a business or family move. He related data found on a website of Sperling's Best Places showing Hilton Head Island in the middle of its scale, as compared to other cities in South Carolina and elsewhere. Mr. Harkins and Capt. McSwain discussed that if the source figures were extracted from the FBI database as the website indicated, it would contain statistics from the index crimes reported through SLED to the FBI for its database. Mr. Harkins and Mr. McCann asked if it was possible to do some comparison next quarter with other communities in an effort to promote the good job being done by the Sheriff's Office, and Capt. McSwain indicated he would deliver a copy of the FBI report for comparison by the Committee.

Chairman Grant and the Committee thanked Capt. McSwain for his report and the good job being done by the Sheriff's Office in our community.

For the record, Chief Lucas asked that the Committee formally vote on the motion to recommend the Strategic Plan to Town Council. A motion to recommend to Town Council the 2013 Fire & Rescue Strategic Plan with all amendments received today was made by Mr. McCann and seconded by Mr. Harkins. Chairman Grant declared the motion approved.

Adjournment

At 10:58 a.m. Mr. Harkins moved to adjourn the meeting and Mr. McCann seconded. Chairman Grant declared the motion approved.

Respectfully submitted:

Lynn W. Buchman
Administrative Assistant

Approved by:

Marc A. Grant, Chairman