



Town of Hilton Head Island
Community Services & Public Safety Committee

Monday, August 26, 2019 at 9:00 am
Benjamin M. Racusin Council Chambers

MEETING MINUTES

Present From the Committee: Marc Grant, Bill Harkins, Tom Lennox

Present from Town Council: David Ames

Present from Town Staff: Scott Liggett, Jeff Buckalew, Darrin Shoemaker, Joheida Fister, Tom Dunn

Present from Media: Katherine Kokal, *The Island Packet*

1. Call to Order

2. FOIA Compliance - Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and distributed in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act and the requirements of the Town of Hilton Head Island.

3. Approval of Minutes – August 12, 2019 Special Meeting – Councilman Harkins moved to approve. Councilman Lennox seconded. The August 12, 2019 Minutes were unanimously approved.

4. Unfinished Business

5. New Business

a. 2nd Quarter Crime Statistics – BCSO

Captain Angela Viens from the Beaufort County Sheriff's Department gave a presentation on the 2nd Quarter Uniform Crime Report. Captain Viens mentioned the Sheriff's Department participated in some active shooter training this last July with a lot of our area Fire Departments. We are prepared and we have practiced with our other public safety partners across the County. A few highlights of her report are as follows:

We have seen a slight increase in robbery incidents in the 2nd Quarter compared to this time last year. In three of those cases I can tell you confidently they were cleared by arrests with very successful investigations. Under Crimes Against Property, our burglaries have decreased, larcenies have increased and auto thefts have increased. Under Vehicle Collisions, overall we have had an increase of about 33 total.

Captain Viens stated they have also deployed body cameras here back in July. It is one of our significant movements we have had. Departments across the United States have moved to body cameras. All of our enforcement officers now are equipped with body cameras as well as in car video system. We get a perspective from the car and a perspective from the officers.

After a brief discussion, Chairman Grant thanked Captain Viens for her report.

b. Warning Siren Project - BCSO

Scott Liggett stated this briefing was intended as an informational report only – no action item. What we have discovered since this meeting began, that there was an error in communication between Town staff and the County staff that we intended to provide that briefing. The bottom line, they are not here to provide it and with your indulgence, I would recommend that the Committee stand down on this item and we look towards a future meeting that they are available and we will have the briefing then. We are not prepared here today as we intended to provide the briefing.

Councilman Harkins asked what the objective is on this topic. Mr. Liggett introduced Tom Dunn who advised the Committee the intent of the project is to create a county wide siren network for outdoor notification of an impending Tornado. That is the ultimate goal of the project. There is a grant in place to put sirens throughout the County.

c. Neighborhood Request for Speed Humps on SCDOT Roads – Point Comfort Area

Jeff Buckalew, Town Engineer stated they have an item before you today in which the Point Comfort Neighborhood desires to have speed humps in their neighborhood to curtail speeding. I will give a presentation and I will explain the background of how we got here. I will explain the Town's role and at the end of it hopefully there will be a Motion in which you would choose either to sponsor supporting a speed hump project in the neighborhood or not to sponsor such a project and forward that to full Town Council.

The speed limit in the neighborhood was reduced back in November, 2018 from 30 to 25 mph. More recently, the POA wrote a letter that said that didn't have the desired effect and they want another treatment and that the speeding is still occurring. Mr. Buckalew showed a map showing the roads in question (Nautilus Road, Row Boat Road, Point Comfort Road and Sea Olive Road.) All of these roads are SCDOT owned. They do not connect to anything. There is no cut through traffic. One would assume most of the motorists doing the speeding live there or are visitors or repairmen, etc. The DOT has a policy on speed humps. Speed humps are a viable traffic calming device in their Traffic Calming Guidelines but they will not work directly with the POA to have them installed. They will only work with the local Government. The POA has written the Town and the District Engineer for SCDOT to ask if the Town would support the project. They have a process laid out – they need 75% of the effected property owners to sign a petition saying they want the speed humps. They would require data - some of that may be in place already such as traffic volumes, people exceeding the speed limit, number of vehicles, etc. and they would need a design to go by their guidelines and other engineering standards to say here is where I am going to place the speed humps and we would have to apply for an encroachment permit. They would review that and they would approve or request provisions to that plan and that design and then ask us to implement installation of the speed humps. The POA could pay for the speed humps or the Town could pay. I don't think the DOT cares who does that, but the Town would be the responsible party under the permit for installing and maintaining those speed humps in perpetuity and any claims against the speed humps, the DOT would just direct those claims to the Town.

We did a cost estimate based on DOT guidelines and they want a spacing of 350 feet or more and you need to space them close enough to be effective. If they are spaced too far apart, people would speed in between. Even with close spacing, if you have lived in a neighborhood with speed humps, sometimes folks will cross the speed hump and speed up

to the next one, etc. We found it would take about \$50,000 to fund the construction of speed humps in the neighborhood. Councilman Harkins asked how many would that be for. Mr. Buckalew said you are looking at maybe 14-15 speed humps. That would be based on curves, intersections, etc. That is a worst case scenario. Town staff would have to design, permit and oversee construction of the project.

We have done several projects over the years where we have paved roads and that is a common request. We never have in the past. We have paved dirt roads, Blazing Star Lane, Reiner Drive, Wiley Road, Lemoyne Avenue, etc. We have not put in speed humps in the past. In looking at alternative solutions, staff recommendation is that the Town does not sponsor such a project. Alternative solutions given the nature of the roads and that there is no outlet would be for the POA to try to spread the word through newsletters, web site, etc. to encourage the residents and their visitors not to speed. BCSO can step up enforcement in the area perhaps, issuing more tickets. Another resort that the DOT mentioned is they could abandon the rights of way and have the neighborhood take over maintenance of those roads. That would also involve the Town. We would have to be an intermediary where they would abandon the right of ways to the Town and then the Town could then dedicate the roads to the neighborhood if they wish to take them over and maintain them. Staff recommends that we do not support the speed hump project.

Councilman Harkins asked what the population size and the number of children in the neighborhood. Mr. Buckalew said he did not know the number of children, but we counted 86 households fronting those highlighted roads. Councilman Harkins asked what the number of people who signed the petition relative to the size of the population. Mr. Buckalew said the DOT requires 75% of the folks effected by the speed humps to sign a petition and we got 61 and there should be 65 to reach the 75%. We would need four more signatures. If we move forward and submit an application to the DOT, we would ask the POA to get at least four more signatures on the petition.

Chairman Grant asked Mr. Buckalew if we would decide to go with speed humps in this area could you re-create a policy to make it consistent throughout the Island. Mr. Buckalew said they could and would definitely have to include Fire Rescue and they would need to access the situation and delay response times.

Councilman Harkins asked Captain Viens if they get calls of service in this area related to speeding. Captain Viens said periodically they get requests for speed enforcement. I think the last data speed study was done prior to the speed limit reduction. We have not deployed any speed signs down there for data collection, but we will do that if you guys request it.

Chairman Grant opened up the meeting for public comment. Mr. Tom Risher, Point Comfort Plantation POA President said that excessive speeding is a problem – it is people coming down Point Comfort Road – there are houses down both sides of the road. That one section of Point Comfort Road from where Sea Olive starts all the way to the circle – that one section has 18 children. If you drive down that road you can see the houses are fairly close to the road. It was noted that these roads are dead end roads which is true, but it is not the residents as much as tourists. As far as costs, in our mind if SCDOT maintains the roads, we thought they would be the ones paying for the humps. The point was brought up that we are talking about 14-15 speed humps. That is not what we requested. We requested three and they are the kind that has the flat top across them – so three going from the top of where the Ashton Cove Road comes in down to the circle – spacing three right in there, not 14-15. That dramatically reduces the cost there. If that is what we are talking about \$3,000 a speed hump I can tell you right now we will pay for that this week if it comes down

to us having to pay for it versus the Town. That is not what we are worried about. We are worried about looking proactive, looking to the future as to what we can do to make sure the neighborhood is safe and these children and pets are safe. There are people here who live in that section and have had point blank instances where cars come through there speeding to the circle, the property owners walk out there and stand in the road to make sure they cannot speed back through and they come speeding back through and go off the road, run through the bike path right there. There has been a lot of confrontation there and it is dangerous. If we can reduce the number of speed humps down from 14 to 3 and with those costs, we would appreciate your help and recommendation for the speed humps. Mr. Risher mentioned they would have no problem in getting an additional four signatures on the petition. We did not know that you needed 75% and would never have turned in a sheet that didn't have the appropriate number of signatures if we did.

Chairman Grant asked how many times they have called the police regarding speeding in this area. Mr. Brian Newman said they are responsible enough to not call the police for every incident that goes on. Logan Cambron and I have speed guns and from time to time we go out there with speed guns. Several animals have been killed as a result of the speeding.

Mr. Michael Perry, Mr. Logan Cambron, Mr. Hughes, Mr. Brian Conyor, Tatana Clark, Eric Norman, Jennifer Gleitzman Vargas, all residents of Point Comfort spoke in favor of speed humps being installed.

Chairman Grant says he has children and understands your concerns. I think we do need some speed humps in this area. I am hoping that we can approve it this morning and move it to Town Council that we are in support of some form of speed humps on this particular road. I would also ask that we do a policy in terms of when we have our citizens coming to us in reference to these type of issues and concerns how would we address that. Is there a plan, do we start looking on slowing down traffic first, how many times do you have to call for service or whatever else we need to do so that we can move in an efficient manner in terms of trying to address the needs of the community in terms of adding speed humps. I don't know if three will do, but we have engineers that will look at it a lot better and come up with a plan to address that.

Councilman Harkins said they are dealing with an administration and to quote the Mayor, residents first and you have come before us with a collective statement and I commend you for that. I know we should listen and we should act. I think we should appreciate anytime we do something in one area it becomes a principal of thought that can permeate the entire community. That said, I am really just enforcing the Chair's comments that it is important to get a policy together with dispatch. I think the key ingredient of that policy would be 1) a clear statement from the POA leadership that there is a problem and 2) have that Policy supported with a majority vote as required and 3) we try to come up with a cost sharing which demonstrates you have some skin in the game and we have some skin in the game. When you look at this from financial standpoint, you are looking at \$9,900 if you do three humps. The consequence of not doing it could be priceless. I would encourage us to vote for this. I don't think we need to have a month of Sundays to figure this out. We should be able to move what is reasonable dispatch.

Councilman Lennox asked Mr. Risher if he was speaking for the POA. Mr. Risher answered yes. Councilman Lennox asked if there were any property owners opposed to this. Mr. Risher answered yes, there were property owners opposed on the basis of I have been here for 30+ years and nothing has happened yet and I don't want it or they don't have children

or they don't live on the road in question. Councilman Lennox said when you said you are prepared to incur all or part of the cost of installing 3-4 speed humps, are you referring to you as individuals or the POA. Mr. Risher answered he was speaking for the POA. I know we have it in our reserves and can get it in our budget.

Councilman Lennox asked Mr. Buckalew if they have the ability to change the recommendation from 14-15 speed humps to 3. Mr. Buckalew said at the end, the DOT is going to mandate how many will go in there. They have design guidelines and will look this. We as the Town, as the project sponsor and submitting the encroachment application we will provide a design. If we want to limit the humps to just Point Comfort Road and we look at the spacing that we think will be effective – we don't want to pay for something that will be ineffective and have folks revving their engines and speeding in between, and reduce that number. In the end, DOT will decide what is acceptable. They will approve if it needs to be seven, etc. If the neighborhood feels like only Point Comfort Road is the target area and Sea Olive and Nautilus is not a concern, then we can definitely do that. We can work with spacing and ultimately the proper number of speed humps.

Councilman Lennox asked if we get involved financially, either on a cost sharing or whatever portion we would decide to be appropriate in a project like this, are we opening up the door for projects similar to this Island wide. Mr. Buckalew said yes. On most paving jobs I have been associated with in the last 20 years, some or several residents have said we need speed humps. We have said no and a lot of times it was predicated on Fire Rescue's opinion. If we do this and as Mr. Grant had said develop a policy I believe folks would come back and want them in our neighborhood.

Councilman Lennox said what he would like to see us consider would be going back and redesigning or re-engineering down as much as we possibly can to accomplish two things – to get to a project cost that the POA can absorb themselves and get to a project that is reduced in scope that is still safe. Chairman Grant said one of our highest priorities is making sure the public is safe. My thinking is this. When we start on public roads requesting citizens who pay taxes to start shoveling costs, what we are doing we are creating government that is based on socio economics and what that means is those who can afford to pay will pay for speed humps and those who can't, will not – a child is still a child. I don't want us to get to the point where we are looking for certain people to pay and certain people not to. Or, those who can't pay just deal with it. My point would be and this might be something we take up later when we get to the policy action, but one of the things you do that engineers do anyway is before the put speed humps in they have a design of where it is going to be and will bring the community in and take a look at it and get their input and then it goes to the different committees. We already have that process in place. My suggestion would be right now let's approve it, ask the engineers and the Town to come up with a fair policy that can be consistent throughout the Island. For instance one of the things I liked was that they had to go out and get 75% of the people in that area to support it. Calls for service should be part of data collection on this particular road and you request from the State and ask for approval and get some other information. Then we have our Fire Chief look at the particular road and give us their perception on what we can do to make it safer.

Mr. Risher said they did go to the Fire Department and Joheida Fister approved for the Fire Department that their response time was under the required response time with the speed humps. Joheida Fister, Fire Marshall said they did come to me with proposing three speed humps. We looked at response time to the very ends of Row Boat and Nautilus. Right now Station 7 is whose first district it is and the response time is under the five minutes that we strive for. The thing I would say with speed humps is while they do keep the public safe on

the side of people driving, it slows us down getting to things. We really strive to have good response time. Anytime somebody wants to put in a speed hump we look at what our response times are and give them feedback. If they are going to put in 14 we would have to go back and look at that and see what that does to response times there. I wouldn't say it was approval, but we did not feel like our response times would be hindered by three humps.

Chairman Grant moved that the Town Engineer look at this for speed humps and coming up with a policy. Councilman Lennox seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Adjournment

Councilman Harkins moved to adjourn. Councilman Lennox seconded. The Meeting was adjourned at 10:09 a.m.

Submitted by:

Karen D. Knox

Approved: 9/23/2019