



January 2019

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**Celebrating 50 Years of Service to Our
Members and Community**

Editor's Note. This newsletter covers a few topics and developments since the November newsletter. Further information on those and other subjects will be provided in subsequent communications to members. (BBLA members please note the article on the new electronic dues payment option at the end of this newsletter.)

POLICE CHIEF BRIEFS BBLA BOARD ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Last November, Chief of Police Michael Redmon provided a comprehensive briefing on the Bethany Beach Police Department (BBPD) and law enforcement statistics and issues for the BBLA Board of Directors. Two conclusions are supported by the facts presented: first, the BBPD is a highly professional, efficient and effective police force; and second, Bethany Beach continues to be a safe community for residents and visitors. Following is a summary of some of the facts presented and discussed.

BBPD Personnel and Professional Qualifications. The Department is comprised of ten full-time police officers. All are college graduates and have successfully completed the 26-week Delaware State Police Academy training program. In addition, they complete 40 hours of further training each year (the State minimum requirement is 16 hours).

Police Coverage (24/7/365)

- Eight officers provide patrol coverage and respond to calls
- Two 12-hour shifts each day
- Two officers per shift (a sergeant and one other officer)
- Working 4 days on and 4 days off (where possible)

Seasonal Police Officers

- The BBPD is augmented with the addition of 15 seasonal officers from Memorial Day through Labor Day.
- Each seasonal officer must meet the same stringent screening and testing requirements as full-time officers (except for the college degree requirement), and complete a 220 plus-hour training program.

Professional Recognition and Certification. The BBPD has been recognized for its professional excellence by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), the preeminent police accreditation organization in the United States. It is the first small department in Delaware and the third smallest department in the nation to receive CALEA certification.

Law Enforcement Statistics and Issues. BBPD statistics identify a wide range of police responsibilities and define what it means “to serve and protect”. We’ve all seen officers on patrol in Town, monitoring traffic on Routes 1 and 26, providing security at public events, and perhaps responding to an individual complaint or call for assistance. Here is part of the statistical report for 2017 (the most recent year with complete data) that expands and clarifies the picture of all they do:

- 1600 calls for service (includes requests for assistance and response to complaints about such matters as noise, construction, parking, animals, suspicious persons and vehicles, disorderly conduct, alcohol violations, domestic disputes and disputes between neighbors);
- 90 reportable vehicle accidents;
- 1800 traffic citations/arrests (majority involving individuals travelling through Town on Route 1);
- 15 DUI arrests;
- 250 other arrests; and
- bike safety training and equipment for summer employees in Town, and pedestrian and bike safety checkpoints during summer.

In discussing criminal offenses in the meeting with Chief Redmon, three areas of particular interest because of concerns of some BBLA members were addressed: theft, drug offenses and “criminal mischief”.

Most incidents of theft occur during the summer, involving shoplifting; stolen bikes and street signs; theft of unattended property on the beach and boardwalk (with one incident in 2018 of a stolen purse on the boardwalk in which the suspect was later apprehended because of an alert seasonal police officer); some reported thefts from homes (with possible implication of cleaning crews and contractors).

Drug offenses involved the illegal use or possession of marijuana. There were 12 adult arrests and 9 juvenile (under age 18) arrests in the beach/boardwalk area in 2017.

Criminal mischief investigations in 2017 involved such offenses as damage to mailboxes, graffiti, “egging”, and some property damage in disputes between neighbors. Arrests and the schedule of fines for disorderly conduct were also discussed.

Considering the dramatic increase in the resident population during the summer (soaring from about 1,000 to 20,000), as well as over 100,000 visitors to Town every year, the incidents of criminal violations are remarkably low. That is attributable, in large part, to a mostly law-abiding population, but also to the preventative efforts of the BBPD.

The low crime statistics do not diminish the importance of individuals maintaining personal security: securing homes, vehicles and other personal property; and reporting unlawful conduct and suspicious vehicles and persons to the BBPD (9-1-1 or the non-emergency number: (302) 539-1000, depending on the situation). Officers will respond. We are very fortunate to have such dedicated, professional police officers serving all of us and our community. The BBLA Board extends thanks to all of them.

CURRENT ISSUES

Increased Fines For Failure To Clean-Up Dog Waste

At its meeting on January 18, 2019, the Town Council voted to increase the penalties for violations of Chapter 240 (Dogs and Other Animals), Article V (Dog Waste) of the Town Code, which requires, among other things, that if a dog defecates on private or public property, the owner or other person exercising control of the dog must immediately remove the feces and dispose of it in a sanitary manner. (There's an exception in the Code for "specially trained companion dogs accompanying a disabled person".)

Because of a significant increase in the number of violations on the boardwalk and beach ramps during the recent off-season months when dogs are allowed on the boardwalk and beach, and the related health hazard, public nuisance and Town clean-up expense, the Council voted to increase the fines for violations from not less than \$25 or more than \$75, to \$100 for a first offense and \$200 for any subsequent offense within a 12-month period. Because of the serious nature of the problem, the Council voted to make the increased penalty effective immediately. It was also noted that the Town will purchase additional dispensers with clean-up material for the boardwalk area.

It remains to be seen whether the increased fines will be effective, or whether further Council action will be necessary. Public health and safety are the primary considerations in dealing with this issue.

Pedestrian Safety Measures on Collins Street Considered

On January 18, the Council also conducted a well-attended hearing to review engineering plans and hear public comments on the proposed creation of a 5-foot wide walkway, on part of the Town's public right-of-way property on the south side of Collins Street, from Half Moon Drive to Kent Avenue. Individuals were also allowed to ask the Town engineer questions about the proposed project.

The proposal was developed to address serious and growing concerns about pedestrian safety on the street. Without a sidewalk, pedestrians walk in the street, which is one of the most heavily travelled streets for vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles in Town. Available information indicates that the right-of-way property deeded to the Town for Collins Street was 40-feet. The paved street is now a relatively narrow 20-foot wide, with 10 feet of unpaved right-of-way on each side. The Town engineer recommended construction of the proposed walkway on part of that unpaved right-of-way to provide a safe walking area out of the vehicle travel lanes for the many pedestrians who use Collins Street to travel to and from the beach, boardwalk and downtown Bethany Beach.

From the numerous public comments at the hearing it appears that the main options for Council consideration and decision at some future date are:

- continue the status quo (Council considered a similar safety proposal in 2009, but did not take any action);
- advise/direct pedestrians to use the sidewalks on Garfield Parkway (Route 26);
- install speed bumps and stop signs to slow, discourage and reduce vehicle traffic on the street, and study the results before doing anything further; or
- construct the walkway and also install speed bumps and stop signs, as recommended by the Town engineer.

The Council is expected to decide on a course of action in the next few months. We will keep members informed of further developments.

Council Decides To Proceed With Three Capital Improvement Projects

At a combined Workshop-Special Meeting on January 23, the Town Council, in connection with discussion of a Capital Improvement Plan, decided to proceed with the following three priority construction projects.

1. The Town Park (now referred to as “Central Park”). The Council directed the Town Manager to proceed with soliciting bids for the first phase of the park construction plan. The first phase will include construction of pathways; lighting; all plants, trees and grass; benches; and limited parking on the Central Blvd. side of the park. The bid documents were prepared based on design features favored by a majority of respondents in a Town-wide survey of property owners in 2016, and approved by the Council in October 2016. It is possible that work could begin this Spring and be finished by the end of the Summer.
2. The Comfort Stations (Restrooms). The Council directed the Town Manager to proceed with design work for renovation and some expansion of the comfort stations/restrooms in the Guard House building at the boardwalk. The construction work on this would not begin until after the 2019 summer season.
3. North Atlantic Avenue. The Council agreed to proceed with design work for the repaving of North Atlantic Avenue. The street has some unique zoning issues that may require a different design than the recently completed project on South Atlantic, since many of the homes from Third to Fifth Streets were built in the early 20th Century, before current zoning ordinances were enacted.

As reported in previous BBLA newsletters, based on outside audit and regular budget and finance reports, the Town is in sound financial condition. It was noted at the Council meeting that as a result of fiscal policies and financial management decisions, the Town has the necessary reserves to complete the projects described over the next few years. We will keep you informed on progress.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The Town recently published an e-newsletter with interesting information on a number of projects and subjects, together with related pictures. The topics covered include:

- The South Atlantic Avenue and Cedarwood Street projects (completed);
- Storm preparedness and recovery (the Town’s Public Works facility near Roxanna);
- Progress on plans for construction of the Town park (bids to be solicited);
- Monitoring tides and areas of possible flooding on Town website;
- Renovation and expansion of the Guard House Comfort Station (restrooms at the boardwalk/ bandstand area);
- End of the recent US Army Corps of Engineer’s beach replenishment project (planting of dune grasses); and
- Renovation of the historical Dinker/Irwin Cottage (expected to be completed in March).

If you have not seen the Town e-newsletter, here’s the link: <http://www.townofbethanybeach.com/DocumentCenter/View/4514/ENewsletterJanuary2019PDF>

Electronic Dues Renewal Option For Members.

Update-With member input, we now use a website approach rather than an e-mail link.

Last year, a number of members asked for an option to renew their BBLA membership and pay dues electronically. The Board responded by working with BBLA's technical consultant-contractor to provide an electronic option. After testing, the result was described in a January 8 e-mail to all 1200 members for whom we had e-mail addresses. The e-mail included a link to click to click to start the process. There was also a January 18 reminder.

And then we learned the following from members:

- Many said the new option worked. Almost 200 members renewed electronically. In a short survey, 99 % said we should continue to offer the option. 95% said the process was easy. Comments included:
 - "Good easy system." "Fast, efficient and cost effective-no issues"-great work."
 - "Paypal worked fine." "Very easy. No additional mailing and sending checks."
- With member input, we learned we could rapidly correct technical glitches. Members were patient and understanding as we fixed the problems. Both glitches related to using a link within the mail service to access the BBLA data and did not occur in our testing. Comments included:
 - "It worked well after the glitch was fixed. I appreciate electronic payment."
 - "Seems like fewer clicks/screens would be possible."
- A number of members felt the process needed improvement to further address concerns about security of personal data. Clicking on a link in an e-mail to bring a member's individual record was a concern. Member comments included:
 - "I need to know if personal data is encrypted." "My issue isn't using Paypal or other online methods -that's fine. The issue is using a link that takes someone to their profile. It's better to have an announcement email that BBLA members have new online methods of dues payment and they will see those options available to them once they log-in." "Go thru your website"

UPDATE- *Working with our technical consultant-contractor, we rapidly adopted and implemented the members' comments, resulting in the website based method shown on the renewal documents. Information now goes through the BBLA website after an individual log in. All payment information in PayPal is encrypted as it was previously. Note those who did not renew electronically will receive the normal postal mailing. It is possible a few will renew while the postal mailing is on route.*

Electronic dues renewal is part of the BBLA Board's commitment to increasing the options for electronic communications with members.

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