

City of Tybee Island
Alcohol Ordinance Workgroup
11-24-20 – Final Minutes

In Attendance: George Shaw, Demery Bishop, Kathryn Williams, Mary McLemore, Major Joel Fobes, Steve Kellam, Ann Delaney, Todd Morrison, Chief Robert Bryson, Paula Crowe, Lawanna Tsoulos

Call to Order – 10:00 by Interim Chair Demery Bishop (DB)

Approval of Minutes – Motion from Kathryn Williams (KW), seconded by Mary McLemore (MM) Motion approved.

Old Business – KW stated that she received some information on drunk tanks and discovered that they are not allowed.

New Business – Joel Fobes (JF) explains arrest reports regarding residents (approx. 10%) v. guests (approx. 90%).

He discussed the relative time per incident sheet to explain how long each type of arrest took.

He discussed the traffic numbers – other than March and April 2020 is greater than previous years.

He discussed the PD org. chart and noted that they are five officers short of budgeted positions.

All positions are POST-certified except Dispatch and Code Enforcement. Jailers cannot make arrests.

KW felt that staffing was too low. Asked if ratios are used i.e. officers per resident, officers per arrest, etc.

Bob Bryson (BB) responded that we have too few officers in the summer and too many in the winter.

Mentioned the possibility of being a precinct for a larger force, which would offer more flexibility.

Said every incident has the chance to go bad, which increases our legal vulnerability.

Positions are difficult to fill. Tybee officers make more arrests for less money than surrounding communities.

Fewer incidents that require police are what they (TIPD) prefer.

DB reiterated that current staffing is 24 officers and budget is for 29 officers.

Noted that approximately 65% of total arrests are alcohol related.

Asked if they happen more frequently in certain parts of the island.

BB stated that they happen all over the island, concentrating officers in one area reduces coverage in other areas.

We also have domestic violence calls in surprising numbers with visitors and also with residents.

It takes a ton of man hours to go from start of incident all the way through court. Reinforcing the point that reducing the number of incidents might be the way to go, versus number of police increasing. Would like to see residents get more attention since they are the ones investing the tax dollars to pay for the department.

Anne Delaney (AD) asked what businesses can do to help.

BB suggested that door security is helpful.

JF said that senior staff do run calls and don't just stay in office.

KW said she was shocked by the number of arrests the officers were making.

BB stated that most arrests are released on subpoena. There isn't time to take everyone to county jail. Explained more about how costly it is to make arrests versus reducing incidents – dispatch costs, cost of running a court, increased vulnerability to civil rights type lawsuits.

MM asked what percentage of businesses use a doorman.

After some back and forth discussion, no one could pin down a percentage.

Paula Crowe (PC) stopped by every bar on the South End to ask for their suggestions.

Most said that more police presence would help.

Suggested a police precinct on the South End.

Suggested better training for bartenders.

Suggested the need for some method of communication between businesses regarding problem customers.

KW stated that a 'bar card' is not required.

North Beach Grill has alcohol liability insurance that requires staff training, but bar staffing is difficult and server quality is not always good. Some liability insurance requires training. Some does not.

DB asked what is the approximate cost per officer.

JF said they would bring that number back.

DB - Alcohol tax on liquor by the drink goes to General Fund.

Not enough to cover more officers.

DB said a new source of funding may be needed.

PC did her surveying both during the day and evening.

Did not see an officer on the night she was out.

BB stated that the officers may have been on a call elsewhere.

DB asked if the City had considered corral zones (outdoor drinking areas attached to businesses).

BB suggested perhaps limiting the outdoor drinking to the festival zone/South End business overlay.

DB said he was aware that corral zones had brought down arrests in Athens.

PERF (Police Executive Research Forum) is against more officers.

Use more cameras.

BB stated that the city has 43 cameras and license plate readers at the bridge.

DB and BB discussed camera approaches, positives and negatives.

MM asked what happened before 2013 when open-container ordinance was passed.

BB stated that PD didn't arrest for open-container, traditionally. (Difficult to hear.)

DB asked for suggestions/ideas for next meeting.

BB offered PD ride-alongs for anyone that wants to see what goes on.

DB asked for more research on corral zones from TIPD.

KW wants more information on liquor liability insurance. Do majority of policies require training?

Information sharing with the lodging companies – also something she would like more info. on.

BB stated that registering domestic violence offenders or those with restraining orders is currently not allowed. He would like to be able to do that.

KW requested more information on PERF.

DB asked for a refined number on cost-per-officer.

KW suggested we need a long-range plan and long-term goals.

Regular DUI checkpoints?

Establish bartender testing/classes?

Steve Kelleem (SK) stated that there are online bar training classes.

KW suggested researching more details about liquor liability insurance regarding costs, coverage, etc.

Todd Morrison (TM) said that the Dept. of Revenue had required it in the past.

MM asked if the group could look at the camera system.

BB said yes and he is putting together a “best of body cameras” montage.

Adjourn 11:30