



TOWN OF HIGHLAND BEACH

(INCORPORATED 1922)

3243 WALNUT DRIVE

Highland Beach, Maryland 21403

Telephone (410) 268-2956

MAYOR

William H. Sanders III

TREASURER

Sheila Jeanne Murchison

COMMISSIONER

Eric Baugh

Eric Brewington

Benjamin Secundy

**Homeowner/Renter Opinion Survey
Safety & Security in the Town of Highland Beach
Response: Full Time Residents
April 4-17, 2021**

PURPOSE: To gain an accurate assessment of perceived safety and security concerns, and options/opportunities to enhance the feeling of safety in our community. It is important to note that this is a Town of Highland Beach Opinion Survey to inform further deliberations by the Mayor and Board of Commissioners. It is not a vote for any particular option.

QUESTION 1: Knowing that no place is 100% safe, do you have safety concerns (feel unsafe) in Highland Beach?

13 Yes

9 No

If yes, please place an "X" by all that apply:

13 Strangers walking in the community

8 Traffic, speeding

10 Strangers on the beach

8 Cars parked on road

10 Cars driving through Town

2 Burglary

3 Other:

- Strangers using town amenities (piers)
- Dog walker letting dogs relieve themselves on home owners property
- People coming on the property unsolicited BWR 2021 WOMEN OF POWER NATIONAL VIRTUAL SUMMIT MARCH 24 – 28, 2021

QUESTION 2: When traffic control is here, do you feel that this is a sufficient level of security to address your safety concerns?

10 Yes, existing coverage is appropriate

14 No, more is needed

If no, please check one of the following (under each heading) that you'd envision would provide the level of security you desire:

Expand hours to:

13 16 hours/day

0 24 hours/day

2 No change in number of hours

Expand number of days a week to:

4 Expand to 5 days a week

10 Expand to 7 days a week

0 No change in days a week

Expand number of months to:

9 6 months/year

6 12 months/year

0 No change in number of months

QUESTION 3: A group is looking into street cameras that would be monitored and an alert would be sent to designated volunteer citizens when someone is seen at the piers or on the beach. An additional camera is being considered for the traffic control booth that is purported to record the license plates of cars entering the community.

There is a suggestion that a passive license plate reader be installed at the traffic control booth to record the license plates of everyone entering the beach. Do you think that this would be helpful in addressing security and safety concerns?

15 Yes

9 No

There is a suggestion that a camera be placed on Wayman Avenue focused on the street to enable the traffic control contractor to view unauthorized cars parked along the street without leaving the guard station. Do you think that this would be helpful in addressing security and safety concerns?

19 Yes

5 No

If yes, what hours of monitoring are adequate to make you feel safe?

2 6 hours daily

8 12 hours daily

9 24/7

There is a suggestion that a camera be placed on the large pier on Wayman Avenue to view activity. Do you think that this would be helpful in addressing security and safety concerns?

10 Yes

14 No

If yes, what hours of monitoring are adequate to make you feel safe?

2 6 hours daily

3 12 hours daily

7 24/7

There is a suggestion that a camera be placed on Bruce Avenue to view the small pier. Do you think that this would be helpful in addressing security and safety concerns?

9 Yes

15 No

If yes, what hours of monitoring are adequate to make you feel safe?

1 6 hours daily

2 12 hours daily

7 24/7

Would you be willing to be a citizen monitor to receive and respond to notifications when suspicious individuals/activities are observed?

6 Yes

16 No

QUESTION 4: Another proposal is to hire a private security guard company to supplement our police force, the Anne Arundel County Department of Police. Do you think this is a necessary and effective use of town resources to make you feel safe in our community?

13 Yes

10 No

If yes, would armed or unarmed security patrols be your preference?

2 Armed

11 Unarmed

Also, if yes, what level of coverage do you desire to make you feel safe (please choose days and hours)?

0 Weekdays only

2 Weekends only

9 Weekdays and Weekends

1 Sunrise to sunset

7 12 hours/day

1 24/7

QUESTION 5, for full-time residents only: Do you feel safer living here, or living at your previous home?

15 Highland Beach

4 Previous home

4 No difference

If you checked previous home, please briefly describe what that community did that made you feel safer there than here:

- My previous community had 24 hour police presence in the neighborhood. Therefore, if an incident occurred, they were there to respond.
- Routine police patrol, Neighborhood network
- Gated community with uniform guard at the gate. Also a patrol car that rode around the property at night. Well lighted throughout the community no dark area that someone could be lurking in.
- We did not have the traffic going to a beach, as much people walking by our home from several communities with dogs on your lawn and want to fight if you say something.

OPTIONAL COMMENTS: This is to provide HB citizens the opportunity to address concerns that are missed by the survey questions, to add comments to the survey questions, and to otherwise offer any overall comments you wish to provide on safety and security in our community.

Some of these suggestions represent significant expense. How will they be paid for?

I have not experienced an increase in crime in the community. Has there been an increase in crime that would warrant these expenses or are we reacting to the fears of recently arrived residents? Absolute control is an illusion.

From Memorial Day to Labor Day we already have traffic control at the front gate that notifies uninvited guests of the conditions that exist here. We can't keep people from coming, we can continue the controls we currently have. (A passive camera would capture vehicles coming- going and parking at the beach, and to provide I.D., if a crime occurs.)

I am glad that the suggestion of putting a fence and locking gate at the beach was abandoned, but some of these solutions are not far removed, in tone, from the aforementioned travesty.

Highland Beach residents are very fortunate to live in a beautiful beachfront community. I'm not sure why there is so much agitation and dissention in what has been a generally peaceful town until the last couple of years or so. Of recent, there is a growing perception that HB is an unsafe town, even though we are largely crime-free, as are adjoining communities. No doubt fears and unease are partly a reflection of the lack of civility, gun violence...crime, and scaremongering that is occurring in the greater society. Then there's the coronavirus, increasing numbers of new residents and visitors, and the desire for outdoor hangouts. Perhaps this has added to a general feeling of unrest and unease that has generated more security concerns. As the saying goes, "perception is more important than reality."

It appears that there are some folks who are generating and spreading the perception that HB is unsafe, even though there are no significant incidents they can point to that justifies such feelings. As adults, are we not responsible for "managing our own feelings" based on facts? I'm not opposed to increasing traffic control by adding an additional day per week, and an additional month or two per year. I don't believe it's really necessary, however, it may make people feel safer. Like the squeaky wheel, the loudest complaints get the most attention. I don't think that the silent majority of residents feel that HB is unsafe, although I could be wrong.

We should distinguish between safety and nuisance problems. Our own HB and VB residents contribute to the problem of outsiders taking advantage of our beachfront, piers.... Many of the non-residents in town are family and friends of residents, who are invited, and who may come back on their own, and they may bring their family and friends. Too many residents, and people associated with residents, stretch the rules regarding what is allowed. As well, workmen may return to use the piers and/or beachfront, and sometimes residents give them permission. And, the number of people in HB, VB & nearby communities continues to grow.

Last few comments:

- HB is much quieter late fall through early spring, with less traffic and use of the beachfront. It tends to be a much more relaxed, peaceful time of year.
- How much of a Big Brother atmosphere would be created if several cameras were installed?
- Something out-of-the-way is going to happen from time-to-time. There's no need to overreact. As has been the practice over the years, we need to work to de-escalate situations; balance is needed. On the rare occasion when the police have been called to help with a difficult person, they have responded quickly and professionally, and the problem person has left without incident.
- Regarding safety and various other issues, we now seem to have a shadow government that is very insistent and persistent on numerous issues. Much of the talk seems to be "solutions in search of problems." Why does the HBCA keep presenting itself as speaking for the citizens of HB, when in fact they do not speak for the majority of citizens who don't belong to the HBCA? And for those that are members, why should anyone keep paying dues to be misrepresented? If we're not able to maintain a civil, friendly community, we could lose the interest of citizen involvement in being a self-governing town.

My general concerns would be if strangers started lingering around the beach area at night or, more from a desire to keep our beach from effectively becoming public, if larger numbers of strangers started using our beach. The video cameras should help there - especially if video is saved of people on the beach at night. The video camera at the entrance to Highland Beach at the security booth constantly recording license plate numbers would also be very useful as a deterrent if marked well enough - both for unauthorized people using the beach and for general crime. For example, if a burglary occurs, it would serve as a record of cars/trucks that have driven by.

If we had unlimited funds, then a gated community would be nice to have, but that is very prohibitively expensive so a non-starter. Substantially increased private patrolling would likely also be prohibitively expensive. Video cameras should act as a deterrent for most potentially risky situations.

I also have personal concerns regarding a creepy guy from work who has continued to plague me for years, for which a license-plate-reading camera at the HB entrance traffic control booth should handle most of my concerns. It should act as a deterrent - especially if there is a sign noting the existence of the camera.

I'm very concerned about the heightened activity (more people coming to the neighborhood to dwell) - using the beach, pier and playground (despite being inoperable) and parking illegally. I've also observed a higher level of hostility when I advise them that the beach is private or that they're not allowed to park illegally. Oftentimes, they become hostile or ignore me completely. I don't feel safe pushing the issue, so I'll contact Eric Brewington. Also, our current security solution (on site security during summers only) is too limited. Essentially, we're relying on the security person or a neighbor witnessing an infraction and responding to it. Relying on someone to see something is not an optimal solution to keep the community safe. I think that cameras in addition to enhanced onsite security (at least 8 months) would be a better solution.

Question 1 - not so much a safety concern but concern for any and everybody walking and riding around our community unmonitored. I like others feel that people, other than guests of citizens, who don't live here don't belong here.

Question 2 - one person at the traffic control booth and one person on patrol throughout the community with focus on the beach and piers would be more adequate.

Question 3 - not sure the type of monitoring suggested in this question is needed or proposed. the idea is the cameras would be there to record incidents if they occur and could be checked to identify perpetrators.

General - traffic control personnel should be in a uniform identifying them as Highland /Venice Beach traffic control. solar streetlights should be installed on lower Lake Ave just off Bay Highlands Dr. a good option is <https://endurancelights.com/products/60w-solar-street-light-6000-lumens>

In over 60 years we have lived here part time and full time we have found the Town of Highland Beach to be a very safe community. In fact there have only been 2 or 3 instances where incidents have occurred mostly in the winter when very few residents lived here. (burglaries of vacant house) In each case, Anne Arundel County Police solved the crime.

Over the years, we have only had to deal with the same type of issues that all beach communities have to deal with. Trespassers on the beach, piers & parking, all of which has traditionally been handled by Traffic Control. However, citizens have been encourage by the Anne Arundel County Police "If you see something that makes you feel uneasy, call us right away" (day or night). In every case this has happened, the problem was resolved without consequence. Crime can happen anywhere at any time however until this time, Highland Beach and all of the surrounding communities remain "crime free".

For the record, I would like to say after serving as Mayor for 8 years and Commissioner for 17 years, until last year, I never heard any citizen indicate they did not feel safe living here. I sincerely hope folks who do not feel safe can tell what has happened that makes them feel unsafe?

I understand the attraction to the Beach and how annoying it can be when it feels like non-residents are taking advantage of the beauty and amenities of our community. Recognizing my privilege and the welcome I have felt here, I don't want my voice to speak over long term residents. I feel safe in this neighborhood, to some extent more so during the summer as it becomes busier, more neighbors are around. What bothers me is more the annoyance of parking, trespassing, and the like. That feels different from a safety concern. Cameras during hours when there is a traffic control person makes the most sense for that I would think. I worry that trying to control poor or thoughtless human behavior that is generally innocuous, we create a space that is so filled with rules and enforcement that the space does feel less warm, welcoming and safe. Again, I will always defer to those who have been here for decades and are perhaps privy to information and concerns that I am unaware of. I appreciate all the work that is done to keep Highland Beach wonderful.

A combination of security measures such as surveillance cameras, security patrol, and a neighborhood network should be considered. Details matter, and compromise may be necessary. We are a unique community with our unique needs and attributes. When we come together, working as a unit, we have a much better chance of living in peace.

My main concern is regarding residents (part-time or full-time) feeling the need to confront (or being uncomfortable with confronting) non-residents parking on our streets, using our piers, using the beach, playground, or otherwise using Highland Beach amenities. With the current emotional climate in the USA, it would be my preference for residents, to be able to call a security guard hired by Highland Beach if they are questioning whether someone should be where they are.

“Perception is more important than reality” says a lot about our differing perceptions on safety and security, and when enough is enough. On adding security cameras, I believe that this presents the illusion of safety, but offers minimal real benefits. Here is why. Highland Beach is not a crime TV story. The expectation that a camera, notably a street camera, would catch the bad guy is a Hollywood production, and does not translate well to our small community. If in the small chance that a burglary occurred, and cameras on the street and at the traffic control booth captured cars passing by, and we gave the video to the police, I cannot imagine that the police would scan all those plates for such a crime, and if they did, would follow-up with every vehicle owner. What would the police say? Just being in the vicinity is not proof of a crime. And for the most part, the resolution of cameras would be insufficient to identify the driver, or to catch the plates. And do you really want the police showing up at the door of your visitors investigating a crime? So, cameras, in my opinion, would offer a false sense of security that I believe would not serve our community well.

Cameras work best in and on buildings, where the person in front of the camera is close enough to be identified, and where a person can be placed at an exact location and precise time. Your opinion may differ, which I can completely understand. It would be helpful to understand each other’s opinions if we converse based upon facts in the real world, and not just how we may feel at any given moment.

Traffic control is not security the way it seems to be understood by some. It is traffic control. Expansion of the service has ramifications beyond an increase in cost. In recognition of liability and other issues, we need to be very careful in how we define this service, and careful that a contractor does not become, in the eyes of the IRS, an employee.

I’ve traveled to many countries around the world and I’ve observed many “high-security” communities and homes. What they have in common are high barbed wired fences around the perimeter of properties, guard dogs, and armed guards. And, importantly, these are areas where the native population has seen its country subjugated to foreign invaders, taken

over, and barriers erected to keep “the others” out. Do you think the occupants feel safe? I think they are scared to death (perhaps with good reason, given the circumstances of their occupation); and the greater the fear, the higher the level of “protections.” I think that the reason we do not have an ongoing and more visible Anne Arundel County police presence in our community is precisely because they judge our community to be one of the safer places to live, and consequently deploy their routine patrols in communities that may be experiencing higher levels of crime. I think that seeing constant police patrols—not the lack of them—is a more realistic indication of the relative safety of our community.

I would hope that this community would collectively embrace the urgent need to reimagine public safety, and not to perpetuate the unthinking response of calling a cop for every concern. I believe that private security is a non-starter, and there are many reasons not to engage such services. A prime reason is town liability. The award of \$27 million in the George Floyd case is but the latest example of a community paying a huge sum of money to settle cases due to criminal actions by members of their police force. A private company can be sued up to the limits of their insurance coverage, but the town could be found liable for millions of dollars above that. This is happening all around the country, with many cities having to take out bonds to pay off the settlements. Anne Arundel County may be large enough to sustain such settlements. But a large settlement has the real potential to bankrupt this community, and would be a very unwise and I believe unwarranted course of action. This is saying nothing of the huge cost that such a service would incur.

I agree to having a camera recording plates of cars as they come through the gate into the community. I strongly disagree to having members of the community receiving alerts and then having to perhaps dealing with those creating the problem. A risk that citizens or the community are putting themselves in jeopardy, legally and otherwise.

I don't like people from Baylands walking their dogs on our streets & beach area along Wayman Ave., not picking up behind the doggie doo.

There have been several bags of dog waste left in our community. People need to be told to take their dog waste out of our community.

First of all, I highly recommend using Survey Monkey or another free tool there are a lot of

them. People can still remain anonymous, each survey would have unique ID, it would be less cumbersome for the person taking the survey, You can automatic tally the survey, generate reports, and less time consuming for the one doing the survey and the one taking the survey.

Question 2 limits the response there is nothing in between. The hours are fine however I think it should be the weekend Friday through Sunday with additional days (Monday & Thursday) during the peak of the summer like the last 2 weeks of June through the end of August

WE NEED THE RIGHT KIND OF SECURITY WITH UNIFORMS , AND RULES AND CONSISTENCE REGULATIONS ON HANDLING PEOPLE COMING IN. THERE ARE TIMES I CANNOT GET OUT OF MY DRIVEWAY BECAUSE OF THE PROBLEMS WITH THE SECURITY LACK OF ENFORCEMENT.
