



# TOWN OF HIGHLAND BEACH

(INCORPORATED 1922)

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Highland Beach, Maryland 21403

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**MAYOR**

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## Homeowner/Renter Opinion Survey Safety & Security in the Town of Highland Beach Response: Part 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?

9 Yes

10 No

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

7 Strangers walking in the community

5 Traffic, speeding

9 Strangers on the beach

5 Cars parked on road

2 Cars driving through Town

3 Burglary

4 Other:

- Strangers using the private Bruce Ave. floating pier. Please note: We do not generally "feel unsafe;" however the above items represent our safety concerns.
- Harrassment.
- With no security, me and my family have an over feeling of vulnerability.
- Racist comments/language/confrontations that have happened in the community, especially on the beach when non-residents are confronted. Also lack of police patrols. Maybe that has changed in the past few months, but last summer, I saw none.

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

8 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:**

5 16 hours/day

5 24 hours/day

2 No change in number of hours

**Expand number of days a week to:**

2 Expand to 5 days a week

7 Expand to 7 days a week

3 No change in days a week

**Expand number of months to:**

6 6 months/year

5 12 months/year

1 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?

13 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?

9 Yes

8 No

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

0 6 hours daily

4 12 hours daily

8 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

9 No

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

2 6 hours daily

0 12 hours daily

9 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?

7 Yes

10 No

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

0 6 hours daily

4 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?

5 Yes

14 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?

6 Yes

15 No

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

1 Armed

3 Unarmed

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

0 Weekdays only

1 Weekends only

0 Weekdays and Weekends

1 Sunrise to sunset

1 12 hours/day

4 24/7

**QUESTION 6**, for part-time residents only: Do you feel safer while here, or at your full-time residence?

8 Highland Beach

7 Full time residence

4 No difference

**If you checked full time residence, please briefly describe what that community is doing that makes you feel safer there:**

- There is 24 hour seven days a week traffic and police patrol within my community. These officers while on a rotating basis are generally assigned to the same jurisdictions. In many cases I have met the officers on patrol who cover the related shifts. (community policing).
- I live in a very diverse urban community. Highland Beach is unique in that it is a historic, predominantly Black community. In today's environment sometimes being at the beach makes me feel like a "sitting duck" for people intent on harming the Black community. In my home in the city I am confident that if there is a problem the police will come quickly. At Highland Beach I am not comfortable that the Anne Arundel County police will adequately address my security concerns at Highland Beach.
- More neighborhood police patrol. This is about the community at large not individual homeowners.
- Parking control and regular / routine police surveillance.
- There is no street light on 3200 Block of Lake Ave.(S), the only street in the town that has no street light- 7 residents affected . This is a safety issue. All 7 residents requested a street light more than a year ago, but no action has taken place and no responsive communication from the town has occurred.
- We have cameras monitoring key streets. They record and if there is an incident, police are able to review. Police can see license plates and have apprehended a number of people because of these cameras. Also, police patrol the area several times a day.

**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.

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I have been a member of the HB community for 59 years and have never felt unsafe. To me it is a wonderful haven to be a part of with folks of similar backgrounds, values and race. I feel that the expectation of the new folks within the last 5 years only represent a small percentage of our community. Perhaps you could have a town hall zoom call to review the results with the residents.

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I understand the safety concerns however I believe if we all step up as concerned citizens and reach out to AA Co when we see something out of the ordinary, we say something. I do not believe the Town needs to extend this "security" need to a police force when we have the support of AA Co.

Cameras are only as good as the video clarity and monitoring, someone would need to monitor this 24/7 for it to be effective against crime (preemptively) and the video feed clarity would have to be 4k to obtain any good pics of a criminal. I would hope if cameras are installed they are ONLY used after an incident to aid in identification of a criminal. If this is not the case, how do you identify a criminal just because they are walking, fishing or driving through?

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A) Not sure why there is a limitation on the number of responses per household. As an example, there does exist adult offspring who reside in High Beach with their parents who use their permanent address for voting for Countywide, Statewide and National voting. Does this mean that they are disenfranchised? The responses per household however cannot be weighted for many reasons. A couple examples:

1) Residents within a household may have differing opinions based upon the questions contained within the survey.

2) Do we have information on the number of "full time" residents in each household.

3) Have the surveys been distributed to the Owner(s) of the property exclusively who may have made a determination that while a taxpayer, does not reside in High Beach but does have an interest in completing the survey.

B) In general, without understanding all of the distinctions, as I am not a proponent of armed security, I thought that the Traffic contract was considered private security given that the company that is awarded the contract maintains their own insurance and their duties and responsibilities are defined the Town. Part of my question is whether, the scope of service could be expanded based upon the wishes of Highland Beach.

Depending on the outcome of the survey and the decisions of the Commissioners and the Mayor as it relates to electronic monitoring and other options, modifications to the existing contract may be warranted.

C) Long term we may want to review the cost factors between the two communities. Just as an aside.

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Thanks for the opportunity to respond to this survey. I am glad that the mayor and commissioners are aware that security is a concern and are getting input from residents. I am in favor of increased security through the use of passive video cameras to record license plates. This can be done 24x7 12 months a year. If there is a problem the people involved can be identified by reviewing the tapes. I also think that a more visible security presence is needed during expanded hours and for at least 6 months a year. When I am here I don't want to patrol the beach for trespassers or question people. This should be done by hired professionals.

For future reference, Survey Monkey is a convenient and user-friendly survey tool. It assists with developing questions that are easily answered and automatically compiles answers.

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If we, as a community, are committed to maintaining security and upholding restrictions on use of the beach etc. we must take strong and unified action. Before going to "hands & guns" for hire I think it best to exhaust other options and determine their effectiveness.

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As with the Republicans in the state of Georgia, sounds like we are seeking solutions where there are no problems. I do not want cameras everywhere - waste of money and invasion of privacy. When has our traffic control failed us such that we need all these new measures and more hours/days of duty at the entrance gate to the beach? Have there been break-ins at the beach? I am not aware of problems.

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Mayor Bill,

You have heard my comments already. But let me share them once again.

As a former prosecutor, and 35 year veteran criminal defense attorney working in the criminal justice system, this is not about safety and security—it is more about making people feel safe in our small vulnerable community (HB). Crime stats don't tell you that HB is safe--the residents tell you whether they feel safe. And having access to a police department to come

after fact is completely insufficient. Our mind set should not be about solving a crime committed, it ought to focus on crime prevention. What is the use of calling the police after the fact, or the crime has been committed already—no use at all.

With the forgoing in mind, several residents do not feel safe. Several residents have also advised you that they want more security to prevent crime in HB. That being said, I agree with them. For your part, you have said you and the town council have the authority and funds in the budget to add security to HB. Accordingly, I recommend we invest the dollars to increase security (armed or not) at the gate for a longer period of time on the weekdays and weekends year round. Or, HB hire a security company (armed or not) to patrol HB year round. Both create a police like presence in the community that will be a deterrent for would be criminals or bad actors. Anything less at this point, exposes HB to civil liability for failure to protect its citizens and homeowners.

As you have told me before, shockingly, that you would not recommend the forgoing to your colleagues to make the HB residents feel safe or feel safer. I hope you will reconsider your position on this issue, and support me and the other HB residents in this initiative to feel safe, rather than citing crime stats, falsely arguing that HB is a safe community, and indicating crime can occur anywhere, as if there is some level of acceptability for the criminal element. That approach won't ever save us from crime, and suggests a real misunderstanding and lack of a real appreciation for the impact crime has and can have, on any community, especially if you have ever been the victim of a crime. Indeed, the only stat that matters in this regard is how the HB residents feel, and many do not feel safe. Period.

Lastly, I will volunteer to work with you and the town council on drafting, issuing and evaluating an rfp to allow security companies to compete for the city contract to make the residents of HB to be, and feel safer, while preventing crime, rather than solving crime after it has occurred.

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The distinction between full- and part-time is divisive, distracting, and irrelevant. We spend our time 50/50 nearly to the day. There is no survey option for choosing 50/50. Safety is paramount regardless of number of days one spends in HB. I feel safer in our "other" residence because its leadership takes safety very seriously, is objectively responsive to questions and suggestions, doesn't concern itself with full- vs part-time, is inclusive of all opinions and considerations regardless of full- or part-time, and strives for frequent and open communication and regular feedback. There are many residents in our "other" community with "other" residences with adequate communication.

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I feel that traffic control officer should be ID card shirt with Traffic Control Print on it so person would know who he is?

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All residents that either face or back up to the 3200 block of Lake Avenue are in support of a street light. A request to the town for installation of a street light was made about six months ago. Every other street in HB has a street light. It's hard to understand why seemingly no action has been taken on this issue, which is a safety issue.

I also would like to offer a suggestion that our security guards should have some kind of identifying clothing. Perhaps it could just be a vest and a hat. But, something so that everyone can see that they are security for Highland Beach would be helpful, in my opinion.

Regarding the cameras, they could be recorded and the recordings kept for a week. If there is an incident, the camera footage can be reviewed and archived as needed. Also, if there were cameras near the beach and piers, monitors could be installed at the guard gate. The guard could more easily monitor these areas while remaining at his post at the town entrance.

I do not believe citizens should be responding to incidents. We should call the police.

Overall, I support as much security as the town can afford. 24/7, 12 months a year is ideal, but that may be too costly, so whatever enhancements can be done would be good. Summer months are more important. But, because so many homes are unoccupied in the winter, security is also important in the winter months.

I also don't understand why a distinction is being made between part-time and full-time residents (question 5 and 6). It seems divisive and unnecessary. Whether full-time or part-time, we all pay the same taxes and should have an equal voice. Security is security.

I do appreciate the survey in general. Thanks for asking for our opinions.

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