



Sound View Commission

52 Lyme Street
Old Lyme, CT 06371

October 13, 2015

TO: Board of Selectmen

Re: 2015 summer evaluation

The Sound View Commission has prepared this evaluation of the summer 2015 for review and comment by the Selectmen. Items listed are a summary and based on comments and observations communicated by residents to the Commission. The comments were a mix of areas for improvement and areas of strength. Although we believe some are higher in priority we also believe each has its own particular significance to the proper and smooth operation of Sound View.

Police and Rangers enforcement actions:

Police presence appeared less than previous years, many times with no police stationed in Sound View at the end of the day especially on weekends. This was particularly noticed on the evening of July 4th, and was very distressing to residents. Furthermore, in the previous 5 years there had been consistency of patrol officers, with the same officers patrolling, thus establishing a community policing approach. This consistency is at the heart of community policing. These Old Lyme police officers got to know the residents, the potential areas of concern, and were known and approachable by the residents, many times walking the area. Sound View is a unique area within the Town and the approachability and consistency of a municipal community policing effort is extremely important. This was not the case this year.

The change in Ranger management protocol this year has created much concern. The compliment of Rangers appeared to be fewer than in previous years and most critical was their prohibition from actively taking action regarding alcohol on the beach. Our concern is not with the Rangers, per se. They are courteous and helpful. Our concern is with the management of the Rangers.

Alcohol on the beach appeared more prevalent this year than in the past few years. This is evidenced by the preponderance of empty containers left in the sand, many of which are glass, as reported by the beach cleaners and the Pavilion staff. The new 2015 Ranger protocol established a log book for beach patrols. This is good. However, what actions were allowed to be taken while on beach patrol? The Commission was informed by Trooper Inglis that alcohol-related action could only be taken by the Police or as requested by Rangers.

It was reported by Trooper Inglis that during the 2015 season there was no suspicion of alcohol consumption allowing probable cause for further container search. Elimination of all alcoholic beverages on the beach is a lofty goal and one which may not be totally attainable; however considering the amount of empty containers and bottles that remained on the beach at the end of the day and the open drinking observed, it is implausible that there was never suspicion of alcohol consumption and not once was there probable cause or the need for further container search. The 5-quart cooler limit is frequently ignored. Although Rangers are monitoring entry points on Hartford and Swan to the best of their ability, a watch of people leaving the beach at the end of the day shows significant numbers of large-size coolers leaving the beach. Why aren't the Rangers / Police making note of these large coolers while on beach patrol and taking necessary actions? A question arose regarding what constitutes a cooler, with beachgoers using large totes and backpacks to smuggle their booze. The beach rules clearly state ALL CONTAINERS MAY BE SUBJECT TO SEARCH. Why aren't the police using the ALL containers rule to search as needed?

In addition to the lack of police presence mentioned above, the policing activities this past summer are of great concern. The Sound View community has been very supportive of our public safety efforts in the previous 5 years. In the past, when problems or potential problems were identified they were dealt with by the patrol officers before someone had to call and make a report. This is what we have become accustomed to and should expect nothing less. It was a program that was working.

In our opinion, Community policing is about prevention, not just in response to a call or other reactionary action. Comments similar to "did you report it, to whom, and when" are not only a poor excuse for lack of enforcement, they are an affront to the Commission's efforts to provide a safe and non-chaotic beach experience.

Beach rule enforcement this year essentially disappeared. Our town ordinances and even state statutes were routinely ignored by attendees. Ball games, (not a few little kids playing, but full-size adult football players), jet skis in the swim area, dogs roaming the beach, and the aforementioned open drinking, glass bottles and oversized coolers are just a few of the issues observed this year in much greater numbers than in the past 5 years. Drinking on the beach was so pervasive this year that beachgoers quickly realized that they would not be approached for bad behavior.

"Dilemma", "disgusted", "Why are we putting up with this?", "Why change what was working?" are some comments received by the Commission. This not acceptable, for Sound View or the Town. Furthermore, Commission members and residents alike are tired of having to continually report problems that should, and MUST be identified and handled by our Police and Rangers before private citizens have to get involved. The changes made to beach and alcohol enforcement this year didn't work, and in fact moved us backwards. They are viewed by many as an abject failure. Our past practice of Community Policing with consistent, visible, known municipal officers, in force, along with a full compliment of Rangers, worked well and significant progress had been made over the past several years. Why change what was working? Regardless of what reasons changes were made this year we cannot proceed in 2016 with the same 2015 protocol. The Selectmen set the standards and expectations for our public safety. This year the town went backwards in our efforts and this must be addressed.

Other police activity:

Rangers were scheduled for summer concert duty. For the first two concerts Rangers were present and extremely helpful. However, on 2 occasions, August 6 & 29, no Rangers appeared, nor were there any Police officers present. With attendance of as many as 450 people, some type of security would have been appropriate and appreciated.

Traffic control this year was better. At times when the number of vehicles approached gridlock Hartford Avenue was shut down to incoming traffic and gates at Portland and Swan Avenues were closed regularly with predetermined criteria. This was a noticeable improvement in traffic control. A very positive move.

Swim lines were a continual problem in 2015. Often missing and broken. Several times cut by boat propellers or by the failure of inadequate materials. On more than one occasion, boats and jet skis were observed well within the swim area. This is extremely unsafe and an accident waiting to happen. Strict enforcement of boating action would prevent some broken lines, Swift replacement of old and worn materials is also warranted.

Noise complaints:

Early in the season, there were several daytime noise complaints. These were emanating from bands at the Pavilion. The Pavilion took action when notified and no further daytime noise complaints were received.

There were also a number of noise complaints during the evening from bands at Lenny's on the Beach. This is disturbing as Lenny's liquor permit allows for acoustic music only and does NOT allow for amplified bands. To the best of our knowledge no action has been taken by the town for this violation.

Private permitted parking lots:

Early in the season there was one private parking lot that overparked, allowing more vehicles than specified in their permit. This was resolved by the efforts of the Selectmen and to the best of our knowledge the Rangers have monitored the private parking lots for capacity. No other private parking lot capacity issues have been brought to our attention.

Illegal parking lots:

The Church parking lot and two additional illegal lots were identified and tickets were issued by Trooper Inglis.

Town Lot:

For most of the season, the town lot appeared to run smoothly. However on Labor Day weekend the lot was overcrowded with cars parallel parked along the southern fence line. Considering that there are no numbered spaces along the fence line there is a question as to how the required kiosk ticket was produced and what was done regarding this parking violation.

Town Lot gates:

Gates to the town lot are to be closed and locked during the evening and reopened in the morning. This is done to prevent overnight parking and potential disturbances. This was done by the PD. This year the gate remained opened all the time. Overnight parking was observed along with camping on the beach.

Porta-Potties: 2015 the porta-potty management was under the purview of the Commission. Our vendor has reported significant vandalism and graffiti, much more so than in past years.

Private permitted parking lot disturbances:

A number of complaints were received regarding evening disturbances at the Martino parking lot including drinking and loud noise. Police were contacted on several occasions. Unfortunately on at least one occasion due to lack of area knowledge by the responding officer a timely response was delayed. Several more disturbances at this lot were also reported.

Overcrowded parking per site plan:

Two cease and desist orders were issued: one for Lenny's and one for the Sugar Shack. After issuance of the cease and desist order, the Lenny's parking lot occasionally overparked by one or two vehicles. The Sugar Shack routinely overparked by as much as 100 % of their allowed parking. The permitted plan allows for 6 vehicles and 8 to 12 were routinely observed. This has been brought to the attention and personally observed by the Selectmen, Rangers and Police. Yet no action was taken.

Signage:

The center road stop signs on Swan and Portland Avenues were missing, moved, and/or are severely damaged. Who is responsible for ensuring these signs are in place and maintained?

No parking signs on Shore road were installed, and then removed. If this was at the direction of CT DOT we must make the necessary arrangements for placement next year. Parking along Shore Road not only aggravates the overcrowding issues, it creates a VERY unsafe condition for pedestrians walking with no sidewalks along Shore Road. No parking signs on Shore road must be present and enforced throughout the season.

Truck traffic:

On several occasions tractor trailer trucks were observed making deliveries to Lenny's on Saturdays. These trucks made u-turns and backing up at the bottom of Hartford Ave. This was during the day while people were entering the beach. A VERY unsafe condition. These weekend tractor trailer truck deliveries must be addressed for safety.

Public Works did a fine job this year with street sweeping, lawn mowing and trash pick-up.

The Sound View Commission appreciates the continued efforts by the Selectmen and their trust and confidence in the Commission. We look forward to working with the Selectmen in addressing the issues for a better Sound View and Town.

Respectfully submitted

Sound View Commission
Frank Pappalardo, Chair