



St. Augustine Beach Police Department

Daniel Carswell, Chief of Police



Memorandum

TO: City of St. Augustine Beach Commission
FROM: Daniel Carswell, Chief of Police
REF: Ocean Hammock Park Boardwalk
DATE: January 4th, 2023

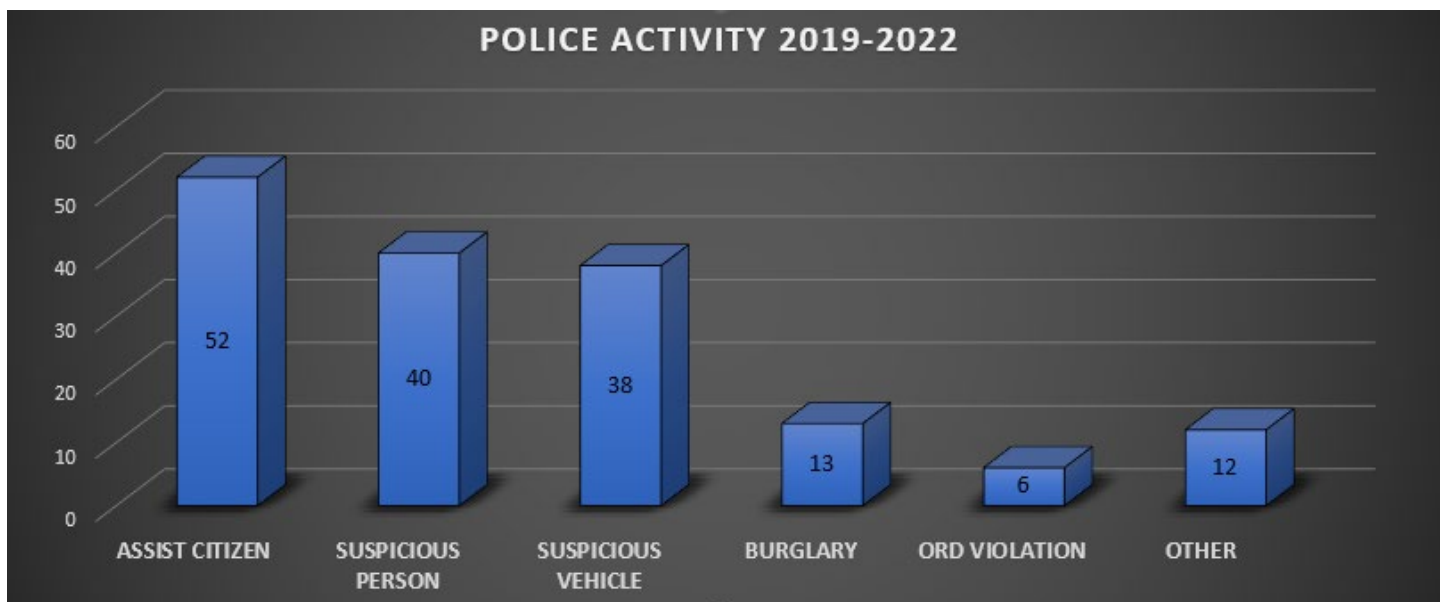
As requested by the commission in the December meeting, I have compiled a brief report in reference to the Phase 2 and 3 portions of the Ocean Hammock Park build, as well as the alternative boardwalk plan presented by members of the Sea Colony neighborhood.

Recent History of Police Activity

In November, a three-year history of the police department's activity in Ocean Hammock Park and Sea Colony was sent to the commission. The data showed that since 2019, there has been 166 total calls for service logged by officers within the park. This includes both calls where officers were dispatched to the location due to a complaint as well as calls involving officers self-initiating a call for service. Of the 166 total calls, 52 calls were "Assist Citizen" calls. These types of calls for service are non-criminal in nature. Another 78 calls for service were "Suspicious Persons" and "Suspicious Vehicles" that were investigated by an officer. Of the remaining 36 calls for service, notable calls included 13 vehicle burglaries, 3 indecent exposure calls, and 2 disturbances.

To account for calls about illegal activity in the park being made from Sea Colony (and not Ocean Hammock Park) a search for all calls for service within the Sea Colony neighborhood for the same time period was researched. There were a total of 122 total calls for service within this time frame. Of the 122 total calls, 40 were "Assist Citizen" calls. Another 36 were "Suspicious Circumstances," "Suspicious Persons," or "Suspicious Vehicles." Of the remaining 36 calls, notable calls included 6 juvenile complaints, 8 missing persons, 2 trespassing, and 2 criminal mischief complaints. It should be noted that these statistics include the entire Sea Colony neighborhood, not just the residences in close proximity to the boardwalk (See graph below).

(Police Activity in Ocean Hammock Park)



Security Concerns as a Result of Development

The Phase 2 and 3 build of the park will bring in more amenities, likely resulting in more visitors to the park. The park is not visible from the roadway and provides many areas for concealment. Due to these factors, additional security measures will be needed to combat illegal activity. There have been 13 vehicle burglaries in the parking lot over the past three years, with additional parking being added, the potential for more burglaries will be present. To combat this, security cameras will be placed in the park that will overlook the public parking area as well as at the entry/exit point of the park. The public restrooms will provide a structure for persons to conceal themselves for criminal activity. For security purposes, lighting will be placed in near the bathrooms and in the parking areas. The restrooms could also be used as a place for homeless persons to wash up and/or camp. It should be noted, that homeless activity within the city limits has been minimal in recent years and this is unlikely to change as a result of the restrooms.

The alternative plan does not negate any of the concerns presented with the approved Phase 2 and 3 build. With the boardwalk relocated, the additional amenities will still remain and still present the same concerns. It should be noted that regardless of which plan is approved, the security concerns presented by the Sea Colony neighborhood will not be fully addressed without proper security and fencing being erected. The fencing on the northern side of the neighborhood varies in height and style and provides easy access for entry/exit points. Access to the neighborhood can easily be made with or without a boardwalk present. Additionally, there are multiple private boardwalks on the beach located south of the existing city boardwalk that could provide easy access into the neighborhood.

Ocean Hammock Development Effects on SABPD

The Ocean Hammock Park area is heavily patrolled by SABPD in its' current state. For security purposes,

the gates for vehicle access into the park are closed during the nighttime. This requires officers to open the park gates before sunrise and to close them at 8pm on a daily basis. Heavy traffic enforcement is conducted in this area as well due to the pedestrian crosswalk along A1A Beach Blvd. near the park access and high vehicle speeds when exiting A1A south. The above reference 166 calls for service does not include traffic enforcement efforts conducted over the past three years.

The Phase 2 and 3 additions of the park will inevitably result in increased law enforcement activity in the park, but this will not be as a result of the boardwalk's placement. The park is not visible from the roadway and provides concealment from law enforcement. More patrols will be needed to check the public restrooms and parking areas. The playgrounds and remote trails will require additional patrols. With a high volume of activity currently in the park and its surrounding area, there should not be a dramatic increase in service demand for SABPD.

After a review of our city ordinance, there is already sufficient ordinance in place to combat the identified issues as well as the potential security concerns brought to the commission's attention by citizens. Alcoholic beverages, speeding, soliciting, camping over night, littering, and wildlife molestation are all prohibited within Ocean Hammock Park by Chapter 5 of our city's code of ordinance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the additions of Phase 2 and 3 to the park will result in more police activity, but the boardwalk's placement will have no effect on law enforcement operations. Proper security measures will be implemented with the new additions to the park to address law enforcement concerns. The Sea Colony neighborhood would benefit from improving its border along the park as well as from the public beach. To combat potential security concerns as a result of Phase 2 and 3 in the park, the police department will increase patrol of the park area into the new restroom facility and trail areas. Sufficient city ordinance is currently in place and can be enforced for observed violations. The area will continue to be heavily monitored and any potential issues will be addressed as needed.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Daniel Carswell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "C".

Daniel Carswell, Chief of Police