

**TOWN OF SOMERSET
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Minutes

April 19, 2023

Members Present

Kumar Vaswani, Chair (2023)
Steve Friedman (2025)
George Wyeth (2024)

Members Absent

Valerie Green (2024)
Archana Gregersen (2025)

Dates indicate year of expiration of term.

Call to Order

Chair Vaswani called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. A quorum was present. The meeting was held via Zoom conference. Notice of meeting and agenda were sent to the Town Manager on April 12, 2023. The Town disseminated the notice of meeting and agenda via email to the public on April 14, 2023.

Approval of meeting minutes

Motion/Second Friedman/Wyeth to approve the February 16, 2023, meeting minutes. Motion passed (3-0).

Collection, preservation, and dissemination of crime and other incident data

Mr. Wyeth provided an overview of the spreadsheet he started keeping in July 2022 of crime incident data for Somerset and adjacent similar neighborhoods (including Brookdale, Green Acres, Glen Cove, and Chevy Chase West). The County has recently shifted its crime map to Data Montgomery, with some attendant glitches. Some issues have become apparent:

- The County's data is not perfect. An incident on Cumberland that the Town government reported to residents in November is not in the County's crime map.
- The County uses generalized incident descriptions, and no details are available (such as whether a case was closed or a suspect was apprehended).
- The Town staff does not consistently follow up on crimes and reported incidents in Somerset.
- Reports from residents on private listserves can be helpful in tracking incidents but have limits. The PSC should encourage residents to report crimes to the police.
- The Town's crime rate is best characterized as "low" and is comparable to that of adjacent single-family-home neighborhoods.
- Financial crimes such as ID theft currently outnumber other types of crimes in Somerset.

The consensus of the committee was that:

- There is a value to reporting crime data on a quarterly basis (which the PSC has been doing in the *Journal* since last year) to residents, but data needs to be based on an official source and placed in the proper context. Periodic reports to residents should be limited to crimes in Somerset.
- The PSC and the Town staff are not well situated to report emergent situations (e.g., an active shooter), so residents are better off relying on media reports or third-party services. However, if the Town staff happens to receive a report of an incident (or series of incidents) in adjacent areas that would be useful to residents in planning for their safety, the Town should relay it to residents immediately.
- There may be value in looking at month-by-month data to discern trends.
- The PSC should continue to remind residents to take basic crime prevention measures.
- The PSC should meet periodically with our Town's lead police officer.

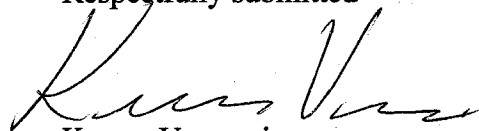
The PSC may be able to obtain further details on crimes in Town from our Town police officers, although even that information may be limited. Amy Daum, the new commander of the Second Police District reported to Town officials on March 30 that the police generally do not publicly disclose the outcomes of cases unless an arrest is made. Information will also generally not be available regarding crimes involving juveniles (either as a suspect or victim). Monthly reports from our Town police ended about a year ago.

Other issues the PSC needs to delve into include the communications among the PSC, Town staff, and Town police, and how to preserve crime data for posting on the Town's new website.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:07 pm.

Respectfully submitted



Kumar Vaswani
Chair

Approved at the October 10, 2023, PSC meeting.