

Citizen observers help keep Town residents safe

Citizens Observer Patrol Col. Bill Johansen

maneuvers through **Terra Mar Island**, putting “eyes and ears” on the Town’s northern-most neighborhood.

After completing his Terra Mar Island patrol, he will return to **State Road A1A** and drive south before taking a left on **Pine Avenue** and heading south again along **El Mar Drive**.

Unlike COP programs in larger cities, where volunteers often just patrol their neighborhoods, COP members in **Lauderdale-By-The-Sea** patrol the entire Town.

Johansen and the 35 other Town COP members are not police officers and do not carry guns. Their job is to report suspicious people to the Broward Sheriff’s Office, the police agency which protects the Town’s 6,000 residents.

COP volunteers also assist at accident scenes, provide extra security in **Anglin’s Square**, direct traffic when

needed and check on homes when people are away.

In addition, COP volunteers help BSO at numerous Town functions, including July Fourth, Taste of the Beach and others.

Every time a COP member handles a routine law enforcement matter for BSO, that’s one less certified deputy who has to be pulled off road patrol or placed on overtime.

“The COP program is invaluable to us,” said **Capt. Fred**

Wood, who supervises BSO in Lauderdale-By-The-Sea. “It’s a really close-knit group here.”

COP members drive marked Citizen Observer Patrol BSO vehicles. Except for the name and lack of rooftop blue lights, the cars look just like BSO patrol vehicles.

Most volunteers go on patrol about three hours a week and always ride in pairs.

Wood said their presence on the Town’s streets provides an extra deterrent to crime.

Several months ago COP volunteers spotted a man with a backpack walking through Town who seemed to be looking for a crime of opportunity. They notified BSO who quickly arrived on the scene to question the man. A BSO deputy



EYES AND EARS: Col. Bill Johansen patrols along El Mar Drive.

HOW TO JOIN COP

To learn more about the Citizens Observer Patrol, go to www.sheriff.org/about_bso/community/cops.cfm. If you have questions about the LBTS program, call Capt. Fred Wood at 954-640-4240.



ALL EARS: COP members Bill Johansen (c) and Dr. Lou Barbara (l) chat with a tourist in Anglin’s Square.

arrested him after discovering he was wanted on warrants.

“We helped take a bad guy off the streets,” Johansen said proudly.

At the **Arts and Crafts Festival** in March, an 84-year-old woman with dementia was reported missing. Johansen was patrolling nearby and safely located the woman, who did not know where she was and was not able to tell police her name.

“This is just another example of the amazing work and impact the (COP) volunteers have on this community,” said **Lt. Thomas Palmer**, BSO’s executive officer in Town.

Johansen received a commendation, but downplayed his role. “I just happened to be the first one to find her,” he said.

About six months ago, COP member **Dr. Lou Barbara**, a retired physician and the son of former **Town Mayor Joseph Barbara**, responded to a minor traffic accident on A1A, where the driver of one vehicle had passed out. Barbara immediately recognized the man was suffering from an “insulin reaction.”

While COP volunteers do not provide medical assistance, Barbara relayed his assessment (which proved correct) to Town paramedics who arrived shortly to treat the victim.

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Vacation home regulations help keep the peace

One sure way to tell that it is still tourist season in South Florida is to see the number of people vacationing here in **Lauderdale-By-The-Sea**.

And while we are happy to host their vacation, the **Town Commission** has set forth regulations to ensure a peaceful co-existence between our visitors and our residents.

The popularity of vacation rentals has continued to grow and having this transient use encroach into our neighborhoods isn't always easy. Recognizing the need for some regulations for these uses, the Commission in 2009 established some rules for vacation rentals to protect the quality and character of our residential districts.

These regulations are set forth in **Section 30-327** of our **Town Code**. A vacation rental license is required for all single-family or townhouse properties before the property is leased as a short-term vacation rental. To secure and keep a vacation rental license, the property owner must follow these rules:

- ◆ Register the vacation rental property with the Town;
- ◆ Agree to rent the property for no less than a 7 day minimum stay;
- ◆ Rent to no more than 10 persons at any time (the maximum number allowed is property-specific and is based on the number of bedrooms and square footage);
- ◆ Identify a vacation rental agent that is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to handle any problems arising from the vacation rental use; and
- ◆ Pass an inspection for compliance with zoning, building, housing, density, life/safety and fire code regulations.

Code Enforcement

The Town's **Code Enforcement** officers are responsible

for ensuring that the properties in the Town, including vacation rentals, follow our regulations. Since there are only two officers for the entire Town, that is no small feat.

So, if you live near a vacation rental property that has tenants that are not being good neighbors, please:

◆ Call the Code Enforcement office at **954-640-4216** or e-mail at **SharonF@lbts-fl.gov** or **CarmenS@lbts-fl.gov** regarding the problems and issues you are having;

◆ For matters requiring law enforcement response or if after hours, please contact the **Broward Sheriff's Office** non-emergency dispatch center at **954-973-7222**. Call **911** for crimes in progress.

◆ Take pictures with date and time of the incident;

◆ Be willing to testify before the Town's **Special Magistrate**, who serves as a code enforcement judge.

Currently, Florida law does not allow local communities to increase their existing regulations for vacation rental properties. The Commission already passed a resolution supporting legislation to give control back to the cities to regulate such rentals, but the vacation rental lobby is actively fighting this. If you would like the Town to have more control over our vacation rental properties, the

Town's state legislative representatives need to hear from you now, as the bill comes up very soon for a vote this session in the state legislature. Contact them and tell them how you feel.

◆ **State Senator Maria Sachs: 561-279-1429**. Her e-mail is **sachs.maria.web@flsenate.gov**.

◆ **State Representative George Moraitis, Jr: 954-762-3757**. His e-mail is **George.Moraitis@myfloridahouse.gov**.

If you have additional questions regarding vacation rentals or the Town's Code Enforcement efforts, please contact **Sharon Foster** or **Carmen Sanchez** at **954-640-4216**.



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Johansen said many COP volunteers bring valuable "life experiences" to the job. Other COP volunteers in Town include a pilot, lawyer and a car dealer.

Most are retired, but some still work 9 to 5 jobs. Johansen's own career experience was working in finance in Miami.

Johansen enjoys the "sense of accomplishment" he gets from volunteering to help keep the Town safe, but he also praises BSO for its efforts in developing a solid working relationship with the COP program members in Lauderdale-By-The-Sea.

"They make us feel important," he said. "They make us feel wanted."

EL MAR (continued from Page 1)

If public sentiment is supportive, state transportation designers will develop a number of conceptual ideas for El Mar Drive at no cost to the Town! The state would then return in the fall to see what the Town thinks, and, hopefully, indicate which one we would prefer. The April 16 meeting would be the first of several meetings on this proposed project, assuming the Town supports it. Subsequent public meetings would be held, for example, when state designers come up with their proposed conceptual drawings.

If you have any questions, please call **Town Planner Linda Connors** at **Town Hall** at **954-640-4213**.