

## Police and Public Safety

### Commission Meeting

**12 September 2012**

The Boonsboro Police and Public Safety (P&PS) Commission held their monthly meeting on Wednesday, 12 September 2012 at 6:30 PM on the first floor of Town Hall. Members present were Commission Chairman Chris Sarnecki and Commission Members Cindy Collier, Bob Glausier, Frank Lum and Scott Stavrou. Police Chief Jeff Hewett was also present as were incoming P&PS Council Liaison Sean Haardt and outgoing P&PS Liaison Janeen Solberg. Guests present were

Reverend Joseph Donovan, Pastor, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Thomas Bikle, President, Boonsboro Cemetery Board and Rodney Cline, Secretary, Boonsboro Cemetery Board. All three (3) were present to express their concerns regarding the traffic flow of Cemetery Lane.

Meeting minutes from the 12 July 2012 P&PS Commission Meeting and the Agenda for the 12 September 2012 Commission Meeting were handed out by Sarnecki. After review of the 12 July Minutes, **Motion** by Commission Member Glausier, second by Commission Member Lum, to officially approve the 12 July 2012 P&PS Commission Minutes and Motion unanimously carried.

Sarnecki welcomed everyone in attendance and then introduced Town Council Member Sean Haardt as the newly appointed Liaison to the P&PS to the Commission Members and the three (3) aforementioned guests.

Sarnecki opened the floor to the three (3) guests. Reverend Donovan first addressed his concerns about Cemetery Lane. As thirty-five (35) years as Pastor of the Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Reverend Donovan had the opportunity to observe the traffic patterns in and around the intersection of Cemetery Lane and Main Street (U.S. Route 40 Alternate). He admitted that he had not personally observed a major accident but witnessed many close calls. Reverend Donovan felt it would be best to make Cemetery Lane a one way street because of his careful and lengthy observation of the road. He believed it would be best for traffic to only be allowed to flow from Main Street, down Cemetery Lane to the intersection of Readers Alley. Reverend Donovan offered additional examples of his observations that shaped his viewpoint. He believed that vehicles, exiting Cemetery Lane onto Main Street, are below grade and going uphill. He opined that the grade diminishes the driver's line of sight when observing east/west bound traffic on Main Street. Additionally, Reverend Donovan thought that legally parked vehicles along eastbound Main Street further hinders the line of sight to the point where it is almost impossible to safely observe oncoming traffic. For these reasons, he informed the Commission that he forgoes using Cemetery Lane. He considered Cemetery Lane not to be legally wide enough to be considered a two-lane road and commented that Cemetery Lane's narrowness forces exiting traffic Cemetery Lane to the far to the right side of the lane to accommodate traffic entering from Main Street onto Cemetery Lane. Reverend Donovan added that the narrowness of Cemetery Lane causes traffic disruption on Main Street when a vehicle exits Cemetery Lane onto Main Street and is simultaneously approached by a vehicle entering Cemetery Lane from Main Street. He observed that the vehicle on Main Street will hesitate or

quickly stop to allow the exiting vehicle from Cemetery Lane to turn into the east or westbound traffic on to Main Street. This maneuver allows the Main Street vehicle room to execute a right or left turn onto Cemetery Lane. Reverend Donovan remarked that the traffic on Main Street, approaching the turning vehicle onto Cemetery Lane, must turn sharply or slow down to avoid striking the turning vehicle. He deemed it just as troublesome turning left from Cemetery Lane onto Main Street. He commented that the drivers exiting Cemetery Lane may feel the need to take advantage of a brief window of opportunity and may recklessly exit Cemetery Lane without properly checking the traffic on Main Street. Reverend Donovan believed that most vehicles on Main Street exceed the posted speed limit. He cited two (2) possible reasons of why vehicles exceed the speed limit along Main Street: 1) eastbound vehicles may accelerate to reach the uphill grade of Main Street; and 2) westbound vehicles are gaining speed from the downhill grade of Main Street before the intersection of Main and Potomac Streets. He again repeated his position to make Cemetery Lane a one-way street from Main Street to Reeder's Alley. He thanked the Commission for the opportunity and time to address his concerns.

Mr. Thomas Bikle, President, Boonsboro Cemetery Board, spoke next and appreciated Reverend Donovan's overview. He wished to include a few additional observations, however; before discussing his concerns with Cemetery Lane, Mr. Bikle first thanked the Boonsboro Police Department (BPD) and Chief Hewett for their professional investigation of the vandalism to the cemetery a few years ago. He continued that he and Mr. Cline visit or walk the grounds of the Boonsboro Cemetery at least twice per day. Mr. Bikle noted that Mr. Cline regularly visits the cemetery during the morning hours and advised that he (Mr. Bikle) often checks the cemetery during the noon and/or dusk hours. He remarked that they both observe the traffic patterns during their checks of the cemetery. Mr. Bikle's first observation was that vehicles mindlessly occupy the middle of Cemetery Lane while trying to exit thereby preventing ample room for vehicles entering Cemetery Lane or allowing enough room to maneuver. Mr. Bikle believed this offered a potential for heated arguments or road rage. He also added that many drivers exiting Cemetery Lane onto Reeder's Alley only perform a precursory stop or a "California stop" when a driver lightly applies the brakes to the vehicles and rolls through the intersection. Mr. Bikle noted that the yellow bollard that protects the residential house has about six different colors of paint from vehicles striking it, including his spouse's vehicle from a few years back. He believed that most members of Mt. Nebo Church prefer to avoid the hazardous intersection of Main Street and Cemetery Lane and travel Cemetery Lane to Reeder's and then exit onto Potomac Street (MD Route 34).

Mr. Rodney Cline, Secretary, Boonsboro Cemetery Board, spoke last and commented that much of the topic was covered by the previous two (2) speakers. He volunteered that he and his spouse walk to the Boonsboro Cemetery nearly every morning, circa 7:00 AM. Mr. Cline continued that they had plenty of opportunities to witness the driving patterns near the intersection of Cemetery Lane and Reeder's Alley. He felt that many Keedysville residents bypass the traffic light at Potomac and Main Streets via Cemetery Lane during the morning rush hour and stated that those exiting Cemetery Lane onto Main Street do not clearly watch for oncoming traffic on Main Street. He opined that this only exacerbates morning traffic on Main Street. Mr. Cline strongly believed that Cemetery Lane cannot be legally considered a two-way road due to its narrowness. He fully understood the need of the bollard to protect the residence but considered it to add to the general narrowness of the road. He noted that funeral processions, en route to the Boonsboro Cemetery, are greatly affected by the problems of Cemetery Lane. Mr. Cline recalled that he initially brought his concerns to Solberg, who had

mentioned it to the previous P&PS Commission but noted it was not pursued any further. Solberg mentioned this was the first official attempt to review and resolve the issue of Cemetery Lane. Lastly, Reverend Donovan mentioned that the signage on Reeders Alley is confusing and requested Chief Hewett to investigate further.

Chief Hewett stated that Cemetery Lane is wide enough to accommodate two vehicles or two-way traffic. He did not consider it to be narrow and informed the guests and the Commission that there is not set standard by the Maryland State Highway Association for the width of a road or alley. Chief Hewett added that Cemetery Lane is wide or just as wide as most of the streets in Town, to include High Street which recently underwent a speed radar survey by the BPD. He confirmed with Reverend Donovan that making Cemetery Lane one-way, as proposed by him and Messrs. Bikle and Cline, would not have an adverse effect on funeral processions.

After the departure of the guests, a brief discussion was held among the Commission members regarding Cemetery Lane and Reeders Alley. Sarnecki's initial impression was that it may be best to also make Reeders Alley one-way from Potomac Street to Main Street, essentially reversing its current configuration. Sarnecki thought that this configuration would alleviate some of the traffic on Main and Potomac Streets but, more importantly, it would serve as an contingency exit from the Town Square during an emergency or if Town Square was shut down. Furthermore, it would eliminate another dangerous intersection in Town: Reeders Alley and Potomac Street, where motorists must slowly inch out in oncoming traffic to ensure safe passage onto or across Potomac Street. He charged the Commission members to study the traffic patterns in the vicinity of Cemetery Lane, Reeders Alley, Main Street and Potomac Street and asked that they provide suggestions to address their observations and that of the guests at the Commission's next meeting in October 2012. Sarnecki proposed a group visit of the area by the Commission to study the area. Chief Hewett recalled that this same area was reviewed and study in the *Downtown Revitalization Study for the Town of Boonsboro* (aka "The Mary Means Study") in the early 2000's. He remembered that the study called for the opening or changing of one-way streets such as Cemetery Lane to improve the Town's existing layout or grid of streets. He agreed that reversing the current traffic flow of Reeders Alley would be an excellent alternative for vehicular traffic to exit Town Square and decrease traffic flow at Main and Potomac Streets. Chief Hewett cited any recommendation made to Town Council will have a temporary impact but firmly believed everyone will adjust over time. It clearly would require further review and input by Town Planner Megan Clark, Town Council and possibly others. Chief Hewett mentioned that the recommendations made thus far should not have a financial impact on the Town since it would simply require the replacement of signage with signs currently in the Town's inventory.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

Sarnecki reviewed with newly appointed Haardt a concern that arose during the Commission's informal National Night Out (NNO) planning meeting on 2 August 2012. He advised Haardt that the Commission unanimously denied an email request from the Women in Networking Community (WINC) to set up a booth for the 7 August 2012 event. Sarnecki explained that the initial denial was based upon the perceived lack of continuity, consistency and relation with the Commission's understating of what NNO and its Mission Statement was to represent. The denial was brought to the attention of the Town Council by Solberg during its monthly meeting prior the NNO. The Commission's decision was reversed by the Town Council and was instructed the inclusion of the WINC booth. During the Commission's post mortem or recap of

this year's NNO on 16 August 2012, Sarnecki requested a clear Mission Statement from the Town offering guidance as to who should be allowed to participate in NNO. The Commission's view during and leading up to the 2 August 2012 Planning meeting was an organization's ability to tie in with the coming together of the local, county, state and possibly federal law enforcement agencies or first responders versus the now understood articulation of the Town Council's view of NNO as an all-inclusive Town picnic. Solberg prepared a draft Town Mission Statement for NNO earlier that day (12 September 2012) and presented it to the Commission for future review and discussion. The concept of having the Economic Development Committee (EDC) hosting an all-inclusive business and organization version of NNO was proposed. This event could take place on its own dedicated night and encourage Town residents to meet their local businesses and organizations. Sarnecki expressed the view that the NNO is the Commission's "crown jewel" event and mentioned to Haardt that the Commission would like to retain some order and consistency with the organizational aspects of the event (i.e. placement of displays, securing denotations, etc.) since each Commission Member is actively involved in its planning. He raised the concern of an organization simply appearing at Shafer Park, without informing the Commission or Town, on the night of the event and distributes or has a display inappropriate or offensive in nature. Commission Member Collier suggested an online application that would be found on the Town's website which could be forwarded to the Commission for review. The Commission agreed with Collier's suggestion and added that they could then advise Town Council of its decision or recommendation. Town Council would then have the final decision. This process would serve as a "check and balance" of future booth/table requests. Solberg mentioned that the Town forwards requests to the Park Board for its Independence Day festival. She expressed the viewpoint that getting to know your neighbor leads to a safer community thereby fulfilling the mission of NNO is the Town's picnic. Chief Hewett echoed this sentiment and used Hagerstown's NNO as an example. The Hagerstown Police Department views NNO as a large block party in which everyone is invited. He added that if the mission statement of the NNO was strictly followed, only law enforcement agencies would be in attendance and would thereby defeat the spirit of the event. Glausier shared the sentiment that the NNO is a great opportunity to meet your neighbors and build a sense of community. Lastly, Sarnecki thanked Solberg for her draft of the Town Mission Statement for NNO and stated it will hopefully avoid future confusion. He noted that the Commission has nearly a year to review and make modifications to the draft before forwarding it to Town Council for review and approval via Haardt.

Sarnecki reported that "thank you" letters were sent on 20 August 2012 to the area businesses and organizations that donated to this year's NNO.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Sarnecki noted that the motion to extend Commission Member Lum's appointment was approved during the Commission's 12 July 2012 meeting, however; he failed to report this to Solberg. Therefore, it was not brought before Town Council at the 6 August 2012 monthly meeting for final approval. Sarnecki asked if Haardt to present Commission Member Lum's extension to Town Council at their next meeting.

Sarnecki advised that Solberg inadvertently reported during Town Council's 6 August 2012 Regular Monthly Meeting that the Commission did not hold its monthly meeting in July 2012. He noted that the Commission did indeed hold a monthly meeting on 12 July 2012 and requested Haardt to ensure that it is accurately reflected and corrected in the Town's August

2012 Minutes.

**LIAISON REPORT:**

When queried, Haardt deferred to Solberg to provide the Liaison report. Solberg informed the Commission that she will now serve as Liaison to the EDC per Mayor Kauffman's realignment of Town Council liaisons. She thanked the Commission for their hard work and dedication and recognized their achievements this past year, especially the Commission's naming of the Town's alleys. Solberg addressed two outstanding issues. The first being that sidewalk fixes to be performed by residents and that there was still excess, damaged and inconsistent signage around town. She concluded her final Liaison Report with a review of the Town Council's Liaison assignments.

**POLICE REPORT:**

Chief Hewett informed the Commission that he will officially retire on 1 December 2012. He expressed his thanks for the time and effort put forth by the volunteers of the Commission and added that it was a pleasure working with them. The Commission thanked Chief Hewett for his time, service and dedication to the Town and considered him to be an invaluable resource to them and the Commission.

Chairman Sarnecki advised that the next Commission would be on Wednesday, 10 October 2012 at 6:30 PM.

Motion by Glausier to adjourn, seconded by Lum and Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Christopher J. Sarnecki  
Chairman, Police and Public Safety Commission