

January 5, 2004

Honorable Mayor and Members of  
The Hermosa Beach City Council

Regular meeting of  
January 13, 2004

## **REPORT ON THE STRAND BY THE POLICE DEPARTMENT**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that Council:

1. Receive and file this report.
2. Enact any or all of the proposed recommendations in this report.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Strand is a wide sidewalk that affronts the beach the entire length of Hermosa Beach. The Strand is wide enough for two vehicles to pass one another in both directions. The Strand has many uses that includes walking, running, rollerblading, skateboarding, walking leashed dogs and bicycling. The Strand becomes very congested during warm days especially on warm weekends that can and do occur all year round. There has been concern expressed by members of the community regarding the variety of uses of the Strand in particular, bicyclists that travel too fast on the Strand for conditions.

There are a variety of municipal code sections that regulate the uses of the Strand. In regards to wheeled vehicles, motorized bicycles and motor vehicles are prohibited on the Strand. (HBMC 12.20.220) There are sections that deal with permitted wheeled vehicles and other devices on the Strand (HBMC 12.20.224 and 12.20.230) Skateboard, rollerskates and pedal powered, non-motorized bicycles or tricycles are permitted on the Strand. There are subsections in 12.20.230 that deal with right of way, group and trick riding, speed and designated walk zones. Subsection E regulates dangerous speeds and designates a speed limit of 10 MPH on the Strand. Subsection F has designated a "Walk Zone" for bicycles and skateboards from 10<sup>th</sup> Street to 15<sup>th</sup> Street on the Strand. This walk zone goes into effect when the red flashing lights installed at different points along the Strand in this area are activated.

### **ANALYSIS**

The Police Department has conducted a study of Strand Activities for the past few months. This has included the use of our "Stealth Radar" machine and the random observation and enforcement of the Strand throughout the week. The Stealth Radar was deployed on October 2-4, 2003 at 8<sup>th</sup> and Strand. It was utilized two more times in December at 18<sup>th</sup> and Strand and 19<sup>th</sup> and Strand on December 5-7, 12-14, 2003. Unfortunately, this radar unit along with all handheld radar units can only register moving vehicles at 11 MPH and above. In these surveys of the Strand vehicles would include anything, including pedestrians, traveling at 11 MPH or higher. The October survey recorded a total of 1653 vehicles with an average speed of 13.37 MPH. The December survey captured a total of 731 vehicles with an average speed of 13.36 MPH. The third survey recorded 1121 vehicles with an average speed of 13.29 MPH. There were vehicles recorded above 15 MPH up to 25 MPH.

The police department has conducted more directed patrols of the Strand in the past few weeks. Officers have been assigned to work the Strand at random times to observe conditions generally and to warn and advise persons travelling too fast for conditions. Officers have also monitored the walk zone and one citation was issued to a violator who was warned three times to dismount in the walk zone. The traffic officers were given the assignment of conducting daily speed surveys during the Christmas holiday season using hand-held radar units. Generally, most people observed were traveling at leisurely speeds of 6-10 miles per hour. Those traveling over 10 MPH were recorded between 11-13 MPH at most of the locations monitored. The north end of the Strand (around 30<sup>th</sup> Street) saw average speeds of 13-16 MPH. The Strand seems to self regulate itself. When the Strand is crowded most people slow down and/or walk their bikes because of conditions. When the Strand is open, people will travel faster.

The Fire Department compiled statistics over a five-year period (1998-2002) regarding accidents occurring on the Strand. (See attachment A) There were a total of 128 accidents during this period of time on the Strand that prompted a fire paramedic response. Of the 128 accidents, only 20 accidents or 15.6% involved a bicyclist or skater versus another bicyclist, pedestrian or skater. Most of the accidents that occurred on the Strand were solo accidents (84.3%). It is also interesting to note that the number of accidents on the Strand have steadily declined over this five year period. (33 accidents in 1998 to 21 accidents in 2002)

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is the opinion of staff that the speeding on the Strand is not a major problem. While it certainly does occur, it does not occur to the extent that has resulted in numerous accidents and injuries. However, in reviewing the existing conditions on the Strand and the municipal code sections that regulate activities on the Strand, staff makes the following recommendations:

- Eliminate the 10 MPH speed limit language in section 12.20.230 (E) of the Hermosa Beach Municipal Code. This speed limit is very arbitrary. Based on experience and observations, there are times when 15 MPH would be safe and there are times when 8 MPH is too fast. There is very adequate language in Section 12.20.230 (E) to allow officers to cite violators that are traveling at unsafe speeds based upon existing conditions or for reckless and careless operation of any wheeled vehicle. Additionally, most officers are not equipped with radar. Radar is assigned to traffic officers who operate these units on public streets. Without a radar gun, an officer is left to his own observations and opinion as to what is over or under 10 MPH. This could prove difficult in court for an officer to testify as to an absolute speed.
- Reduce the walk-zone from the current 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets to 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets. Staff feels that this walk zone is too large and unreasonable. The area in front of Noble Park, 14<sup>th</sup> Street to 15<sup>th</sup> Street should not be apart of the walk zone. Staff also feels that the signage and lighting for the walk zone is poor and needs to be re-engineered for better visibility. The walk zone also creates some confusion for bicyclists and skateboarders that can ride legally on Pier Plaza yet illegally as they cross onto the Strand into the walk zone area. If this recommendation is adopted by Council, it will require a modification to Section 12.20.230 (F) of the Municipal Code by changing the language designating 10<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Streets as the walk zone to 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Streets.
- Another alternative for the Council to consider is the total elimination of the walk zone from 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Streets. The walk zone is difficult to enforce on a consistent basis. The police department does not have the resources to assign officers to this area on a regular basis for

enforcement purposes. There are other higher priority activities for officers to be involved in. Fortunately, most people slow down and/or walk their bikes through this area when it is crowded. Thus the Strand is generally self regulating. The signage and lighting is confusing. While the locals might be familiar with the walk zone, people from out of town are completely confused. Additionally, as the red flashing lights are on a timer, the lights come on automatically even when the Strand is empty causing further confusion to users. Finally, there exists sufficient language in the Municipal Code to deal with speed issues on the Strand. Section 12.20.230 (E) allows the police to cite violators observed anywhere on the Strand that are traveling either too fast for conditions or in a reckless and careless manner. Adoption of this recommendation will require the modification of Section 12.20.230 (F). It is recommended that the main body of language in this section remain. Staff feels that it would be helpful to enable the Council to designate temporary walk zones that could be useful in connection with certain events that take place along the Strand. The only language that would need to be eliminated is the last sentence of the section that designates the current walk zone (10<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Streets).

Respectfully submitted,

Concur:

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HERMOSA BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

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CITY MANAGER