



HSVPOA Security Gate Presentation at Board Retreat

Description

Charlie Brown, Code Enforcement Manager, gave a presentation at the Board Retreat for the Hot Springs Village Property Owners' Association on May 12, 2021.

Heffer Introduces Charlie Brown

Stephanie Heffer, Director of Programs and Operations, said Charlie came to the POA a number of years ago through recreation. Heffer said, "I actually hired him to work beach patrol and outdoor recreation and all kinds of stuff and he has just continued to impress me. Charlie has been with the Coast Guard and then the Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons. He is a detail guy and he is going to detail you to death about gates, right now."

Charlie Brown said he is "thrilled to be able to give this presentation on the gates. It is very important in code enforcement. We're thrilled with the success we think we've had over the last year in gates."

Contract with Securitas

The POA executed a contract with Securitas on February 3, 2021. The contract's effective date was March 4, 2021. The contract is a two base year, with an option for a third year.

There is information that is confidential Brown can share privately with the Board Directors on the cost.



Securitas Gate Personnel Hard at Work in Hot Springs Village

Gate Operation Changes

Brown said he is sure everyone has noticed some operational changes in the last few months at the manned gates.

Securitas is “currently working under our “Statement of Work,” that was distributed with the RFP and that is tied to the contract.

One of the changes is the monitoring of the right lane to prevent improper usage and unauthorized access,” explained Brown.

“That basically changed the right lane at the manned gates from an honor system to now a monitored lane,” said Brown. This is a permanent change.

“The guardhouse video monitoring by Securitas is a great improvement. This has proven very beneficial as the district manager of Securitas can monitor officer activity in the guardhouse and also view the lanes and the duty spot for the officers. Because of this camera that has been installed at both gates, we have corrected several instances of improper lane monitoring by the security officers,” stated Brown.

“Another addition to our operational program is our POA access to Securitas portal, allowing for electronic reporting and scheduling and other tools. I no longer get any hand-written incident reports,” said Brown.

Change of Access Cards for Landlocked Property Owners

The Change of Access Cards are issued to those who are “landlocked” or do not have access to their property except by POA roads. Prior to this recent change, the landlocked individuals had renter cards and that was determined to be a deficiency. They have access (by law) to their properties, but can’t use the amenities.

Heffer said, “Cooper, as you know has reserved properties throughout the community and they have sold properties over time, many years ago in some cases. It is at their discretion whether they bring that property into Hot Springs Village through a supplemental declaration. If they don’t bring [the property] into the community, where they are bound by all of our governing documents, our Declaration, our Covenants, all of our governing documents, then they own property within the boundaries of Hot Springs Village as you know it, but they are not actually a member. They are not a POA member.” They are “landlocked” by Village property. Legally they must be granted ingress and egress, “but we don’t collect assessments. They don’t have our water or sewer or trash service. Previously, they were allowed access to everything. There are 52 people on our landlocked list. These people live in the Village but are not POA members and do not pay dues.

Stephanie said she thinks there are five properties in the Village like this. The reason the number of access cards is so high is because these are family members of the property owners.

On June 30th (2021), the “landlocked” people must surrender their renter card for a “landlocked” card. Their renter cards will be deactivated.

Standard Operating Procedure Changes

- Commercial/Church/Medical Practice entry – “We have reached out to business owners and churches after implementing our SOP’s for commercial/church entry. We have met with the businesses.” We have educated the commercial businesses/churches on how to get their patrons in the gates.”
- Unannounced monitoring – Compliance Division staff performs unannounced monitoring of the gates. There are consistent inspections and monitoring and this means reporting to Securitas is also consistent. Unannounced monitoring is conducted at least once a month. Announced monitoring is also conducted.
- The Village has recently created Spanish information handouts for the gates because there is a language barrier for many of the subcontractors entering the gates every morning to work here.
- There are also many other small changes in gate operations.

Difficult Changes

There have been physical changes at the west gates which came about because of excessive speed at the gates. It was an unsafe environment. “We had to slow traffic down, first and foremost for safety reasons. The Streets Department, Public Works Committee, and our Code Enforcement Department, along with Securitas studied ways to do this, to slow this traffic down, enhancing staff safety and without creating traffic backup”, stated Brown.

There are two things which have dramatically slowed down traffic at the west gate:

- Narrowing lanes (10 feet is the federal minimum).
- Flex stakes – this makes the lanes look smaller than they actually are.

Stephanie said they did a study to determine the average speed going through the east and west gates.

Charlie said the average speed at the west gate in the no decal lane was around 25 miles per hour. They even registered 50 miles per hour, all times of the day. Charlie said, “it was not uncommon to register someone going 40 miles per hour through the right lane. We registered some going through the left lane at 25 or 30 miles per hour.”

Narrowing the lanes allowed the median where the security officer stands to be wider. Also, the flex stakes ensure the traffic doesn't go into the median.

Coming are two very large concrete planters, 36 inches high and five feet long that will be placed in the median(s). These planters weigh 100 pounds when they contain dirt and vines. These planters will go in front of where the officer stands.

There is also improved signage which has helped with last minute lane changes.

Future Improvements – Quicker Guest/Visitor Sign-in Time

Improved computer system – “dramatically increasing the operational speed at the gates is about to be rolled out by our own POA IT department. Paul Moore has been working on it. I think by the end of the month, he is hoping to have it in place. We are very excited about that,” said Brown. {This has to do with an improvement of time that gate personnel are able to sign in visitors and guests.

The POA is reviewing proposals by Securitas for a visitor management system. This is similar to the system the POA contracted with ISN in 2017. The contract with International Security Networks (ISN) was never completed. [There was a lawsuit filed by ISN regarding this, which is documented on this website and in our Facebook Group.] We are currently reviewing proposals for something similar to that which will provide a software integrated with our system. This is much needed. Right now we have no verification programs in our computer systems to verify what our portal is showing in our visitor log. This will also let us provide passes to Smartphones for unmanned gates, even print out passes at the unmanned gates and it can be integrated with our current system. This allows RFID use at a later date if we choose to do that. This will provide in-house scanners at the two main gates. The system would allow for drivers' license scanning if need be in the future. “There are some secured areas that are

using that now instead of issuing cards. They have now have loaded drivers' license information and so you do not have to issue our cards to members or residents or whoever the case may be, the drivers' license information is actually what is scanned and what is used as your entry," said Brown.

"It allows for all of the lease and guest passes, which is very beneficial so you can put the guest in from this point to this point. It automatically leaks from the system at that point so they would not be allowed access in after that date point," explained Brown.

The proposed system automatically purges from the visitor log, however, you have to go in and manually delete it from the back part of the program.

Heffer said, it is a kind of a pieced-together system, which is why Paul [Moore] is rewriting it, to make it better.

Paul Moore said, "I am trying to rewrite something I wrote in [PHP](#) about 12 or 13 years ago. So I have to go back and look at the old code and remember what I did to make this again. Charlie is talking about how long it takes to check somebody in. So we did a test." The form used at the gates to check-in guests is an extremely slow process. Often it takes a guard five or ten minutes to make a single entry and check-in a visitor. This situation causes a backup of traffic at the gates. Paul Moore is working to create a much, much faster check-in system. When testing his recreated form, it turned out to be much faster. Paul was able to make 50 check-in entries in the time it normally takes a gate guard to do two. The form distinguishes between a guest and a visitor.

Director Chris Jones said that it was his understanding that incompleteness of the prior gate contract [this is in reference to the ISN Debacle that resulted in a lawsuit] was an infrastructure and broadband problem, largely. "Have you solved that?" inquired Jones.

Moore said this is no longer an issue.

The Board received a packet of information from Brown. Brown said the amount of the proposal cost in this packet has been revised because "we gave them much more data after we went through a demonstration with them." This is concerning equipment that we already own. The \$122,580 figure was reduced to \$87,179.76. This is \$2,421.66 a month for 36 months. At this point, the POA owns all of the equipment and would pay for a maintenance plan of \$1,325 a year. This project is in a preliminary stage.

Planned Improvements at the Unmanned Gates (Signage/Cameras/Sally Port)

Better signage at the unmanned gates is planned. "We hope this will discourage tailgating," said Brown. We have also budgeted [this year] for camera upgrades at all the gates. Code Enforcement, IT, and the Police Department will look at each gate and determine where to place the cameras. This should happen by the end of the year.

Chair Corry asked if the cameras would be aimed at the license plates. Brown said this would be the case.



Security Camera – West Gate

Options are being studied to eliminate tailgating. There are a lot of options available that can be used to address this issue. The POA is researching the addition of a fast-arm barrier gate to the current gate system. This would create an area between the two gates. In the federal prison system, this is known as a **“Sally Port.”** {Click [here](#) to read about a Sally Port.} This is a double gate system that eliminates tailgating. The approximate cost for this barrier-arm system is \$70,000 total for all the unmanned gates. There are a lot of details still to be investigated and worked out concerning this.

Challenges With the Gates

- Brown said, “Stephanie and I often say we are gating a city.” This is a challenge.

- Members not purchasing decals but using the right lane [decal lane] This backs traffic up in this lane because the guard has to ask to see their POA identification card. This may happen up to 50 times a day. Chair Corry and Director McLeod asked about making these folks pull off to the side. If they are inconvenienced enough, it may force them to purchase a decal. The POA has always charged for the decals, except for two years. Heffer said that some folks are unwilling to put a decal on their vehicle, whether it is free or not.
- Education – Educating businesses and churches on how to get their patrons/members into their facilities.
- Current check speed in for visitors/guests at the gate. (Please see above. This issue is being resolved.)
- Residents sponsor guests by phone or email. It is better to use the online portal on the Explore the Village website. Brown plans to submit a proposal that email sponsors of guests be eliminated. Director Avila said the portal is not easy to find. Sometimes there are 40 or 50 phone calls an hour to sponsor people in the gates. The phone calls take a lot of resources. It is a big help for the gate staff if members use the Website Portal to call their guests into the Village. [Here](#) is a link to the online form to sign in visitors. Click on “Gate Access” and follow the prompts.
- Staffing is a challenge for Securitas.

Questions/Additional Information

Property Owner, Marcy Mermel, asked about making it a requirement for people to scan their cards when leaving. Three or four years ago the POA removed the card scanner from the exits. Mermel said, “if someone isn’t supposed to be in here anyway, we are making it really easy for them to leave.”

Director Omohundro said they could still exit out of the manned gates without using a card scanner.

Mermel said this has to do with the possibility of the police looking for someone and it is easier for them to slip out unnoticed at the unmanned gates.

Property Owner, Maxine Klein, said the number of people using the gates will increase as we grow the Village. Brown said future growth is being considered.

John Paul said the gating situation is being taken very seriously. “We are trying to get a handle on ingress,” stated Paul.

The security improvements made at the west gate will also be implemented at the east gate. Brown has asked the Police Department to include the improvements in next year’s budget. However, there will be improvements made at the east gates in the next 60 days. When the repaving is done at the east gate, the lanes will be narrowed.

Director Avila asked about the west gate traffic light that is in the lane where you turn in the Village heading north on Highway 7.

Jason Temple, Director of Public Services, explained this light is not for the purpose of stopping traffic when entering the Village. The purpose of this light is “if you are stopped behind a big semi-truck, real close to the intersection, you cannot see the traffic light at the intersection. This light gives you a heads up that the light turned green..It is not for entering the Village.” This light has caused a lot of confusion. Folks don’t need to stop or yield when entering the Village at this particular spot. Temple is in communication with the highway department about this light.

By Cheryl Dowden, May 17, 2021

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