

'Zero Tolerance' as Police Gear Up to Handle Montauk's Boisterous Party Crowds

East Hampton Town Police Chief Michael Sarlo also said his department has had a record number of calls, with up to 20,000 expected this year

By **LISA FINN** (Patch Staff) January 15, 2016 8:44 am ET



Montauk, NY - With crowds of fun-seeking partiers ready to descend upon Montauk again this season, officials are gearing up with plans to handle the sheer volume and enforce a zero-tolerance policy. And, they'll help to enforce new rental registry legislation passed in East Hampton last month.

Last summer brought crowds of unprecedented numbers to Montauk, creating a wild party atmosphere that had residents outraged over egregious quality of life violations, including noise, public urination, and traffic woes.

According to East Hampton Town Police Chief Michael Sarlo, plans are in place for officials to take a proactive stance.

“Between now and May, we are planning to have meetings with the Citizen’s Advisory Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Concerned Citizens of Montauk and Montauk United, to hear residents’ concerns and share with them our plans, focusing on creating better understanding of the laws and codes, what we can and can’t do based on criminal procedure law, etc. — and giving the people of Montauk a clear picture as to how we will go about enforcing the quality of life issues facing the hamlet during these challenging times.”

Sarlo said the plan includes meeting with bar and restaurant owners, managers and security, in the hopes of establishing better communication between the police department and licensed establishments.

Internally, police will continue to meet with all of the town enforcement agencies, including code, fire, and marine, “...to ensure collaborative efforts, information sharing and cooperation amongst personnel in handling enforcement issues. We will review signage, the town code, parking restrictions, beach access points, street

lighting —anything we can, to improve the safety and security of the public, and facilitate a more calm and acceptable atmosphere.” “Large crowds are inevitable”, Sarlo said, and some of the issues faced are created by the sheer volume of people and cars.

“But we will do the best we can to get out in front of as many ideas and situations as we can. Our zero tolerance policy for outside music after 9 p.m., open alcohol on the streets, litter and public urination will continue from last summer, and we will use social media, press outlets through digital, print, radio and television to spread the word of what is acceptable, what will be subject to summons or arrest, and where our focus will be.”

East Hampton Police still have the entire west end of the town to patrol, with more than two-thirds of its calls, arrests and traffic summonses all being generated from the rest of the town, he noted. “We must be careful and diligent in planning the use of our resources. Overtime and part time officers, supplemented by the district attorney’s DWI Task Force, state police, the county sheriffs and the State Liquor Authority will all be called upon to chip in and help us out with increased presence throughout the summer,” he said.

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In addition, Sarlo said, Sgt. Joe Kearney, an 18-year veteran of the force, and a sergeant for the past seven years, will be the department’s new precinct commander.

“He will be focused on patrol officers, ensuring supervision of our directed enforcement shifts and part-time officers,” Sarlo said.

Kearney won’t be charged with as many administrative duties or office hours as previous precinct commanders, Sarlo said, as he will be working a lot of nights and weekends.

However, he said, senior staff will be available for officer hours out at the precinct building on weekdays, as well as a secretary. “We will all be participating in planning the operations and communicating with the public,” he said.

The department is busy, Sarlo said. Along with planning now for the annual Montauk Friends of Erin St. Patrick’s Day Parade, working on an annual report, finalizing 2015 accruals, budget lines, evaluations and awards, promotions and hiring, “We are very busy completing our training calendar and gearing up for the summer season.”

Sarlo added that East Hampton is also still running at a notably high call volume, with emergencies, arrests, and cases steady.

“We set a record for calls for service last year, with almost 19,683 and anticipate clearing 20,000 this year,” he said.