

## LCSO Media Alert

For Immediate Release from the Boothbay Harbor Police Dept. and Lincoln County Sheriff's Office

For further information, contact Chief Doug Snyder or Sheriff Todd Brackett at 882-7332 or at [dsnyder@boothbayharbor.org](mailto:dsnyder@boothbayharbor.org) or [tbrackett@lincolnso.me](mailto:tbrackett@lincolnso.me)

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Lincoln County officials met with the Boothbay Harbor select board, in executive session, on Monday to continue ongoing dialogue of how the Sheriff's Office can assist the Police Department as it works through an unprecedented staffing shortage.

Sheriff Todd Brackett and Boothbay Harbor Town Manager Julia Latter in December and established a temporary system of support that is currently in place. Monday's meeting with the select board included County Commissioner Hamilton Meserve and County Administrator Carrie Kipfer, alongside Sheriff Brackett, Chief Doug Snyder, and Manager Latter to discuss plans for the upcoming summer season.

Although a formal agreement between the town and county is not yet finalized, considerations include blending the schedules of both agencies to provide dedicated police services within the town through September or later. The agreement will likely include supplementing Boothbay Harbor shift coverage with Sheriff's deputies as much as fifty hours per week. The Sheriff's Office will patrol the town as requested by town leaders, in the same manner as Boothbay Harbor Police currently does with its remaining full and part-time staff.

This coverage request goes beyond the scope of traditional county services, according to Sheriff Brackett, causing an increase in overtime costs to the Sheriff's Office budget. Lincoln County will offset these costs by invoicing Boothbay Harbor for any dedicated patrol shifts that are responding to this staffing request.

Recent resignations, staff changes, and injuries have left the police department seriously low on staff, which is common in Maine. According to the Maine Criminal Justice Academy, over twenty-five law enforcement agencies across Maine are short on police officers. The Sheriff's Office is included in this tally. "I have not been up to full staff in the law enforcement division for almost five years," said Sheriff Todd Brackett, commenting that the Sheriff's Office still has one vacancy to fill.

Summer in Lincoln County is a busy time for law enforcement and discussions between town and county officials continue, recognizing the scheduling challenges that lie ahead. In addition to dedicated patrols within the town, the Sheriff's Office will make some changes to its patrol zones within the county to move its regular Sheriff's patrols closer to Boothbay Harbor. "We can make some temporary changes to the towns that each deputy covers during a routine patrol shift that moves a deputy a bit closer to Boothbay Harbor without impacting the services we provide to rest of the county" Brackett said. The move will provide additional support to assist any officers working in Boothbay Harbor and will provide for reasonable response in other situations.

In the meantime, Boothbay Harbor continues its search for police officers to fill vacant positions. "We are doing everything we can to recruit and attract officers to the Boothbay Harbor Police Department" said Chief Doug Snyder. "We will continue to do so until we fill all available positions. Until then, we will

work closely with the Sheriff's Office to ensure as little interruption to police services as possible for the town."

Discussions between Boothbay Harbor and Lincoln County officials will continue as the situation evolves in the coming months, and include a gradual phase back of Sheriff's Office services as new Boothbay Harbor police officers are hired.