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CITY OF TYBEE ISLAND

PRESS RELEASE:
For immediate release

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Statement from City of Tybee Island Mayor Buelterman

Tybee Island, GA – (June 10, 2010) Tybee's Mayor Jason Buelterman today released the following statement:

There has been a great deal of media coverage in recent weeks about an incident involving the use of a taser on Tybee a few weeks ago.

Many have requested an official response from the City. Please understand that our City has taken significant steps to address the concerns raised by this incident, but unfortunately we are limited as to what we can say publicly because of a notice of litigation, an actual lawsuit, a pending case, and an ongoing internal investigation.

The City does take the matter seriously and has taken the following steps:

-We reached out to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) to conduct a thorough review of the incident so as to ensure that an unbiased and thorough account of the circumstances is obtained.

-We have purchased cameras for our taser equipment.

-Our officers will soon receive training so they can better recognize conditions such as autism. We are grateful to the Mathew Reardon Center (MRC) for their willingness to assist us in this endeavor. The Reardon Center is dedicated to the care & education of children with neurodevelopment disabilities, and we are hopeful that their expertise will help our City as we work to prepare for a growing population of young people with such conditions.

-We immediately released the police reports about the incident to the public and will also be as forthcoming as possible about the findings of the GBI investigation.

-The investigation of personnel matters continues. Much of what has transpired thus far relative to personnel does not directly relate to the tazing incident but rather to the reports issued after the incident took place. We have a City Manager form of government, which Tybee voters approved over a decade ago. This form of government empowers our City Manager to handle issues related to personnel. The City Council has done a good job of abiding by our Charter and allowing our City Manager to manage her staff in a way that she sees fit.

It should also be noted that our City is focused on responding to this situation by taking a methodical and deliberative approach so as to ensure constructive outcomes which we would not obtain from a decision-making process based on emotion, rumor and speculation.

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I would also like to point out something else. Our Police Department has an extremely challenging job. Tybee has approximately 3800 residents. But in the summer, Tybee's actual population can swell to many as 30,000 people. It is extremely difficult to effectively and efficiently police a population that has such a high degree of fluctuation in terms of size. Despite this fact, our Police force does a very good job of fulfilling its mission. In the end, the mission of our police department is to protect and serve Tybee's citizens, tourists, and visitors. We will continue to strive to make sure their mission is fulfilled.

About Tybee Island, GA.: The City of Tybee Island, Georgia is on the outermost barrier island off the Savannah area coast. With a wild bird sanctuary, over three miles of ocean beaches, and salt marshes on the back river, outdoor recreation activities abound for visitors to the island. As a key defense point to the important Savannah port, Tybee's Fort Screven, Tybee Fort Theater, Fort Pulaski, and the Tybee Island and Cockspur Lighthouses combine with the unique architectures of the island's raised cottages to form a rich backdrop for history buffs. Attracting a strong artistic community, there are several local supporting art galleries. Keeping the island interesting year round are several arts festivals, the Annual Pirate Fest, the Beach Bum Parade, St Patrick's Day celebrations, the Hot Rod Run, the Beach Bash, and the Christmas Parade, as well as fireworks displays on Independence and New Year's Days off the Walter W. Parker Pier and Pavilion. The Marine Science Center cooperates with Georgia's DNR to protect threatened sea turtle species by searching for nests, protecting their eggs, and making sure hatchlings make it to sea. For visitor information, stop by <http://www.tybeevisit.com/>, and to find more about the City of Tybee Island, visit our web site at <http://www.cityoftybee.org/>.

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