

## **FYI. I know Fort Lauderdale and Daytona Beach have Noise Ordinances!**

### **New Hope continues motorcycle crackdown**

By: Linda Seida , Staff Writer

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**Police issued 35 citations in one day, including illegal mufflers, expired inspections, no inspections and unlicensed drivers.**

**NEW HOPE** — Continuing their crackdown on illegal motorcycles, New Hope police gave out 35 citations to bikers Nov. 23.

The traffic detail on South Main Street came less than a week after a Borough Council meeting when residents repeated their longstanding complaints over the excessive noise coming from the bikes.

Police Chief Rick Pasqualini said the citations were written for a combination of violations, including unbaffled motorcycles, or bikes that have had the baffles removed from their mufflers to encourage louder noise. Citations also were written for expired inspections, no inspections and unlicensed drivers.

"I think we sent a clear message," said Mayor Laurence Keller. "We're not going to have illegal bikes come into town." He reported the results of the traffic detail at a meeting of the council Dec. 9.

The motorcycle community is taking note. Some bikers, such as two who shot off e-mails to Chief Pasqualini last week, said they won't come back to town.

Other motorcyclists, more than 10, responded to an article in The Beacon Nov. 27 concerning the borough's intention to closely monitor motorcycles. E-mails on the issue continued to come in as of last week. They left comments on the paper's Web site with slightly more of them upset with New Hope's stance on motorcycles than in agreement.

"We welcome law-abiding motorcycles in town," Chief Pasqualini said last week. "We welcome them, but they must be registered and insured and inspected."

The motorcycles also must have mufflers intact and in place, he added. "It's become a quality-of-life issue," Chief Pasqualini said.

The issue ballooned after a state law went into effect Oct. 4, 2002, he said. That law said local ordinances may not limit motorcycle parking to one bike per space and allows "as many as practicable," according to the chief.

These days, borough parking spots often can be found holding four bikes per parking space. When a group of bikers start up their bikes at the same time, the noise can be thundering, especially if their mufflers have had the baffle removed.

In May, New Hope passed a noise ordinance to help get the problem under control. In March, the borough will have even stronger measures in place when it comes into possession of a decibel meter, which will allow police to use more stringent federal regulations as they monitor noise levels from motorcycles and other offenders, according to Chief Pasqualini. After the decibel meter arrives, fines for excessive noise most likely will be set at between \$150 and \$200 for the first offense, according to the chief.

"We're going to take a hard line early in the season, and we're going to continue it all the way through," he said.

The motorcycle community seems to be divided over New Hope's handling of the situation. Is it harassment? Or is it a legitimate quality of life issue?

"I recently sat with Chief Pasqualini and discussed the problem for our monthly publication, the E. Penn Biker Magazine," publisher and editor Norm Keller said in a written response to an article in The Beacon on the paper's Web site. "I have been receiving many phone calls and e-mails since I ran the story in the November issue of our magazine, and it seems that New Hope is taking an 'anti-motorcycle' stand on this issue. The police don't only pull over the bikes that have an obvious noise issue, they pull over every motorcycle that comes into town. This is segregating the entire motorcycle community from the automobile community."

Mr. Keller's comments ended with, "Many of our readers, including myself, enjoy riding into New Hope on the weekend to shop and eat, and when we do, we usually leave a lot of money behind. Is our money only good when we come in our cars? These residents have a 1950s attitude about 'bikers,' and it's time to put this and many other stereotype attitudes to the side."

Other motorcyclists, including a reader named Steve Taggart, defended the practice of loud pipes and termed their use a safety precaution.

"I have ridden bikes for many years but only recently have installed 'loud' pipes," he wrote. "Since then, I have noticed that I no longer am nearly run off the road by inattentive or just plain stupid drivers. I understand that is not very scientific, but I really do believe that the volume of my exhaust is making the roads I ride a safer place for me. I am sorry that you have to hear my bike for the 10 to 20 seconds that it takes for me to go by, but my life and limbs are worth that. It sounds to me that New Hope really does have an anti-motorcycle agenda. By getting rid of the loud motorcycles, they will get rid of many more that are not loud because people want to ride with their friends. The motorcyclists will simply go somewhere else and spend their money while the tourism-oriented businesses will no longer be able to stay in business. It sounds like a great way to kill a town."

Others call his safety defense bunk.

"I've been riding motorcycles off and on for several years and can understand the citizens' adverse reactions to motorcyclists," wrote Truman Green. "I say stick it to the ones that show no respect by running illegal pipes/mufflers. And to the riders who say that loud pipes save lives — hog wash!"

Another reader, Mark Gibson, said, "I have owned and ridden motorcycles continuously since I was 14 years old, and I can authoritatively state that anyone who thinks loud pipes save lives is ignorant."

He stated several reasons for his opinion, including, "People in residences and businesses can't hear themselves think when these loud machines go by, and they have the right to do so. I think this town is doing exactly the right thing. A decibel meter allows for objective standards to be measured, and idiots who unbaffle their pipes should pay through the nose. I ride my bike all over this country, and I'm tired of the opinion so many non-riders have formed of me before I've even shown up, an opinion developed due to the inconsiderate louts who preceded me."

A visitor from Vermont was outraged to read about Council President Richard Hirschfield's suggestion last month to make the fine for loud pipes as high as \$500.

"It's not likely, after reading this article, that I will ever ride my bike to New Jersey," wrote Ron Austin. "We have no noise ordinance such as yours here in Vermont. In fact, our mayor and governor embraced the bikers who attended the first annual Killington Classic Motorcycle Touring Rally by leading the parade from the mountain into downtown Rutland where the streets had been shut down to all but motorcyclists for a barbecue and concert. Apparently, New Jersey has a bit to learn about promoting tourism. I'll keep my performance pipes and dollars right here in Vermont, thank you very much. \$500?! You have to be out of your minds!"

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