

# Residents' Data Security in Orange Beach

700 words

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As Thomas Jefferson said, "The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only legitimate object of good government."

Every day you read about a person or corporation getting hacked, having his or her personal data stolen, posted on the dark web, and sold to the highest bidder. Facebook lost your information along with 87 Million other subscribers, stumbling around trying to figure out how they can get control of the narrative. Twitter recently asked 330 Million users to reset their passwords, because of an error in their code. Not exactly hosannas for confidence in data security.

Orange Beach has the financial wealth to protect the data of residents, including bank account numbers, credit cards, and information about local businesses. Putting the resources to work is another matter.

City Hall has glass doors between your credit card information, bank account numbers, and the street with no alarm system installed. Yet Council Chambers has a bulletproof steel barrier, disguised as a podium with sacrificial guys in front, armed to the teeth, allowing time for officials to dive on the floor behind the barrier, protected from an active shooter. This is an example of stepping on your own rake, preparing for a gunfight instead of a data breach. Why not have people check their Second Amendment at the door?

Planning for a data breach is statistically more logical than planning for a gunfight at a Council Meeting. Facebook, Target and Equifax admitted they could have done more to prevent an attack, but that was after the fact. In Orange Beach, getting ahead of the curve, being proactive about data and physical protection is in the best interest of our community.

Security consultants did a great job at the Art Center, installing 56 surveillance cameras, building-entry alarms, monitored offsite, creating a jaw-dropping achievement. Enabling patrons to view art, protecting the physical pieces from theft, securing credit card information of purchasers, keeping staff safe, illustrating the fact that physical security and data security are intertwined.

The buildings of City Hall, Community Development and the Bradley Finance Center have no access control or monitored surveillance cameras, allowing anyone to enter the building unchecked. These facilities need professional security audits, outlining counter measures for hacks and a physical breach.

The key issue is funding. Politicians love to talk about spending. To simplify, Democrats win leftist votes by calling it a good investment and promising more to come. Republicans secure conservative votes by calling it waste and pledging to make cuts. Talking candidly about how to spend revenues that fund government is more ticklish, especially when pain is likely to be broadly shared across several departments.

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Security has come up before, but Management does not want to fund surveillance cameras and access controls, arguing there is no return-on-investment. The embarrassment of a data breach or an employee death caused by negligence is a disaster, requiring a job sacrifice.

“Protect the employees first is what I say. We had a man splatter his brains all over his car right outside our building,” I overheard one employee speaking in the parking lot. “He could have come in there and killed me.”

In this instance, the city’s credibility bank is pretty overdrawn already. However bad this looks, the reality is worse.

The City Hall Campus buildings still do not have secure entryways with surveillance cameras. This speaks to the need for more than just data security. Trading off what is important rests with City Council.

Security issues will always exist, waiting until someone breaches the institution before Management takes action is like having no prevention policy at all. A breach is more personal in a small town, because elected officials espoused keeping residents safe. In turn residents trust delivery on the promise.

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ENDS.