

Motel managers in dark on new police policy

By ROGER BRIGHAM
Staff Writer

"They should have notified me right away," Kennaway said.

Asked if the non-disclosure policy had created undue publicity in area media, Kennaway responded, "Yes, I think it has. They should have released the details."

Jack Hoffman, manager of the Turf Inn, where court papers say all six of the prostitution incidents occurred, said he didn't know about any specific arrangement with police but agreed with the withholding of arrest and incident locations.

"I tend to think it is correct," Hoffman said of the police policy. He said motels where arrests are made should not be singled out for identification. "Prostitution is in every motel in the area," he said.

Asked if the policy had created extra publicity, he said, "I don't know. I couldn't say."

After the arrests, police said only that they occurred at "a Colonie motel" — of which there are more than 40. Manager Peter Schmid of the Sheraton Inn on Wolf Road said that put a stigma on motels not involved. He also agreed that the policy had caused undue publicity.

He noted it is difficult for motel

owners to combat prostitution. "This sort of thing happens," Schmid said, "but it can happen anywhere no matter how hard you police it."

The problems of policing were also discussed by James Schwarz, manager of the Tom Sawyer Motor Inn and Restaurant on Western Avenue.

"You can't have a bed check at midnight of every room," he said.

"I can't say whether their (the police's) policy is right or wrong," Schwarz said. "I can't say whether the press's right to know is right or wrong. It depends on the circumstances."

"If the solicitation is going on, if the motel operator does nothing about it, then let the chips fall where they may and let the press know about it," Schwarz said. "If it's a one time thing and he cleans it up, it shouldn't receive publicity."

The four managers were contacted by phone Monday. Two other hotel managers declined to comment. Lt. Hahn could not be reached this morning for comment.

It is standard procedure for police to tell where arrests are made. The New York Free Trial Press Conference, a

Colonie police held a rare press conference to announce they had arrested several prostitutes at local motels and hotels. They did not say which lodgings were involved and said that arrangement had been at the insistence of the managers -- in violation of a statewide press-police agreement to always provide that info.

Other reporters spent considerable time to track down the location. I did not. I told my editors there was a bigger story that would make it harder for similar nonsense down the road.

This was the story I wrote. The police then released the name of all the locations and did not do that again.

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voluntary and not legally binding association of press, legal and law enforcement agencies, has said, "When and after an arrest is made, the following information should be made available for publication...the circumstances surrounding an arrest, including the time and place of arrest."

The conference guidelines are designed to protect the rights of individuals charged with crimes to receive fair trials, the freedom of the press and the right of the public to know.

Before learning of the arrest locations from the defense attorney, reporters buttonholed everyone from Colonie police to Albany County District Attorney Sol Greenberg for the information, prompting Colonie Town Judge Philip Caponera to say, "I wish reporters were this diligent in covering other kinds of cases we have."