

## **Special City Council Meeting - Visioning**

2:00 p.m., Wednesday, March 21, 2018

A Special Meeting of City Council was held on May 21, 2018 in the Conference Room of City Hall, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilmembers Bell, Buckhannon, Ferencz, Kinghorn, Moye, Rice, Smith and Ward, Mayor Carroll, Administrator Tucker and Assistant Administrator Fragoso; a quorum was present to conduct business.

1. Mayor Carroll called the meeting to order and acknowledged that the press and public were duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

2. **Isle of Palms Water and Sewer Commission**

**A. Options for extension of public sewer**

**B. Options related to grinder pumps**

Kristen Champagne, Dana Love, and Nick Stroud were present to answer questions about the presentation. (The power-point presentation is attached to the historical record of the meeting.)

Councilmember Kinghorn asked whether the Forest Trail facility would handle the volume of waste water if every lot on the island was developed and was attached to the gravity system and every hotel room was occupied, and Commissioner Helfrich answered with confidence that it would. The Commissioner stated that they expected to receive a FEMA grant in the amount of two and a quarter million dollars (\$2,225,000) that the Water and Sewer Commission plans to use to finance the second module for the Forest Trail facility. As the technology of the membranes continues to improve, today's membranes are said to be fifty percent (50%) more efficient; therefore, the number of membranes could be reduced from the planned four (4) and the fifty-two million dollars (\$52,000,000) becomes forty-two million dollars (\$42,000,000).

Since the figure of fifty-two million dollars (\$52,000,000) was the estimated cost to sewer the entire island, Councilmember Ferencz stated that the group needed to look at the residents' responsibility; with the cost of tying into the system being approximately twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000), she thought they should have some kind of incentive, for instance, some type of discount or the ability to pay off this fee over five to ten (5 – 10) years. She voiced the opinion that, if residents were forced to tie in, some would be forced to leave the island.

Councilmember Kinghorn suggested that another incentive could be to give the first "x" number of residents to tie in a break on the fees.

Responding to Councilmember Buckhannon's question, the price to add-on two (2) modules, according to Kristen Champagne would be in the neighborhood of twenty-one million dollars (\$21,000,000) including the construction costs.

Mayor Carroll commented that the island has fourteen hundred (1,400) homes on septic tanks; his question was who would pay for the sewer system – the residences on septic systems or all residents?

Dana Love, Chairman of the Water and Sewer Commission, responded that all residents would pay for the expansion.

### **3. Consideration of establishing a goal for the Visioning Meeting**

Mayor Carroll suggested that Council wait until the end of the meeting to establish a goal so that it could incorporate information from the discussions.

### **4. Direct a plan forward for the top seven (7) priorities identified by citizens for City Council and Standing Committees**

#### **1. Parking and traffic management**

The Mayor noted that, at the Ways and Means meeting, Council had a good discussion on parking and traffic and had made strides that could be implemented relatively painlessly. The Public Safety Committee will work toward more recommendations to improve the traffic congestion and parking in the coming months. Mayor Carroll tasked the Public Safety Committee with bringing Wild Dunes and the rental companies into the traffic discussions relative to the backups that occur on check-in days. Councilmember Buckhannon said that, based on the signage at the intersection of Palm Boulevard and the Connector, it often becomes a bottleneck; he suggested that, like Sullivan's Island, all traffic be directed to turn right or left and prohibited from going straight. By turning right, vehicles would be directed through the commercial district and by the City parking lots and the County Park. Mayor Carroll reminded Councilmember Buckhannon that traffic could not block Fire Station #1 from exiting; the summer is the most hectic time for them between lost children and stranded boats and swimmers who cannot make it back to shore. Councilmember Rice recommended that overhead signage be added to the entrance to the island from the Connector and that the County Park be included in traffic discussions due to the backup created by their process of entering the parking lot. Councilmember Kinghorn asked what legal authority the City had to state that parking on the island has reached its maximum capacity, i.e. the island is full.

#### **2. Drainage**

Mayor Carroll stated that the City should require pervious driveways, surfaces around swimming pools and sidewalks; the impervious surfaces on the island have created flooding on streets that did not flood in the past. Councilmember Moye asked if that Mayor's suggestions were initiated by an engineer based on flooding problems on the island. Director Kerr commented that the Planning Commission has been discussing drainage issues and has some recommendations to offer City Council, and they discussed requiring all surfacing to be pervious; their hang-up was the cost of the pervious pavers which were preferred over gravel. Director Kerr said that David Stevens, an engineer who has done extensive work on the City's drainage system, has stated that the level of impervious surfaces on the island does contribute to flooding. The Director also has learned that SCDOT's system and engineering criteria is solely to deal with the road pavement; he also pointed out that most property owners direct their drainage toward the road, which was not designed to handle this drainage. Other contributing factors to the island's flooding issues are under-sized infrastructure all over the island and the higher water table that has greatly

diminished the storage capacity. Councilmember Rice added that residents should be encouraged to keep open ditches and educated about why it is preferred over covered/piped ditches. Councilmember Buckhannon indicated that, on a Committee level, he would like to study the island's easements to determine whether the City could address the ordinance so that people could shore up the drainage ditch on their property. Councilmember Rice advocated a public information program to educate the residents on the island about drainage in general and open ditches versus piped ditches. Councilmember Buckhannon stated that a recommendation from the Public Works Committee was for additional help on the island to address drainage issues.

Mayor Carroll confirmed that the Public Works Committee would be tasked with drainage issues.

### **3. Beach**

The Mayor said that the biggest problem with the island's beaches was the condition of some of the accesses which are flooded and impassable. He noted that a couple of houses in the 200 block of Ocean put up sand fencing recently and that "the volume of sand that has built up was phenomenal." Administrator Tucker stated that individual homeowners could put up sand fencing as long as they adhered to OCRM guidelines.

The Mayor asked if accommodations taxes could be used "to build beautiful, raised, wooden walkways over the dunes" as Sullivan's Island has done.

Administrator Tucker responded that the City could do that, but she wanted Director Kerr to explain the problems for the Isle of Palms has to accomplish it.

Director Kerr stated that the City has a slope and run problem and that OCRM requires the walkway be two feet (2 ft.) above the primary dune, and then an ADA ramping requirement is that the ramp down must be very shallow.

Councilmember Buckhannon suggested bringing in material to put on the beach accesses to raise them up and out of the muck.

### **4. Restrictions to new construction**

Councilmember Bell said that the discussion he heard on this agenda item was related to lot coverage and the replacement of smaller houses with very big houses.

Councilmember Buckhannon stated that the Planning Commission, with Director Kerr' counsel, was making recommendations like the FEMA height change, the new flood map elevations changes and the City's mandate on the application of the fifty percent (50%) rule from a five (5) year accumulative total to one (1) year. This matter has been referred to the Planning Commission.

### **5. Animal Control**

Mayor Carroll commented that he had forwarded a newspaper article to several staff members about Nags Head, North Carolina that succeeded in catching seventeen (17) coyotes in less than a year, while the City has only captured two (2) in two (2) years. He stated that he had gotten their Animal Control Officer's number and given it to the Police to follow up.

Councilmember Bell cautioned against bringing too much attention to the coyote issue on the island; he opined that every barrier island community has the same problem. The City should not give the public the impression that the Isle of Palms is a scary place to visit, which would serve to drive tourists and tourism money away from the island.

Councilmember Kinghorn suggested reaching out to Charleston County and Mount Pleasant to form a coalition to show the unanimity in dealing with coyotes.

Councilmember Smith repeated her call for a study to determine how many coyotes are living on the island.

Councilmember Bell thought the City should call upon DRN to do such a study rather than spend taxpayer funds for an expert.

Councilmember Moyer thought the question before Council at this meeting was what the City could do now to reduce the anxiety level of the residents.

Although the City did not adopt the Coyote Management Plan drafted a couple of years ago, it is doing all of the things noted in the plan according to Assistant Fragoso.

Councilmember Bell reported that he suggested that the City staff find out all that it could about the feasibility of using more lethal means of reducing the coyote population on the island, i.e. hunting.

Issues about coyotes was sent to the Public Safety Committee for study and resolution.

Councilmember Ferencz brought up the subject of dog licenses and noted that Sullivan's Island requires all dogs to have a dog license primarily because the owner must show proof that the dog's vaccinations are up-to-date. She continued saying that the doggie park on the island was very popular with Mount Pleasant residents, as well as island residents; the off-island residents use the park free of charge, and no one knows whether these dogs have had their vaccinations. The Councilmember would like to see the City require all dogs that use the Bark Park to have IOP dog licenses.

Councilmember Buckhannon reported that this topic was discussed by the Recreation Committee and the Committee will be proposing that the ordinance be amended to require all dogs, resident or non-resident, to have an IOP dog license in order to use the Bark Park. Assuming that Council approves the change, off-island residents would be charged more than island residents for the licenses.

## **6. IOP Marina infrastructure improvements**

Councilmember Bell, Chair of the Real Property Committee, stated that they have asked for an RFP for an engineer to look at the docks and tell the Committee which to replace and which to repair; once that is done, the Committee plans to go out for bid for the work to be done.

## **7. Sidewalks and multi-use paths**

The Mayor stated that the sidewalks on Palm and on Waterway Boulevard were "in bad shape."

Administrator Tucker, Assistant Frago and representatives of SCDOT walked the sidewalk between 21<sup>st</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue, and DOT said that their responsibility was to cutback the overhang and to fix what they consider a trip hazard. The encroachment onto the sidewalk from the ground is not SCDOT's responsibility, but the responsibility of the adjacent homeowner or the City. For the houses with rental signs in front of them, the Animal Control Officer was asked to engage the rental companies to have the landscapers know to keep the sidewalks clear and not to plant where the planting would grow over the sidewalk. In addition, the landscaping companies that have an IOP business license will be sent a letter from the City about the encroachment issue.

Councilmember Rice asked if the fitness room at the Rec was still a consideration for this Council; She reported that, at the forum, she heard many people say that they wanted more activities/programs at the Rec and complete support for a fitness room.

Councilmember Bell recalled one resident who wanted the Rec Center to become more of a community center and to be more encompassing and more community-oriented, and for Council to expand its vision of what it could be, i.e. more of a multi-purpose facility.

According to Councilmember Buckhannon, the original intent was for it to be more of a community center, and Councilmember Bell suggested a name change.

Councilmember Bell stated that he would like to see a usage study, compiling data on who uses the facility, when it is used, off-island users versus residential users, etc. He wanted to optimize the concept of a community center where people gather.

Councilmember Smith indicated that she wanted Council to consider adding a pool at the Rec Center; she acknowledged that the City had more pressing issues, but she did not want a pool to be eliminated from future consideration.

Councilmember Ferencz visited the Mount Pleasant Senior Center recently she learned that their classes are offered at a cost of five dollars or ten dollars (\$5 - \$10) to all participants, residents of Mount Pleasant or non-residents. They also have an annual membership fee of one hundred fifty dollars (\$150) for Mount Pleasant residents and two hundred fifty dollars (\$250) for non-residents. When they prepare their budget, they base it on the membership fees, and the program costs pay for the programs and instructors.

## **5. Consideration: Action Items and Budgeting for FY19**

Mayor Carroll stated that Council needed to prioritize what it thought were the most important, and he thought that drainage was critical.

Councilmember Rice indicated that the Public Works Department was interested in hiring someone who could dedicate the time needed to learn the island's ditch system and assess problems when they occur; the Public Works Director was spread too thin and did not have the time to dedicate himself to any one (1) area under his purview.

Councilmember Bell asked whether the City needed assistance in Public Works or a City engineer.

The Mayor was interested in seeing the Seabrook plan and to learn where the ditches are and which remain open and which have been piped.

Administrator Tucker's complication when she considers hiring an engineer was what kind of engineer the City needed, i.e. a civil engineer, a traffic engineer, a transportation engineer. She did not think the City would find one (1) person who was qualified to assume all of the engineering disciplines that the City uses.

When this matter was discussed in the Personnel Committee, Councilmember Ferencz reported that they decided to take a look at the Department as a whole and all of the job descriptions to determine what was needed. The Committee agreed that a definite need was for the job descriptions to be reflective of what the Director does and what he would be expected to do in five (5) years, and to generate job descriptions for the positions laid out in the Continuity Plan. She added that she did not think Council should be budgeting for additional people when it did not know how the Department should be structured.

The Mayor said that Council needed to look at the Seabrook engineering drawings and have, maybe, David Stevens take the big picture of what the City has, what has been filled in and to give the City an estimated cost.

Director Kerr expected that the City would receive from Mr. Stevens a priority list of what are the next action items and that the City needs to accumulate this amount of money; in addition, he thought that the City would get a long-range strategy, possibly Phase III. When Mr. Stevens was asked what he would do next to improve drainage on the island, he responded that the City's focus should be the outfalls along Waterway Boulevard that he thought were all silted in and undersized causing water to flow back in. Director Kerr understood him to propose a plan along the back of the island on getting the water out of those ditches and keeping stormwater from coming back in. The Director said that it would be a huge project, likely bigger than Phase I and Phase II.

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The Mayor said that, for now, Council would wait for the Planning Commission to come back with their priority list of the worst drainage spots on the island.

Mayor Carroll said that drainage and parking and traffic were things Council should be working on "no matter what." The consensus of Council that drainage and parking and traffic would be the #1 and #2 priorities.

As the discussion moved to the docks, Councilmember Bell commented that certain items for the marina would carry-over to the FY9 budget, such as the underground storage tanks.

When Councilmember Smith asked about how the budgeting process would go, Councilmember Ward stated that Council was behind schedule this year and should be much farther along than it was. Councilmember Ward stated that the Committees review the budget for the Department(s) that fall under their purview and make changes or adopt as presented; the budget then goes before the Ways and Means Committee for study and changes until they are ready to present a final document to City Council for adoption.

After conferring with the Mayor, Administrator Tucker stated that, for the budget meeting on March 28<sup>th</sup>, all of Council would be working together, and staff would provide a copy of the ten-year Capital Plan, a working draft of the FY19 operating budget based on historical data, as well as additional tools that have been found to be useful in prior years.

**4. Adjournment**

**MOTION: Councilmember Kinghorn moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:32 p.m.; Councilmember Bell seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland  
City Clerk