

## **PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**

2:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 9, 2018

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 2:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 9, 2018 in the City Hall Conference Room, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilmembers Bell, Smith and Ward, Administrator Tucker, Police Chief Buckhannon, Fire Chief Graham, Assistant Administrator Fragoso and City Clerk Copeland; a quorum was present to conduct business.

1. Administrator Tucker 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. Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

For the position of Chair, Councilmember Ward nominated Councilmember Bell and Councilmember Smith seconded.

Having had experience with fire and police in the past as a reporter, Councilmember Smith stated that she would not mind chairing this Committee.

Councilmember Ward also nominated Councilmember Smith for Chair, and she seconded the nomination.

When the vote was taken, Councilmember Smith was elected Chair of the Public Safety Committee by a majority vote.

For the position of Vice Chair, Councilmember Ward nominated Councilmember Bell, and Councilmember Smith seconded. Having no other nominations, Councilmember Bell was unanimously elected Vice Chair.

### **3. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes**

**MOTION: Councilmember Ward moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of November 6, 2017 as submitted; Councilmember Bell seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. **Citizens' Comments** – None

5. **Old Business**

#### **A. Update on efforts to remove encroachments from rights-of-way**

Administrator Tucker stated that the removal of encroachments has been an initiative in the Police Department and that the project was temporarily slowed due to weather events.

Chief Buckhannon reported that the Department identified sixty-three (63) encroachments in the right-of-way that needed to be removed; of that number thirteen (13) remain, and one or two (12) of these are working with the Department to determine how they can come into compliance with the City's ordinances and State law. For the few remaining, the City Prosecutor is preparing a letter with a citation of non-compliance.

The Administrator explained that the public right-of-way is the area between an owner's property line and the road and is not platted as their property; they are under the purview of SCDOT or the City. If a property owner wants to place something permanently in the right-of-way, he must get an encroachment permit from SCDOT or the City. Most of the rights-of-way on the Isle of Palms fall under SCDOT, and they typically do not allow anything that could impede a vehicle from safely pulling off the road in order to let an emergency vehicle to pass. In the past, the City addressed encroachments in the planning stage and directed the property owner to SCDOT to secure a permit; in the last year or two, Council changed its stance and committed to aggressively working to remove encroachments from the rights-of-way.

Replying to Councilmember Bell's question, Chief Buckhannon stated that the City will not remove encroachments that do not come into compliance but will leave further action to the Courts. He added that the City is seeking to remove those encroachments that create a hazard to a pedestrian or vehicle.

**B. Status of overgrown lots**

Chief Buckhannon stated that twenty-eight (28) overgrown lots were identified in 2017; currently the City is working with eight (8) property owners to get the lots cleared and one (1) of them has asked for more time to come into compliance. For those who choose not to comply, the City Prosecutor is again working on a letter that will include a citation of non-compliance.

**C. Parking at the Rec and consideration of an amendment to the parking ordinance related to "No Overnight Parking" for locations adjacent to City-owned properties**

Administrator Tucker explained that this discussion was an outgrowth of complaints received in 2017; the employees of the marina businesses were asked to park there, but, in addition, boats, heavy equipment, vehicles, recreational vehicles, etc. were also parked at the Rec Center. The neighbors expressed a desire for the City to take action to have the vehicles removed, but, at the time, the City had no mechanism in the City Code to address vehicles left overnight. If the Committee wanted to regulate parking so that people cannot, generally, store vehicles in the City's right-of-way at City-owned properties, an amendment to the parking ordinance would be required to give the Police Department enforcement capabilities. The majority of vehicles were removed last year in a cooperative manner; others simply moved the vehicles around the property.

The City did number the spaces in order for officers to monitor and record the parking activity at the Rec Center on 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue, but the police officers were not able to issue citations.

Councilmember Bell asked if the City had a means of restricting parking there to personal vehicles only because he did not think residents would be opposed to having them left overnight, but non-vehicular parking should not be allowed to park there.

Chief Buckhannon noted that State law allows parking in the right-of-way for up to forty-eight (48) hours; to restrict parking overnight adjacent to City properties would require signage. He added that all of the vehicles parked at the Rec Center last year were residents and the majority belonged to residents of 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Councilmember Bell said that the primary complaint he heard was the noise late at night generated by the marina employees who get off work at midnight.

**MOTION: Councilmember Bell moved to eliminate non-vehicular parking at the Rec Center; Chair Smith seconded.**

Chief Buckhannon stated that, presently, two (2) trailers, three (3) cars and a golf cart were parked in the spaces at the Rec Center; the action proposed would eliminate the trailers.

**VOTE: The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **6. New Business**

- A. Consideration of a contract award to JH Global Services, Inc. in the amount of \$13,988, state contract pricing, for replacement of a Low Speed Vehicle (LSV) for Beach Services** (Page 28, line 278 – State ATAX Fund, Police Department, Capital Outlay, \$14,000)

**MOTION: Councilmember Ward moved to recommend to Ways and Means the award of a contract to JH Global Services, Inc. for \$13,988 for the replacement of a Beach services Low Speed Vehicle; Councilmember Bell seconded.**

Chief Buckhannon told the Committee that this LSV was acquired in 2010 and that the Department got two (2) new ones when the beach parking plan went into effect.

Administrator Tucker commented that this item did not have to be on the Agenda because it was in the FY18 budget and beneath the toggle for the Administrator's approval.

**VOTE: The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- B. Consideration of a contract award to Love Chevrolet in the amount of \$25,370, state contract pricing, for one (1) 2018 Chevrolet Silverado Extended Cab 4x4 to replace the animal control truck** (Page 22, ln 32 - Capital Projects Fund, Police Department Capital Outlay, \$30,000)

**MOTION: Councilmember Bell moved to recommend to Ways and Means the award of a contract to Love Chevrolet to replace the animal control truck as detailed above; Chair Smith seconded.**

Responding to Councilmember Bell, Chief Buckhannon stated that the vehicle is six (6) years old and has more than one hundred thousand (100,000) miles on it.

**VOTE: The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**C. Consideration of 2019 Transportation Sales Tax (TST) requests**

Administrator Tucker explained that these requests were an annual process; Charleston County has two (2) programs for grants to local governments in the County in the form of the Transportation Sales Taxes (TST) and the County Transportation Committee (CTC). These two (2) programs have similar objectives; TST funds could be used for drainage projects, the paving of unpaved roads, bicycle paths and access improvements associated with alternate forms of transportation. The City's process has been for both the Public Safety and the Public Works Committees to recommend projects and for City Council to review the recommendations and make the final decision on what will be submitted for consideration. Due to the deadline this year, the Public Works Committee will not have the opportunity to discuss this at their January meeting. A key item on the grant application is whether the requests have the support of City Council and the community. On occasion, the City has made the same requests as the prior year, for instance, Phase I drainage was submitted multiple years, and the City received several grants toward the project. A more recent grant award was for the engineering, design and construction of the sidewalk on 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue between the Rec Center and Palm Boulevard.

Assistant Frago commented that the City also was awarded two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) in CTC funds toward the Phase II Drainage Project.

The Administrator stated that two (2) other projects have been submitted for the past several years, and they were for regulation bike paths on both sides of Palm Boulevard from Breach Inlet to 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue and for improvements to the 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Palm Boulevard intersection to direct cyclists exiting the Connector and pedestrians through Leola Hanbury Park to Palm Boulevard. She commented that staff's recommendation was to re-submit both projects, unless the Committee has other ideas for consideration.

Administrator Tucker noted that she has heard complaints about the condition of the multi-purpose path on Waterway Boulevard, and the Committee might consider requesting regulation bike paths on both sides of Waterway from 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue to 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue where space exists in the right-of-way. Another option could be to request widening and re-doing the multi-purpose path on Waterway; she noted that police officers cannot force cyclists onto the multi-purpose path, but they can enforce cycling on regulation bike paths.

Councilmember Ward made the following recommendations for TST grants: 1) intersection improvements to 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Palm Boulevard as detailed above, 2) regulation bike lanes on both sides of Palm Boulevard from 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue to 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 3) improvements to the multiuse path on Waterway Boulevard.

Councilmember Bell said Waterway Boulevard was not wide enough to support regulation bike paths on both sides of the road.

Chair Smith questioned the request for regulation bike paths on Palm Boulevard rather than Waterway Boulevard.

The Administrator commented that City Council approved the route of the "Battery to the Beach Path" directing cyclists onto Waterway between 21<sup>st</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> Avenues; she speculated that the reasons were to free up the vehicular lane of traffic that backs up when cyclists are on the road, to, potentially, reduce or eliminate vehicular parking in some areas of Palm Boulevard and to encourage non-vehicular transportation.

Chair Smith inquired about improving the multi-use path and adding regulations bike paths to both sides of Waterway, and the Administrator replied that the City would need engineering to determine if space would allow for both.

The Administrator also pointed out that, on 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue between the intersection on Palm and the Intersection with Waterway, there is only a sidewalk, no bike path. If the desire was to improve cycling on Waterway, bike paths on 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue should also be included, and she thought that the street had ample right-of-way for regulation bike paths on both sides of the road.

**MOTION: Councilmember Ward moved to submit the following as TST requests for grant funding:**

- 1) Intersection improvements to 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Palm Boulevard as detailed above,**
  - 2) Regulation bike lanes on both sides of Palm Boulevard from 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue to 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue and**
  - 3) Regulation bike lanes on both sides of Waterway Boulevard.**
- Councilmember Bell seconded.**

During the discussion, Chief Buckhannon added that having regulation bike paths on both sides of Palm Boulevard would provide an additional buffer for beach-goers parking on Palm as they exit their vehicles.

Assistant Fragoso suggested that all of the bike path requests could be combined for one (1) TST grant request, and the Administrator thought that, with the addition of bike paths on both sides of Waterway, the multi-use path would better serve residents as a sidewalk.

Councilmember Bell asked whether the City stood a better chance of a grant award for bike paths on Palm or on Waterway, and Councilmember Ward stated that the bike lanes on Palm Boulevard between 21<sup>st</sup> and 57<sup>th</sup> Avenues would be a very expensive endeavor.

Assistant Fragoso explained that the TST funds are put into three (3) categories one (1) of which is for pedestrian and bike related projects, and they, generally, get priority. Intersection improvements are another category, meaning that the City's projects will not compete for funding.

When Chair Smith asked how long the multi-use path improvements would last, Administrator Tucker replied that an issue with the multi-use path was that it was a continual maintenance problem, compounded by the encroachment of the growth on top of it. The experience has been that the path could be cleared to its width of four feet (4 ft.) and within two (2) weeks the same work needs to be repeated.

From campaigning, Chair Smith commented that people suggested having marked crosswalks on Waterway; she opined that having the crosswalks might reduce the speed on Waterway. She indicated that she would like to see the brick crosswalks like the ones on Palm Boulevard.

Administrator Tucker stated that to install crosswalks on Waterway would require that the City evaluate the street to determine where they would be the most effective, discuss the locations with SCDOT, request them to be marked and signage installed. The City does the actual street printing, and the cost can vary between three and eight thousand dollars (\$3,000 - 8,000) each, depending on the dimensions and location. Once installed, the City would maintain them.

Councilmembers Ward and Bell withdrew the motion and second, respectively.

**MOTION: Councilmember Ward moved to submit the following requests to TST for grant funds:**

- 1) Intersection improvements to 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Palm Boulevard as detailed previously and**
- 2) Regulation bike paths on both sides of Waterway Boulevard and Palm Boulevard;**

**Councilmember Bell seconded. The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**D. Announcement of micro-surfacing of Palm Boulevard between 21<sup>st</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> Avenues**

Administrator Tucker reported that SCDOT would be micro-surfacing Palm Boulevard between 21<sup>st</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> Avenues; the project has been funded and the project has been committed to. The Administrator explained that micro-surfacing was not the same as re-surfacing; in micro-surfacing, a thin layer of asphalt is placed over the existing asphalt, preserving the asphalt for a longer period of time.

At this time, the City is waiting to be notified by SCDOT about the timing for the project.

## 7. Highlights of Departmental Reports

### Fire Department - Chief Graham

From the November 2017 report, Chief Graham commented that personnel responded to a structure fire on Sullivan's Island on November 10<sup>th</sup>; while one (1) truck and the rescue vehicle went to the scene, another crew manned the Sullivan's Island Fire Station. In the month of November 2017, personnel responded to forty-five (45) calls, and, of those calls, twenty-three (23) were EMS calls. Twenty-two (22) fire inspections were done in the month that found eighty-seven (87) violations. Fire personnel received an average of thirty-three (33) hours of training in the month; the Chief noted that personnel were completing tasks that would be included in the annual safety audit as the year was coming to a close.

Administrator Tucker explained that the safety audit encompasses the entire City, not just the Fire Department, although they do collect all of the data and ensure that employees get the necessary training. The audit is an evaluation of the safety practices of the City; the City strives to do well on the safety audit because a good score can translate to lower fire insurance premiums for island residents.

The Chief reported that the Fire side of the Public Safety Building (PSB) experienced a major water leak that caused it to be without water for a period of twelve (12) hours, and the invoices for the totality of the repair were not received when this report was compiled.

The cost for repairs to the stabilizer jack systems on Tower 1002 were significantly less than expected since only one (1) system needed repair, not both as anticipated. Among the public relations activities in November were replacing smoke detector batteries for several smoke detectors in a resident's home and assisting a resident back into his chair after falling.

Calls of interest in December were untangling a dolphin from a crab pot line, responding to a report of a structure fire caused by electrical issues with a dishwasher, and extinguishing a fire on the sixth hole of the Harbor Course. The Department responded to forty-eight (48) calls, twenty-one (21) of them were EMS calls; for 2017, personnel responded to eleven hundred twenty-five (1,125) calls. Twelve (12) fire inspections were done that identified that forty-three (43) violations. In December, personnel averaged twenty-three (23) hours of training.

Chief Graham stated that, for the first time, someone from the state audited the City's 1% Fund expenditures; she assured the Committee that everything was in order.

Administrator Tucker explained that one percent (1%) of the fire insurance paid by residents of the island goes into this fund for firefighters; very strict rules are attached to the fund related to its uses. Firefighters on the Isle of Palms spend the majority of their 1% fund for additional retirement and insurance; none of the money can be spent on items required by the City.

Although not included in the Maintenance Report there was a problem with the PSB generator; last July the City was cited by DHEC related to the underground storage tank monitoring system. When DHEC came to inspect the corrective measures, they realized that the part that monitors the fuel level in the tank at the generator on the roof was not operational.

Administrator Tucker clarified for the Committee that two (2) tanks are involved in this issue, one is the underground storage tank and the second is on the roof of the building with the generator; the tank underground supplies fuel to the tank on the roof that operates the generator.

The Chief continued that the tank on the roof has a two hundred gallon (200 gal.) capacity and a sensor notifies the underground tank when it needs fuel; that sensor has shorted out. If a problem develops with the system, an alarm located on the first floor on the FD side, and it is not monitored by dispatchers.

Currently, if a storm is looming, Director Pitts, coordinating with Travis Stafford, Fire Inspector, notify the Fire Department that, if the power starts to go out, to call them and they will come to manually open valves to fill the tank on the roof. When the weather is relatively good, this does not create a serious problem, but, once the storm begins and people are evacuated or conditions are hazardous for travel, there is a problem; this sensor is critical to keep the tank full to keep the generator operating for the operations of the public safety departments of the City.

Chief Graham informed the Committee that the monitoring system is no longer supported by the manufacturer; three (3) companies were contacted about the needed repair to no avail. The company that installed the system no longer services it, but referred the City to Petroleum Equipment Services out of North Carolina. Staff has learned that the sensor is no longer available, but a salvaged part has been found with no guarantee that it will work or how long it will work. The cost of the repair with the salvaged part will run five to six thousand dollars (\$5,000 – 6,000), and the replacement of the system will cost sixteen thousand dollars (\$16,000) without travel and expenses.

Administrator Tucker noted that the repair is not the recommended course of action.

According to Chief Graham, money has been allocated in the FY18 budget for repairs and maintenance items identified in the Hill Report at the PSB, and the expectation is that all of the issues will not be addressed in this fiscal year, leaving funding for this system replacement.

The Administrator stated that staff does not believe that the existing design and placement of the generator is the best alternative for the City going forward; if a recommendation is made in the FY19 budget to replace the generator system currently on the roof of the PSB, this monitoring system could be re-used. Problems with the current generator are that it is declining because it is on the roof and unprotected and deterioration has also occurred by its being nine (9) years old.

**MOTION: Chair Smith moved to recommend to the Ways and Means Committee the replacement of the monitoring system on the PSB generator in an amount up to \$20,000 equally paid from the Capital Projects Fund for the Fire and Police Departments; Councilmember Bell seconded.**

When asked by the Chair if this problem was related to the bigger issues with the building, the Administrator stated that it will depend on how it plays out, but she assured the Committee that legal counsel was kept abreast of all issues that arise related to the Public Safety Building.

**VOTE: The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**Police Department** – Chief Buckhannon

One of the highlights of November activity in the Police Department was the report of a golf cart theft; two (2) weeks later, a Mount Pleasant officer stopped a vehicle towing a trailer with a golf cart that turned out to be the one that had been stolen. Over the course of a couple of days, five (5) vehicles were broken into in the vicinity of 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue to 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue; in one case, the owner was able to get some video footage of the suspect, but officers have not tied it to anyone yet. On November 8<sup>th</sup>, five (5) officers attended and assisted with the Keenagers lunch; they interacted with the attendees to strengthen the bond between citizens and the Department.

Several note-worthy incidents occurred in December, including several thefts from vehicles between the 100 and the 800 blocks of Ocean Boulevard; officers do have some possible suspects and are working those leads. The Chief noted that the majority of vehicles broken into were not secured. On December 6<sup>th</sup>, Officer Louise Hardy attended the Keenagers luncheon where she provided a brief talk about safety while holiday shopping, the theft of packages and telephone scams. In the month of December, Communication Specialists took a total of five thousand fifty-four (5,054) calls and four thousand five hundred sixty-eight (4,568) were for the Police Department. For the year 2017, Communication Specialists answered fifty-nine thousand six hundred seven (59,607) calls. Officers made a total of two hundred ninety-two (292) traffic stops and issued forty-one (41) tickets in the month. The Animal Control Officer issued one (1) citation and two (2) warnings. From the Livability Report, a residence received one (1) warning for a noise complaint and citizens reported thirty-three (33) coyote sightings.

Councilmember Bell stated that he expected the number of traffic tickets issued would be roughly the same year over year, but the number actually declined.

Chief Buckhannon explained that the current environment has law enforcement under intense scrutiny and that officers are making the comparable number of traffic stops but they are for lesser offenses. He agreed that the average over a number of years was consistently twenty-five to thirty percent (25 – 30%). The key factor in writing fewer tickets has been the environment, but court and legislative decisions also come into play.

Administrator Tucker informed the new members of the Committee that the City has both audio and video records of officers' actions; when complaints are received, the Department has a

process for investigating them. She stated that she often tells the complainant that the City will review the audio and video tapes of the encounter, and many times the complaint changes the story a bit at that time.

The Chief was pleased to see that the number of burglaries in 2017 was approximately half the number in 2016; he commented that it would take citizen cooperation to reduce the number of vehicle break-ins since the bulk of these thefts happen with unlocked vehicles, making it a crime of opportunity.

When Chair Smith asked about the outcome for the coyote that was caught in a trap, Chief Buckhannon stated that State law states that a fur-bearing animal cannot be relocated, but must be euthanized. Since it is unlawful to discharge a firearm on the Isle of Palms, the animal is, typically, taken off island and euthanized by the trapper.

The Chief commented that the reporting of sightings was very helpful for the Department; if they see a pattern of heavy activity, it guides the trapper to the most advantageous location for placing traps.

The Administrator informed the Committee that a meeting with DNR on the subject of coyotes is scheduled for Wednesday, January 10<sup>th</sup> that will include representatives from Dewees Island, Sullivan's Island, Wild Dunes and City staff. A topic of discussion will be whether or not DNR has changed any of its best practices associated with coyotes relative to the idea of getting with the policy-setting body to learn if they would like to take a different approach to the coyote problem from the targeted, box trapping currently employed. If Council wanted to pursue the hunting of coyotes, an ordinance change would be required, but she cautioned that such an action would come with significant risks. The next step would be to hold a citizens' forum on coyotes to be able to decide what the City wanted to do differently. She also reminded members of the Committee that individual property owners could get a permit to trap on their own property.

Councilmember Bell indicated that he would like to know how many coyotes were on the island and that, if the City were to become more aggressive, how it would know if its efforts were being successful.

Discussion continued on the subject of warning and notifying residents and visitors to be aware of the coyote problem on the island and to take the necessary precautions.

Relative to the discussion about the number of traffic tickets written, Administrator Tucker reminded Committee members about the number of storm events the island has experienced in the past couple of years. She explained that, when these events happen, the City immediately goes into preparation mode which easily takes three (3) days, and then the City is in the event, that is followed by the post-event requirements of gathering data, documentation, report preparation, etc.; as a result, large expanses of time were diverted to unusual job functions for which fire and police are vital. She opined that these situations may have factored into the lower ticket numbers.

Councilmember Bell clarified his question; he noted that the number of stops has increased but the number of tickets issued has reduced; therefore, the weather has not impacted the numbers.

**8. Miscellaneous Business**

Councilmember Ward suggested that the meetings be held later in the day to allow for more citizens to participate.

**Next Meeting Date: 4:00 p.m., Monday, February 5, 2018 in the Conference Room.**

**8. Adjournment**

**MOTION: Councilmember Ward moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:00 p.m.; Councilmember Bell seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland  
City Clerk