

Public Safety Committee
9:00am, Monday, September 16, 2019
City Hall Council Chambers
1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC

MINUTES

1. Call to order

Present: Council Member Ryan Buckhannon (Chair), Council Members Randy Bell and Jimmy Ward

Staff Present: Administrator Desiree Fragoso, Chief Kevin Cornett, Chief Ann Graham, Director Douglas Kerr

2. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

MOTION: Council Member Bell made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 1, 2019 meeting, and Council Member Ward seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

3. Citizen's Comments

Howard Hough, "Beach Santa" of Moncks Corner reported on the vast numbers of cigarette butts and cigar tips that he has collected on the island and off the beach this year. He expressed concern that these end up in the waterways when not properly disposed.

Kelly Thorvalson of the South Carolina Aquarium shared research regarding cigarette litter and its effects on marine life. She encouraged the Committee members to support a smoking ban on the beach.

Susan Page, 5 Forest Trail Court 1, spoke about Ordinance 2019-16, noting she understood why some citizens were upset about its intent. She hoped the wording could be made clearer so its intent was better understood. She thanked the Committee for continuing to work on this matter.

George Page, 5 Forest Trail Court 1, also speaking about Ordinance 2019-16, expressed concern that there seemed to have been no communication between the Committee and the person who wrote the ordinance. He was also frustrated at how long the process is taking. He also asked if someone could look at the tree blocking the view at the intersection of Hartnett and 34th.

Stan Harris, 801 Ocean Boulevard, commended the police department for the work they did in educating people how to properly park along Palm Boulevard this summer. He said he supports the idea of making the parking rules applicable 24/7. He also asked about the policy regarding securing the island during a storm, noting that many people had left the island but that non-residents were still coming to the island in the days leading up to the storm.

Eddie Shepherd, 4 20th Avenue asked for feedback on the crosswalk at 20th Avenue. He also asked about the policy and rules regarding driving a golf cart after dark. Council Member Buckhannon said only low-speed vehicles can be driven at night, not golf carts.

Bill Campbell, 34 42nd Avenue, asked how responsible citizens should react to open disregard for the laws of the island.

4. Old Business

A. Consideration of Ordinance 2019-16 – an ordinance to establish new standards for dilapidated structures

Administrator Fragoso reviewed this history of Ordinance 2019-16 up to today. She said that in an attempt to speed up the process of putting this ordinance before City Council as requested by the Committee. The redline version of the ordinance was presented to City Council last month for First Reading, but no action was taken and it was deferred back to the Public Safety Committee for more review and recommendations. Council Member Bell said she shared Mr. & Mrs. Page's frustration at the length of the process in getting this to approval and said he would be open to have a special meeting of the City Council to discuss this ordinance.

Director Kerr said the ordinance was drafted using the International Property Maintenance Code, coming from the issue of just one house on the island. Once passed, it would only pertain to less than 5 houses on the island. Committee members agreed that the language could be made broader so that the public did not perceive it as the City government's attempt to create an HOA for the island. Committee members also expressed the need for City officials to have the tools they need to act on such properties as needed. Director Kerr said that no matter how the ordinance is written it will always be perceived as overreach.

Council Member Buckhannon encouraged the Committee to reach out to staff about their specific wording concerns in the ordinance so that another draft could come to the Committee before the October City Council meeting. Administrator Fragoso wondered if there were any civil matters the neighbors could work on regarding dilapidated structures in their neighborhoods. She expressed concern that any ordinance might not yield the desired results for the property in question. Council Member Buckhannon wondered if smaller neighborhoods were allowed to create their own HOAs to deal with such issues. The Committee instructed staff to look into the process for who a neighborhood may be able to establish their own HOA.

B. Update on crosswalks from 41st Avenue to the 2nd Wild Dunes gate

Administrator Fragoso reported that DOT said crosswalks need to be connected to a sidewalk or an ADA-compliant pad and if the City opts to install sidewalks to accommodate the desired crosswalks, the City will be responsible for the maintenance of the same. Council Member Ward asked about a crosswalk at 20th Avenue, and Administrator Fragoso said that DOT will not put one there as there is one at 21st Avenue and they must be a minimum distance between them. Administrator Fragoso said she will reach out to Stantec to see if they have any other options to increase safety in that area and address the neighbors' concerns. She added that the no parking buffers created by the crosswalk at 21st Avenue seem to be successful.

C. Discussion of beach patrol officers

Chief Cornett next year he intends to fill all 10 budget positions for Beach Safety Officers so that 5 can be assigned to the beach. He believes a visible police presence on the beach will be helpful.

D. Update on SCDOT encroachment permit for Palm Boulevard golf cart path

Administrator Fragoso said there is no update on this project, noting that it is being worked on, but it is not in the current budget.

E. Discussion of implementing the 4' off the pavement rule on Palm Boulevard between 42nd and 57th avenues

Administrator Fragoso said that implementing the 4' off the pavement rule in that area will eliminate parking, thereby creating a funding issue as it will limit public access to the beach. Council Member Buckhannon expressed concern about construction workers parking there when it explicitly says it is for beach parking. Administrator Fragoso recommended addressing this issue along with others that may surface during the annual after-action meeting conducted by staff to evaluate the parking changes, what worked and what may need to change. She said she will bring a proposal and staff recommendations to the Committee the following month. She also pointed out that any changes made to the parking plan will create a labor-intensive chain reaction of changes needing to be made (i.e., SCDOT encroachment permit, updating the parking map, new signage, amending the ordinance, etc.) Citizen Jim Smiley spoke briefly about safety concerns to citizens in the 43-46th avenues area as a result of cars parked in the public right of way too close to the pavement.

5. New Business

A. Discussion of changing the hours when parking is regulated along the public rights-of-way

Council Member Buckhannon said this issue is being discussed in the Planning Commission as an option to help with issues surrounding short-term rentals. Administrator Fragoso said this change may also bring about the need for new signage since the existing signs include the times of enforcement. Council Member Buckhannon suggested a City Council Special Meeting to discuss parking as a larger issue. Administrator Fragoso said the issue will also be discussed more in-depth at the after-season department head meeting.

B. Consideration of a smoking ban on the beach, beach access paths, public outdoor spaces and City building and facilities

Administrator Fragoso said this issue is before the Public Safety Committee at the request of the Public Works Committee to consider the enforcement of such a ban. She added that all of the recommendations of the Public Works Committee are in the draft ordinance presented to the Committee. She said many coastal communities around the country have instituted such a ban and that Sullivan's Island is working on a similar initiative. She pointed out that infractions of a smoking ban carry civil, not criminal, fines. Chief Cornett pointed out that ticketing people for

smoking would be much like ticketing people for littering – the officer has to see the infraction to ticket for it, and people generally behave in the presence of an officer. Administrator Fragoso said, that if it is approved by Council, it may be beneficial to work with Sullivan’s Island to simultaneously promote and launch the smoking ban on both islands. She noted there will need to be an educational campaign as well as new signage when it goes into effect.

C. Consideration of the refurbishment of Tower 1002 in the amount of \$600,000
[FY20 Budget Capital Projects - \$300,000; Muni ATAX - \$150,000; State ATAX - \$150,000]

Chief Graham requested approval to spend \$600,000 for the refurbishment of the 2003 95’ Tower (truck) 1002. This figure is lower than originally budgeted after she decided some of the items to be refurbished were not necessary at this time. She said a pre-construction meeting will be in October. The truck will be driven to Florida in December by IOP personnel for the refurbishment, and it is expected to be ready in June.

MOTION: Council Member Bell made a motion to approve the expenditure, and Council Member Ward seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

D. Consideration of a mutual aid agreement with Charleston County Sheriff’s Office

Chief Cornett suggested City Council send a resolution supporting mutual aid along with the signed agreement.

MOTION: Council Member Bell made a motion to approve, and Council Member Ward seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

E. Discussion of a potential ordinance for failure to stop on police command

Chief Cornett noted the City has no ordinance that allows a person to be ticketed for failing to stop at an officer’s command. He said he can secure wording for such an ordinance from other communities who already have this in place.

MOTION: Council Member Ward made a motion to approve the drafting of an ordinance for failure to stop on police command. Council Member Bell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

F. Consideration of the replacement of four patrol vehicles
[FY20 Budget – Capital Projects - \$44,000; Muni ATAX - \$88,000; State ATAX - \$88,000]

Chief Cornett requested approval to purchase 4 Ford F150 police responder trucks instead of the 5 cars originally planned as they will better diversify the fleet of police vehicles and provide for a variety of uses, including towing boats and responding to emergencies on the beach.

MOTION: Council Member Ward made a motion to approve the purchase of 4 Ford F150 police responder vehicles, and Council Member Bell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Department Reports

A. Fire Department – Chief Graham

Chief Graham reviewed the report sent to the Committee in their packets.

B. Police Department – Chief Cornett

Chief Cornett noted that tickets for traffic and criminal violations are down, but he expects those numbers to increase now that the newer officers are out of FTO. When asked about an increase in drug-related arrests, Chief Cornett said there seems to be an increased presence of people on the island who bring drug-related crime with them. He stressed that this sort of behavior expected in a “party environment,” but that the Isle of Palms is still a very safe city. He said he will break down data surrounding drug-related offenses in future reports. He also said that he and Chief Graham will combine their data on Narcan usage.

In a brief discussion about golf cart regulation, Chief Cornett said he would like to be able to track golf cart ownership through the police department in the future. Committee members expressed concern that renters do not know the rules regarding golf cart usage. Chief Cornett spoke briefly about the differences in the laws regarding golf carts and low-speed vehicles.

Lastly, he shared preliminary renderings of a new patch for the police department as requested by the officers. He said it is still in discussions and he will bring a more final version to the Committee at a later date.

7. Miscellaneous Business

The next meeting of the Public Safety Committee will be at 9:00am on Monday, October 7, 2019 in City Hall.

8. Executive Session – none needed.

9. Adjournment

Council Member Bell made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 11:01am.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk