

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
8:00am, Thursday, October 3, 2019
City Hall Council Chambers
1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Present: Council Member Rice (chair), Council Members Kinghorn and Smith

Staff Present: Administrator Fragoso, Director Pitts, Assistant Director Asero, Chief Cornett, Chief Graham

2. Approval of the Previous Meeting's Minutes

Council Member Kinghorn made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 19, 2019 meeting, and Council Member Smith seconded the motion. The minutes passed unanimously.

3. Citizen's Comments – None

4. Department Reports for September 2019

Director Pitts reported that garbage pick-up for September was up despite being suspended the week following Hurricane Dorian. With regards to the hurricane, Director Pitts said staff worked three Saturdays to clear storm debris, so the budget will reflect overtime. He thanked Administrator Fragoso for allowing staff to use the large municipal parking lot for the staging of the debris. Assistant Director Asero stated that most of his work in September was dictated by Hurricane Dorian. He reported on a few post-hurricane-related repairs that needed to be done. Director Pitts indicated that all hurricane debris has been cleaned up and staff returned to normal operations last Wednesday.

Administrator Fragoso noted that the after-action staff meeting regarding Hurricane Dorian found an opportunity to better communicate with the public after the next hurricane about a debris removal schedule. She stated Director Pitts has a map explaining his routes that will be added to the City's website next time it may be necessary. Director Pitts noted there are still local municipalities picking up debris. When asked about FEMA reimbursement for debris removal, Administrator Fragoso said that it may be possible for the City to be reimbursed for up to 75% of monies paid out for that task.

5. Old Business

A. Updated on Phase III drainage project and small internal projects

Administrator Fragoso reported Phase III is still in the design and planning stages and she has asked for an updated work schedule for the project. She hopes the small internal projects can be completed over the winter.

B. Request for from the Isle of Palms Water & Sewer Commission for approval of a \$16M bond for the decommissioning of the Wild Dunes Waste Water Treatment Plant and the consolidation and expansion of the Forest Trail Waste Water Treatment Plant

Council Member Rice stated she does not feel comfortable voting in favor of the bond request until the transition of staff and new Commission members is more settled at the Water & Sewer Commission. Council Member Kinghorn said he concurred with Council Member Rice and asked about the state of their finances. Administrator Fragoso reported that Treasurer Suggs retrieved their financial statements from online and is reviewing them.

Council Member Kinghorn invited Chief Cornett and Chief Graham to speak their thoughts about the pros and cons of having the Water & Sewer Commission become another City department. Chief Graham cited the following as positives for having the Water & Sewer Commission be more closely tied to the City: establishing a single line of communication, ability to maintain a more current GIS database, cooperative use of heavy equipment such as backhoes, cross training opportunities for staff, potential for helping maintain the fire department's ISO Class 1 rating, HAZMAT training opportunities, and coordinate a user-friendly inventory system of the hydrants. She added there is currently too much red tape if there is a joint project between the City and the Commission. She also said there were some concerns about septic tanks following Hurricane Dorian. Council Member Kinghorn expressed concern about the public safety and liability issues surrounding non-working hydrants.

Chief Cornett said his staff does not have as many direct interactions with the Water & Sewer Commission. He did note that when water is not functioning somewhere on the island that it is the police department, not the Water & Sewer Commission, that gets those phone calls. Those issues could be dealt with faster if there was a more direct relationship with Water & Sewer. With regards to the hydrant issue, Chief Cornett noted a non-working hydrant would make it necessary for police to reroute traffic to avoid a fire situation, and every second counts in bringing those matters under control.

Council Member Kinghorn summarized his concerns and stated that all three department heads present (Fire, Police, Public Works) recognize that having a water and sewer services within the city would be a preference to the current situation.

MOTION: Council Member Kinghorn made a motion for the Approval of a \$16M bond for the decommissioning of the Wild Dunes Waste Water Treatment Plant and the consolidation and expansion of the Forest Trail Waste Water Treatment Plant shall be available only when the functions of the IOP Water and Sewer Commission

become a department of the City of Isle of Palms. Council Member Rice seconded the motion.

Council Member Smith asked the Administrator for her thoughts and opinion on the matter. Administrator Fragoso said that acquiring the Water & Sewer Commission as a City department is a policy decision for the City Council to make. If it is the will of the policy-setting body, staff can implement it and administer it. She agreed there are many advantages, such as opportunities to streamline communication and information sharing, reduce cost as capital improvement projects could be coordinated, and the City having control and oversight of the rates and how the utility services are provided. If Council decides to pursue this initiative, her recommendation to the City would be to engage a utility consultant to do a thorough assessment and analyze the Commission's finances, operations, business practices, revenues over expenditures, capital assets, and needs before taking any action.

Council Member Smith said this option is definitely worth considering, but she does not agree with the motion as presented. She noted there are other municipalities that have separate water and sewer commissions, but the City government has more control over it than is currently in place on the Isle of Palms. She suggested amending the motion to include a contingency upon an assessment of the existing operations. Council Member Kinghorn said he believes the current motion sends a strong message that this is the best for the residents. Chair Rice agreed that the motion sends a strong message that this is the direction the City should pursue. Council Member Smith is in agreement with not approving the bond but needs more time to thoroughly evaluate the proposal for the commission to become a department of the City.

VOTE: A vote was taken as follows:

Ayes: Rice, Kinghorn

Nays: Smith

The motion passed.

Administrator Fragoso said the motion will be before the Ways & Means Committee on October 15. Council Member Kinghorn thanked Chief Graham and Chief Cornett for offering their input.

C. Considering of smoking ban draft ordinance

Administrator Fragoso said the smoking ban idea had been presented to the Public Safety Committee. They did not make a recommendation but agreed it could be enforced. Chief Cornett said such a ban is more of an opportunity to educate and interact with the public rather than write tickets. Council Member Rice said this is a chance to modify behavior and decrease the litter on the beach. Council Member Smith reviewed the many reasons why a smoking ban is just as much of a health issue as it is a litter issue.

The Committee briefly discussed the effective date of the ban and agreed to have the ordinance effective on January 1, 2020. Administrator Fragoso reported that there will likely be a First Reading of a similar ban on Sullivan's Island in October or November.

MOTION: Council Member Kinghorn made a motion to send the draft ordinance with the January 1, 2020 effective date to the full City Council for First Reading. Council Member Smith seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

7. **Miscellaneous Business**

The next meeting of the Public Works Committee will be Thursday, November 14, 2019 at 8am in City Hall Council Chambers.

8. **Executive Session** – not required

9. **Adjournment**

Council Member Kinghorn made a motion to adjourn, and Council Member Smith seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:01am.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk