

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

2:00 p.m., Monday, May 8, 2017

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was called to order at 2:00 p.m., Monday, May 8, 2017 in the City Hall Conference Room, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilmembers Bergwerf and Carroll, Chair Bettelli, Administrator Tucker, Police Chief Buckhannon, Fire Chief Graham, Assistant Administrator Frago and Clerk Copeland; a quorum was present to conduct business.

1. Chair Bettelli 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. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of April 3, 2017 as submitted; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Citizens' Comments

Jennie and Scott Pearce, 4-9th Avenue, attended the meeting to learn about the process for bringing an issue to the Committee's attention; their particular issue was the haphazard parking on 9th Avenue that has made the street dangerous for pedestrians and vehicles. They have counted as many as thirty-eight (38) vehicles parked on 9th Avenue between Ocean and Carolina Boulevard in a mix of parallel and perpendicular parking. Mr. Pearce stated that, from conversations with SCDOT, he has learned that all state rights-of-way were intended for parallel parking; he opined that the perpendicular parking on 9th Avenue caused the volumes to go beyond safe capacity. Adding to the problems are people parking parallel in both directions and, typically, walking down the middle of the street as they go to and from the beach. Mr. Pearce said that he and his wife have no problem with parking on 9th Avenue, but they are concerned about the potential for a serious accident. Mr. and Mrs. Pearce want to see parallel parking on both sides of the street; they believe it would create the safety factor that is missing currently.

Administrator Tucker concurred that SCDOT has purview over the roads on the island that belong to them, and, any time the City or a resident wants to do something in their right-of-way, it must seek approval of an encroachment permit from SCDOT. Despite an SCDOT employee making the blanket statement that parking in state rights-of-way is to be parallel, there are instances when encroachment permits have been issued granting permission for parking other than parallel. The City's Parking Management Plan is one (1) of those instances where areas of the island have been approved for perpendicular parking; SCDOT also allows for a local government to regulate parking within its jurisdiction. The City's approved parking and sign plan do designate perpendicular parking on certain streets on the island.

Mr. Pearce voiced interest in seeing the plan to know where perpendicular parking was approved on the island. He also asked what he could do to have all of the parking on 9th Avenue made parallel.

According to Chief Buckhannon, the Wild Dunes side of 9th Avenue is now approved for perpendicular parking and the Breach Inlet side is for parallel parking.

The Administrator told the Pearce's that they had done the right thing in bringing their concerns to the Public Safety Committee; the safety of the residents and visitors to the island is of the paramount importance to this committee. She added that this problem may well be included in an after-action for the 2017 parking plan for consideration as a change.

4. Old Business

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

Chief Buckhannon reported that officers continue to work with the owners on the north end of the island as well as a couple on the south end. Since the tourist season appears to have already started, some residents will be working with Director Kerr while patrol officers work to manage parking and to monitor other situations of the island.

Administrator Tucker again reported that some residents have voluntarily complied with the request to remove encroachments in the rights-of-way.

B. Status of clearing overgrown lots

Chief Buckhannon reported on several overgrown lots that the City has requested to be cleared:

- 4 Sand Dollar – owner requested and was given an extension in time to finish clearing his lot;
- 17 Wills Way – cleared;
- 18 Wills Way – owner received the City's letter, but he is paying "hide and seek" with the Department;
- 3903 Cameron – cleared soon due to pending construction;
- 3701 Palm – letter sent;
- 3706 Palm – letter sent; and
- 3804 Cameron – letter sent.

C. Request to leave pedestrian crossing signs up year-round

Administrator Tucker reported that this topic was on the Agenda at the request of a citizen; the City's policy today is to put the portable crosswalk signs out early in the morning and to remove them in the evening during the busy season. The City has received some citizens' advocacy to leave the signs out year-round; that request was accompanied with the request to have more crossings on Palm Boulevard.

Having reached out to SCDOT, Chief Buckhannon reported that the City has gotten permits to have five (5) of the portable signs and is allowed to utilize them on weekends and holidays. Depending on the day of the week on which the holiday falls, the crosswalk signs might be out for a week, for example, the week of July 4th. SCDOT would deny the City's request to permanently attach the pedestrian crosswalks to the roadway because they would damage the road surface.

The Chief reminded the Committee members that signs are up beside the road indicating crosswalks at 22nd, 25th, 28th, 34th, and 41st Avenues and that a street imprint for a crosswalk has been approved for 31st Avenue.

5. New Business

A. Consideration of using CodeRED service for notifications to public of important information

Administrator Tucker stated that she did not know much about the service but that other local governments have it listed on their websites; she thought that it works like a reverse 911 service. One (1) signs up for the service and the local government has the ability to send important messages out or to notify residents of an emergency situation. She did not know if there would be interest from the Committee to pursue it, and she assumed that there would be some type of subscription fee.

The Administrator opined that the City's messages seemed to be getting out via the various social media sites the City employs, i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the City's website.

Chief Graham added that, if this service was automatic, she thought it would be a good thing, but, if someone had to sign up for the service, the same could be accomplished with Charleston County's Everbridge program that disseminates news to the public that enrolls. A link to the Everbridge site is on the City's website.

Since Sullivan's Island uses the CodeRED service, Councilmember Carroll asked that City staff investigate how they use it and if they think it is worthwhile.

Chief Graham also noted that the Fire Department maintains a priority assistance list of residents who have asked to be notified of emergencies on the island, like major storm events.

B. Consideration of FY2018 CTC project requests

The Administrator recalled that the City makes annual requests to the Charleston Transportation Committee (CTC) for new construction projects (rocking, paving or improving earth roads, road drainage, road signage, traffic calming measures, striping, improving intersections, side-walks and bike paths); for FY17, the City asked for funding for Phase II Drainage and regulation bike paths on both sides of the road from Breach Inlet to 57th Avenue. Since the City has sufficient funding for the drainage project, the Administrator suggested that the first priority could be continuing the regulation bike paths from 21st to 57th Avenue.

CTC requests go before the Public Works and the Public Safety Committee; the Public Works Department chose the completion of the bike path as its first priority and improvements to the intersection at the Connector and Palm Boulevard as second.

The Public Safety Committee felt that the intersection improvements at the foot of the Connector were more important to the safety of cyclists and pedestrians than the regulation bike paths.

Assistant Fragozo reminded the Committee that Stantec had prepared preliminary drawings for the intersection improvements for the TST (Transportation Sales Tax) submission last year.

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to recommend for FY18 CTC fund requests for intersection improvements at the Connector and Palm Boulevard as Priority One and regulation bike paths from 21st to 57th Avenues as Priority Two; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

C. Discussion of banning balloons from the beach for environmental safety

Chief Graham stated that she asked that this topic be placed on the agenda; although she is still in the information gathering stage, she believes that balloons are causing harm to the marine life and should be banned from the beach through an amendment to the litter ordinance or a new ordinance. She noted that the City has a mechanism to prevent Chinese lanterns from being released from the beach and the same needs to be done regarding balloons.

Councilmember Bergwerf agreed that any kind of litter that will end up in the ocean needs to be addressed; she reported that approximately one-fourth (¼) of the turtles admitted to the turtle hospital have ingested plastic or balloons and the strings.

Councilmember Carroll said that he would like to begin with an educational program and not immediately introduce an ordinance.

The Chief indicated that she would continue gathering information and bring it to the Committee next month.

On a related topic, the Administrator reported hearing and reading that advocacy is growing to ban smoking on the beach.

D. Discussion of sole source approval for Motorola radios

The Administrator stated that sole source approval for Motorola was on the agenda as a result of implementing the new procurement code. One (1) issue, for example, is that the radios are expensive, and, occasionally, in only a matter of a few months, a toggle may be met or exceeded as the purchase orders for radios, parts, chargers, etc. are issued, filled and processed. In the beginning, the purchase orders may be for only a few hundred dollars, but in four (4) months, the purchases to Motorola may total forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) – an amount for which the Purchasing Agent must go through competitive procurement. Unless the City decided to go to another manufacturer's radio, competitive bidding is impractical. As long as the City uses Motorola radios, she would like this Committee and City Council to approve Motorola as sole source vendor for radios, parts, chargers, etc. until such time as the City decides to globally change out equipment.

MOTION: Councilmember Bergwerf moved to approve Motorola as a sole source vendor for radios, parts, chargers, etc.; Chair Bettelli seconded.

Responding to Councilmember Carroll's question about a cheaper radio manufacturer, Chief Graham stated that, although there were cheaper radios available, the Motorola radios have held up in water, being run over by fire trucks, and dropped from roofs, and continue to work. In the Chief's opinion, the Fire Department must have the reliability of the best radio available.

Administrator Tucker reported that the Recreation Department will be using a cheaper radio, but they do not use their radios in the same way; they are talking across a basketball court or a soccer field where time and clarity are not of the essence.

VOTE: The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

E. Discussion of kiosks at Breach Inlet

This topic came up for discussion at the Ways and Means Committee as a new source of revenue for the City and was referred to the Committee for further study, dovetailing with discussions at the Real Property Committee for new revenue sources City-wide to reduce the need for increasing property taxes. The Administrator noted that, to do this, the City would incur expenses from purchasing and installing the kiosks to the enforcement and collections.

Chair Bettelli recalled that the cost of the kiosk and installation run approximately thirteen thousand dollars (\$13,000) each.

Since the original discussions, Chief Buckhannon reported talking with a senior engineer with SCDOT who said that as long as the property was under SCDOT control, it would remain a public parking lot and they would not allow parking kiosks to be installed. The Chief was also told that, if the City wanted to assume control of the lot with the accompanying maintenance and upkeep, it could do whatever it wanted with the space.

Councilmember Carroll recounted that Breach Inlet is a historical site, and stated that, due to the length of time it would take the City to recuperate the investment, putting parking kiosk at Breach Inlet was not reasonable and he did not support the idea.

Chair Bettelli said that he would like to keep the idea on the table, but he did not think the City needed to do anything now.

Councilmember Bergwerf thought that the first step was to determine if Council as interested in assuming control of that parking area. She also stated that Council must be willing to come up with some out-of-the-box ideas for new revenue sources if it wanted to avoid an increase in property taxes.

6. Highlights of Departmental Reports

Fire Department – Battalion Chief Smith

Battalion Chief Smith reported that fire personnel responded to the report of a lightning strike on Back Bay Drive on April 3; since no active fire was found, one (1) breaker was put in the off position and the homeowner was told to call a qualified electrician to make the necessary repairs.

On April 13th, personnel rescued a dog trapped on a small island in the Intracoastal Waterway near the Connector, and, on April 24th, a crew rescued three (3) individuals stranded on Capers Island in a deflated raft. Fire personnel responded to a total of one hundred four (104) calls; of that number forty-four (44) were EMS calls. The fire inspector inspected twelve (12) public occupancy structures and found twenty-eight (28) code violations. Personnel averaged approximately thirty-six (36) hours of training in the month. Vehicle maintenance was high for the month; the radiator replacement on Engine 1001 cost nearly ninety-two hundred dollars (\$9,200) and the water pipe rebuild and leak testing was approximately twenty-one hundred dollars (\$2,100). A true sign of activity picking up on the island was the number of station tours that were given in April.

Police Department- Chief Buckhannon

On Saturday, April 8th, officers were called to a residence on 31st Avenue for a noise violation, but, when they arrived, they found a large group of individuals who were underage drinking alcoholic beverages. Officers arrested nineteen (19) individuals for underage possession, one subject was charged with hindering and resisting arrest and one subject was charged with transfer of beer to a minor and violation of the noise ordinance. The Chief recognized Administrative Assistant Tracy Waldron for her hard work and dedication to ensure a successful audit for the National Crime Information Center (NCIC)/Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) with South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Two (2) "Meet and Greets" were held for residents; the first was for residents between the Connector and 25th Avenue and the second was for residents between 26th Avenue and 35th Avenue. In the month of April, Communication Specialists answered a total of three thousand nine hundred eighty-four calls (3,984); of the total, two thousand eight hundred seven (2,807) were for the IOP Police Department. Officers made a total of one hundred sixty-seven (167) traffic stops and issued thirty-three (33) tickets in the process. Officers made fifty-eight (58) arrests, and the majority of them were for underage possession of alcohol. The Police Department received nineteen (19) noise complaints and four (4) citations were issued.

Councilmember Bergwerf stated that she received a warning ticket when parked on 28th Avenue for her golf cart being parked in an area other than one (1) marked for golf cart parking only. She noted that the golf cart sign was behind a palm tree, and she knew that mothers with children clamoring to get to the beach or visitors anxious to unpack their chairs and goodies to get to the beach would not see it. She asked Chief Buckhannon if the sign could be moved in front of the tree nearer to the four feet (4 ft.) off pavement sign.

The Chief replied that the City would be better if it angled the sign so that people would not think they could park behind the sign.

Councilmember Carroll noticed that collisions had increased two hundred fifty percent (250%) over April 2016; he asked if there were any particular hotspots on the island, and the Chief responded that the entire island was a hot spot in April.

Administrator Tucker announced that the 511 beach camera is up and running, and she reported that the camera to go on Rifle Range at the Connector was to be wired by Comcast today.

7. Miscellaneous Business

Next Meeting Date: 2:00 p.m., Monday, June 5, 2017

8. Executive Session – not necessary

9. Adjournment:

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:14 p.m.; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk

DRAFT