



Public Safety Committee
10:00am, Thursday, March 4, 2021
Virtual Meeting via Zoom call due to COVID-19 Pandemic
broadcasted live on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/cityofisleofpalms>

MINUTES

1. Call to order

Present: Council members Bell, Pounds, and Ward

Staff Present: Administrator Fragoso, Asst. Administrator Hanna, Chief Cornett,
Chief Hathaway

Also Present:

2. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

Minutes of Special Public Safety Committee meetings on January 25 (2) and January 29, 2021 (2), and Regular Meeting of February 4, 2021.

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

3. Citizens' Comments

Aaron Rowland, manager of the Palms Hotel and Seaside Inn, spoke to the Committee about the possibility of changing the times of the newly market loading and unloading zones from 8am-2pm to 8am-5pm to include check-in time at 4pm.

Council Member Bell reported that 71 written comments were received by the Committee. They can be found alongside the agenda for this meeting on the City's website.

4. Old Business

Update on Front Beach loading zones and parking

Chief Cornett said the zones have been painted and the signs are up. If the time is to be changed, then it should be changed on all 10 affected spots.

MOTION: Council Member Bell made a motion to recommend City Council change the Front Beach loading zone times to 8am-5pm. Council Member Pounds seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. **New Business**

A. **Discussion and consideration of July 4th fireworks show**

Administrator Fragoso said the contract with the fireworks vendor needs to be executed soon, so a decision needs to be made as to whether or not to have a fireworks show this summer. Council Member Bell expressed his concern about the staff's exposure to COVID since this event would bring many people to the island. Administrator Fragoso said she is unsure what surrounding communities are doing for July 4th.

In addition to the \$35,000 budgeted for the fireworks show, approximately \$10,000 in other expenses are incurred by the City for this event. It is a big draw for the island's tourism industry.

MOTION: Council Member Bell made a motion to not proceed with this year's fireworks show. Council Member Pounds seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Administrator Fragoso said she would add this to the Ways & Means meeting agenda.

B. **Discussion of FY22 Operating Budget for Police and Fire Departments**

Administrator Fragoso reviewed the highlights of the operating budgets of the Fire and Police departments. Salaries reflect a 2% increase but not the 2.5% merit increase, which is to be discussed at the Budget Workshop. Administrator Fragoso noted the salaries in the Fire Department are currently lower than budgeted but that FY22 assumes full staffing without additional positions. She will have numbers for a possible additional fire personnel at the Budget Workshop.

Chief Cornett shared the reasoning for changing over the service weapons from .40 caliber to 9mm. He said a Federal study said the guns work better and are more accurate. The ammunition is less expensive, and neighboring jurisdictions and the Criminal Justice Academy have switched to 9mm weapons. Monies for training pistols and ammunition are in the budget.

He also explained the \$50,000 addition to the budget for a 10-year agreement to store information on body-worn and in-car cameras in the Cloud. This new arrangement will allow for faster access to the data files needed for court, attorneys, and FOIA requests.

Battalion Chief Hathaway reported that the rooftop tanks that maintain positive pressure in the building need to be discussed as part of the budget.

C. **Discussion of angled parking on the non-ocean side of Palm Boulevard between 22nd and 40th avenues**

Administrator Fragoso said she, Mayor Carroll, and Public Safety met recently with Secretary Christy Hall and other staff of SCDOT. "The goal of that meeting was to continue discussions and conversations about improving beach traffic and the flow in our community."

She added, "SCDOT, as you all know, owns the parking lot along Breach Inlet, and they want to explore increasing parking along that section of Breach Inlet. The bulk of the conversation with

our Public Safety group was along Palm Boulevard, and Council recently had a meeting where it was decided to continue to conversations with SCDOT about optimizing safe parking on the island and enhancing safe parking on the island. And that is what we wanted to talk to you about because we think that it is something that the City should consider continuing to discuss with DOT as it relates to the parking on the land side of Palm Boulevard between 21st and 41st.”

SCDOT is suggesting the City returned to angled parking along Palm Boulevard. Administrator Fragoso said, “It would push the people coming to visit or parking in that area, would push them further away from the pavement and from the vehicular lane of traffic. It could also open up an area of the shoulder that could be available for vehicles that are on Palm Boulevard whenever there is traffic backed up, which again happens quite often in the summer, to be able to pull away from the road onto the shoulder and allow emergency vehicles to pass.” She said meeting attendees think this might be a solution “that could solve some of the concerns that we have expressed with the volume of parking and the way that parking is organized on Palm Boulevard.”

With regards to citizens suggesting that the City stop negotiating with SCDOT regarding parking on the island, Council Member Bell said, “I think the public needs to understand that both the Mayor and Desiree are not negotiating, right. So I am not defending in any way, shape, or form Secretary Hall’s actions because I completely disagree with her on all fronts. I was going to bring this up later any way. My own opinion is that until such time that SB40 is withdrawn or suitably amended, it would not make sense for Council to move on any item that goes against the vote we took the last time affirming our 2015 plan and subsequent amendments.” He expressed concern about how allowing more people to park in that area will create the need for additional parking infrastructure and maintenance. He sees this parking conversation and the restriping of the IOP Connector as “another attempt from SCDOT to usurp” the rights of the City and its public safety.

Administrator Fragoso said the need for additional parking infrastructure and increased shoulder maintenance along Palm Boulevard were discussed at the meeting. “There are potential benefits with this system, and from my perspective and from the perspective of the Police and Fire Departments what we are looking at is continuing to enhance safer conditions for our community. We have always had conversations with our State partners that we have to work with because they do own the road.”

Regarding who would pay for these changes, Administrator Fragoso said, “Our position is that any of these changes would have to be paid by SCDOT if this is something they are supportive of as well. Obviously, there is always a cost share and a partnership associated with any issue, anything that we have done. In the past, any changes that the City has done to the parking plan have been paid for by the City. So I think that there is an opportunity for collaboration as well.”

Chief Cornett said that parallel parking did cause more traffic collisions. He added, “What I really liked about it [angled parking plan] was that it left a spot for a vehicle to park at an angle and then back out into the, still in the right of way, not into a lane of traffic, and that would give them a better view to pull out onto the lane of traffic to resume moving forward. And it also

leaves that space” for a vehicle to pull aside in the presence of an emergency vehicle. He said a well-developed plan is needed to lessen confusion about how to park in that area.

Council Member Bell expressed skepticism about SCDOT sharing costs and responsibility for these changes and ongoing maintenance needs.

Administrator Fragoso said the timing of the changes is critical because it cannot and should not be implemented without a proper educational component. She said lack of public education about the changes could create a chaotic situation for Public Safety personnel. She said that while SCDOT is motivated to find solutions to the parking on Palm Boulevard, she is unsure if those ideas can translate into action in a reasonable amount of time. Committee members said they did not support these changes being quickly implemented as this year’s beach season begins.

Administrator Fragoso said the conversations with SCDOT also included reducing the speed limit on Palm Boulevard.

D. Discussion of Parking “4 feet off” pavement rule along Palm Boulevard between 41st and 57th avenues

Council Member Bell said there is no signage indicating parking four feet off pavement from 47th to 57th coming toward “city center.” Administrator Fragoso said that the four feet off pavement rule extends to 53rd Avenue but stops there because of the drainage ditch that begins there. She does not want to create a situation that would encourage people to park in that area due to unsafe conditions. One option would be to create a no parking zone between 53rd and 57th avenues. However, the City needs to be mindful of the amount of available parking that will allow it to continue to receive renourishment monies.

Administrator Fragoso, Chief Cornett, and Chief Hathaway will look into the issue further to determine what is needed in that area moving forward.

6. Highlights of Departmental Reports

A. Fire Department – Battalion Chief/Training Officer Hathaway

Chief Hathaway reported there were 46 calls in February, which is the same as February 2020. There was only one fire-related call from Sullivan’s Island, 24 EMS calls, and 3 HAZMAT-related calls. Crews responded to a gasoline spill at the gas station, a boat stuck on a sandbar, and an auto vs. pedestrian accident that sent the pedestrian to the hospital. Chief Hathaway said the changes to the IOP Connector did not impede response to the accident. He said response times will be monitored heavily.

B. Police Department – Chief Cornett

Chief Cornett reported there were 11 drug charges, 7 DUIs, and 53 traffic-related charges in February. He said they are still investigating the auto vs. pedestrian accident with help from the Mt. Pleasant Traffic Unit. Responding to rumors in the community, he stated that none of the

Public Safety vehicles was involved in the accident. The vehicle in question was blocking the scene to protect the evidence. He will put out a social media post on the issue today.

He shared that starting next week they will be posting about golf carts and the regulations pertaining to them. In addition, Public Safety personnel will provide educational materials to illegally parked golf carts. Starting the second week of April, “we will do a heavy approach to enforcing” the registration and golf cart-related regulations. Along with stepped-up enforcement opportunities, Public Safety will be speaking with the rental agencies to make sure their guests are aware of golf cart rules.

Chief Cornett said the apparent increase in arrests is likely due to how the arrests are reported. However, DUIs and drug-related arrests are on the rise. He said they have been speaking with media outlets to try to raise awareness about the effects of impaired driving on the community.

Chief Cornett said he is speaking with a new vendor for the traffic camera on the Connector to find a more reliable alternative to the current camera.

7. **Miscellaneous Business**

MOTION: Council Member Bell made a motion to add to the agenda a discussion about the next steps regarding the filling of the Fire Chief position. Council Member Pounds seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Administrator Fragoso said the majority of the Personnel Committee would like to open the process again and start accepting new applications for the Fire Chief position. She said part of the discussion was “what kind of changes to the process the Committee can embrace to hopefully ensure that the final candidate that is recommended by the Hiring Committee has the full support of City Council.”

Council Member Bell said it is important for the Joint Personnel and Public Safety Committee to meet to discuss how to move forward in the process.

The next meeting of the Public Safety Committee will be on Thursday, April 1, 2021 at 3pm.

8. **Adjournment**

Council Member Pounds made a motion to adjourn, and Council Member Bell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:34am.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk