



Public Safety Committee
10:00am, Thursday, June 2, 2022
1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC
and broadcasted live on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/cityofisleofpalms>

MINUTES

1. Call to order

Present: Council members Anderson, Hahn and Streetman

Staff Present: Administrator Fragoso Chief Oliverus, Deputy Chief Hathaway, Chief Cornett

2. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

MOTION: Council Member Streetman made a motion to approve the minutes of May 5, 2022 and Council Member Hahn seconded the motion. The minutes passed unanimously.

3. Citizens' Comments -- none

Mimi Wood, 3100 Waterway Boulevard, spoke with concern about the crowd she witnessed at the municipal parking lot on Front Beach on Memorial Day evening. She thanked the police for the manner in which it was handled and dispersed. She wonders if there are plans in place for handling these types of incidents.

4. Highlights of Departmental Reports

A. Fire Department – Chief Oliverius

Chief Oliverius gave an overview of department efforts in May. He said there were 111 calls for service including two incidents involving golf carts, a brush fire on Pine Island, a water rescue of a dog and its owner, and a pinning ceremony. He detailed training received by the staff throughout the month including a collaboration with the Town of Mt. Pleasant in an earthquake scenario. He reported that a staff member has taken on the responsibility of the department's social media presence.

Chief Oliverius spoke to the Committee about the effectiveness of the traffic pre-emptive ability of the Town of Mt. Pleasant, noting that such a module can be purchased for the Isle of Palms. He said Fire Marshall Stafford is speaking with Wild Dunes about the Click-to-Enter program that will allow emergency vehicles to open the gate without stopping.

Council Member Anderson suggested that the proactive efforts of the Fire Department to reduce response times should be on social media. She also shared that pre-empting traffic signals will be part of the extended traffic study.

Council Member Streetman commended Chief Oliverius for his employee engagement and recognition efforts. Chief Oliverius said it is very impactful to have City leadership attend these events.

B. Police Department – Chief Cornett

Chief Cornett said the Police Department held two community meetings in May with two more scheduled. There were 1251 calls for service, which is actually a bit less than May 2021. There were 387 traffic stops. Of concern were the 4 gun charges, 7 PWID narcotics charges, and 18 DUIs.

Text To Park was implemented in the municipal parking lots over the weekend. Positive feedback has been received from users about this offering.

He shared with Committee members that Police Department staff receives active shooter training every year. Two staff members are certified by multiple agencies to complete this training.

Reporting on the incident that happened on Memorial Day, Chief Cornett said that four illegally held guns were taken off the streets. A large party on Saturday night at 3906 Palm Boulevard led to a noise complaint to which the police responded. Chief Cornett said, “This will be the first time that we successfully used the new rules that the Planning Commission recommended where we asked for the response of the property management company. The property management company did respond to the location and did evict all personnel because of breach of contract and told them they had to leave.”

Another large party that started at a county park in North Charleston ended up at the front beach and municipal parking lot on Monday. Police received information that there was an assault planned. Resources from the county, Mt. Pleasant, and Sullivan’s Island were called in to assist. Chief Cornett said it was a great use of mutual aid from local law enforcement. He said it is likely, but not confirmed, that the incidents on Saturday and Monday are related.

Chief Cornett hopes Charleston County will form a gang task force which would lead to a reduction in crime countywide. He has already spoken to Administrator Fragoso about the department having a representative on such a task force. Committee members expressed thanks to the IOP police department as well as the agencies who responded to the situation. Chief Cornett shared that area law enforcement leadership has begun meeting with more regularity to share information and intelligence.

Chief Cornett reported that there are two vacancies in patrol and two in BSOs. He said he will be down to one vacancy each shortly. He also said they were able to get drone video of traffic and beach activity over the weekend. Council Member Anderson said that footage will be shown to SCDOT so they have a better understanding of traffic flow onto the island.

Council Member Hahn asked about the 50% reduction in the amount of parking tickets written. Chief Cornett said, “Our goal is we want to see compliance. As we improve parking abilities or opportunities, we should see a reduction in tickets issued.” More people using Text-to-Pay has reduced the amount of tickets written. He also noted that parking has been more orderly on Palm

Boulevard since angled parking went in. He said that as long as parking falls under the purview of the police department resources will be pulled from parking management duties to handle life and safety issues such as locating a missing child or dealing with traffic backup. Council Member Hahn said a company who could take over parking management has contacted the City, and he suggested the Chief review what they would like to do.

Council Member Hahn also asked about jurisdiction on the IOP Connector. Chief Cornett responded, “Technically, our jurisdiction, the municipal jurisdiction stops at the flagpole. However, we have an agreement with Charleston County to give us jurisdiction from the flagpole to where the concrete meets the asphalt on the other end. The caveat of that is any tickets that are written or any charges made must be tried in the magistrate’s office in Mt. Pleasant.” He said it is a legal, binding contract that gives them that ability. He said officers will wait to pull someone over until they are off the bridge for safety reasons.

Council Member Anderson suggested changing the way people are charged for parking in the municipal lot to increase turnover. Administrator Fragoso said this issue has been looked into in the past. It creates an increased need for enforcement to ensure that people are paying. Hourly parking is available on 10th-14th avenues. Chief Cornett said the new LPRs will increase the efficiency of parking enforcement.

5. Old Business

A. Update on study of the modification to the IOP Connector, to include assessment of alternative configurations to improve traffic flow, pedestrian and emergency access and expanded scope for corridor study [Strategic Plan Priority 1, Goal b]

Administrator Fragoso shared a memo received just prior to the meeting from Jennifer Bihl. The memo will be posted online. Additional traffic evaluation will occur in July. The coordination of the next phase of the SCDOT study has begun. She said, “We have decided to expedite the process to go ahead and contract directly a traffic counting firm to get us additional data over the summer at the key intersections including 14th and Palm. We also included the curve at 41st Avenue and Rifle Range. So hopefully that will help us get the work on the corridor study expedited with SCDOT, and I think it will at the same time enhance the trust that the community and the City could have in the data that is being collected. That is something that the City will be hiring separately for.”

She reviewed the preliminary findings from their assessment of the Connector and adjacent intersections during March. She noted that this is off-season data. Some of the highlights include:

- medium speed for the IOP Connector is 47mph
- maximum weekend off island traffic time peaks from 2-3pm on Fridays
- maximum weekend on island traffic time peaks from 3-4pm on Saturdays
- 68% of the cars on the Connector are passenger vehicles
- oceanside parking in the area of 10-14th avenues reached capacity around noon

One of the recommendations they are evaluating is the installation of a “Be Prepared to Stop” sign with some flashing lights that would be triggered by some type of radar when congestion is

approaching the bridge crest to mitigate the risk of rear-end collisions. They are also recommending that the City increase speed enforcement or consider the use of speed feedback signs on the Connector.

Administrator Fragoso reported that SCDOT has updated traffic signal timings at the intersection of 14th and Palm Boulevard which has improved afternoon traffic backups. The City is evaluating additional signage at the right of way at 14th Avenue requiring people to continue moving as well as directional signage on the Mt. Pleasant side of the connector directing people how to turn at the end of the IOP side of the connector. The lane configuration at the IOP end of the connector will be studied by SCDOT.

Council Member Anderson said SCDOT plans to give the City eight alternate lane configurations for the Connector. City Council will narrow down the choices down three to present to the public for feedback.

Administrator Fragoso said of SCDOT's engagement, "Based on the meetings we have had, there is a commitment to working with the City once those alternatives are developed, working with the City to identify the most feasible model that meets both of our goals. The City's goal, which is we continue to emphasize is the emergency access. We have communicated that that is one of our primary goals, and for them is accommodating bike and pedestrian traffic. So I think the assignment is finding a solution that accommodates both."

Council Member Hahn said, "At least from my perspective, it is not we want it. It is a demand. We must have an emergency access lane. I would just remind everybody that they do not have the legal right to do what they have done, or do they have the legal right to get us to do anything else by statute. We need to be hard with them on that. That is a dealbreaker for me."

Council Member Hahn did not support the recommendation of more traffic signs on the island. He would like to see SCDOT to come here during peak times of July 4th and Labor Day weekends.

B. Discussion about potential changes to the noise ordinance [Strategic Plan Priority 4, Goal a]

While waiting for the completion of Mt. Pleasant's trial period of its new noise ordinance, Chief Cornett said he is reaching out to similar communities with noise ordinances and asking them about enforcement.

Administrator Fragoso pointed out there is not a one-size-fits-all solution for this concern and whatever ordinance City Council puts forth will need to have a trial period.

The Committee reviewed a decibel level chart. Administrator Fragoso said staff will continue to collect data and craft something for City Council to discuss later in the year.

C. Discussion regarding the division of transportation issues into different departments: traffic, roads, and transportation planning [Strategic Plan Priority 1, Goal b]

Council Member Anderson asked Chief Cornett what he sees as the traffic issues that fall within his purview. He responded, “For the police department, it is very simple. We just do enforcement. We enforce speeding. We enforce violations of traffic ordinances, and we enforce parking. We will help out when we need to if signs need to be put up. We will help put those up. If we see something where we say hey, this is an unsafe area, we may come to the City Administrator and say this is an area that we feel like we need to get with DOT or whoever we need to to address it. But typically, our involvement in transportation is just enforcement and make sure the traffic is flowing.”

Administrator Fragoso detailed how transportation issues are handled within the City: “We are a very small community. We have one traffic light in our community. We do not own roads with the exception of Ocean Boulevard between 10th and 14th, and there are other very random sections throughout the island that may have easement from Charleston County, but most of it is owned by SCDOT. So the City does not have a transportation or roads department. Whenever there is an issue with a road, let’s say there is a sinkhole that needs to be fixed, the City will submit that to SCDOT to include in their schedule for maintenance. So that is something that comes to us from complaints from the community or our staff who are on the road and say hey, there seems to be a sinkhole forming. We will submit that to SCDOT’s maintenance department. They respond to it as part of their on-going schedule in the county. If there are some areas that need some maintenance work that is something that is owned by the City, the City would contract that out directly, and oftentimes we will get assistance from Charleston County, who does have a public works department and are able to respond as needed. Or we would contract that out directly. That is something we have in our forecast budget for resurfacing of Ocean Boulevard between 10th and 14th. So that is part of a schedule. When it comes to transportation planning, in the past and currently, we engage services of traffic engineers we have on hold that we use to receive advice on certain issues whether it is signal timing or parking recommendations and we use Stantech and currently Jennifer Bihl has been added to the team of experts that we rely on.” Administrator Fragoso is the coordinator of these efforts.

Administrator Fragoso clarified that the City’s Public Works department is for garbage collection and not road maintenance. Council Member Streetman pointed out that Assistant Director Robert Asero is a good point person for road maintenance issues on the island.

6. New Business

A. Discussion of implementing the 4’ parking setback on the landside of Palm Boulevard from 51st to 57th Avenue [Strategic Plan Priority 1, Goal b]

Council Member Hahn said, “The issue is currently that area of Palm Boulevard, the sidewalk is on the ocean side of Palm Boulevard. All of the cut-throughs coming from Wild Dunes into Palm Boulevard, the cars are parking right on the edge of Palm Boulevard, so you cannot see traffic coming or going or see small children. Two suggestions that have been made to me. One is a 4’ setback which is what we have everywhere else. We ought to do it all the way down Palm

Boulevard for the same reason. And the second would be to move the crosswalks so that they line up with the cut-throughs coming out of Wild Dunes, go straight across and dump you into sidewalk.”

Administrator Fragoso clarified, “Two years ago, City Council approved changes to the parking plan that included requiring that 4’ setback all the way to 53rd. So currently, it is 53rd, and between 53rd and 57th, there is an open ditch. Not enough space to allow a vehicle to park within 4’ of the road without essentially being inside the ditch. So that felt unsafe and installing that 4’ setback in that section would essentially eliminate parking on that end.”

Administrator Fragoso said she would ask Jennifer Bihl or Stantech to evaluate the “traffic volumes on that end and maybe make some recommendations whether that area should be piped, the drainage structure there to be piped to allow for parking 4’ off the road or any other recommendations.”

She pointed out that there is a setback at every intersection and a 20’ buffer where parking is not allowed on either side of the landside beach access paths.

B. Discussion of Parking Enforcement [Strategic Plan Priority 1, Goal a]

Council Member Hahn said this was addressed in Chief Cornett’s report.

C. Discussion of entering into Automatic Aid Agreement with Mt. Pleasant [Strategic Plan Priority 3, Goal d]

Chief Oliverius spoke about the importance and workings of an automatic aid agreement. He said that he and Chief Hathaway are meeting with Chief Mixon and his staff today to work out parameters of the agreement. He said there is no cost to the City to enter into such an agreement except for minor fuel costs should the need arise for IOP personnel to respond to an incident in Mt. Pleasant.

D. Approval of FY23 capital purchases for Police and Fire:

- i. Three (3) patrol vehicle replacements - \$135,000, state contract pricing
- ii. Two (2) Ford F-150 truck replacements (re-budgeted from FY220 - \$87,000
- iii. One (1) F-250 replacement (re-budgeted from FY220 - \$70,000
- iv. Replacement of ATV with small pickup truck - \$28,000

Administrator Fragoso said these four items are included in the FY23 budget. Due to the delays in securing vehicles, staff would like these purchases approved now so they can get the process going. Backup information for the purchases will be provided at the Ways & Means Committee.

MOTION: Council Member Hahn made a motion to recommend the approval of these purchases to the Ways & Means Committee. Council Member Streetman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

7. **Miscellaneous Business – none**

8. **Adjournment**

Council Member Hahn made a motion to adjourn, and Council Member Streeman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:57am.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk