



**Special Administration Committee Meeting
Monday, November 20, 2023
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 Bogosian, Pierce and Streetman

Staff Present: Administrator Fragoso, Director Kerr, various department heads

2. Citizen's Comments -- none

3. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes – September 14, 2023

Council Member Streetman made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 14, 2023, and Council Member Pierce seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Old Business -- none

5. New Business

A. Discussion and consideration of wage and compensation study results and recommendations

Stacy Whichel and Allie Crumpler of Evergreen joined the meeting via Zoom to answer Committee members' questions about the wage and compensation study.

Committee members expressed concern about a small sample size of data from peer municipalities. Ms. Whichel explained how they came up with average salary range data. She also explained how they need to FOIA salary data from municipalities and that a State statute allows municipalities to opt out of providing data for salary studies. She added that they use secondary sources to check against the data they do receive.

Administrator Fragoso said, "Just as a reminder for context. The City adopted and pursued a pretty comprehensive wage and compensation study report a couple years ago, and part of the compensation philosophy that City Council at that time adopted included wanting to be competitive and at market for our general positions and leading in Public Safety. I think with the results of this survey, it is showing us that what we have pretty much known throughout the year and the reason why we requested City Council to approve doing a review of our compensation plan is that we are falling behind compared to our neighbors particularly in the region, and that coupled with the reality of still having vacancies that haven't been filled in about a year, how long it has taken us to fill some of the vacancies that we have been able to fill really spoke to us a

need and frankly an urgent need to review this. I think there is an expectation or desire for Council to want to reaffirm the compensation philosophy, and if the City is still in a position of wanting to be leading in Public Safety and have competitive compensation for all employees then here are some options that we can look at and see how that would impact our current personnel or starting salaries for new recruitment and ultimately of course, how that impacts the City budget and in our efforts to plan forward. So there is a sense of urgency on my part just because I am seeing where we have been this year just how difficult it has been to fill vacancies. Just for example in the Police Department, we have three vacancies that we've been trying to fill. Those three folks did leave to another department, and we are seeing particularly in the Police Department, we are seeing a lot of people leave or just changing their careers. We know the challenges with policing in general in this nation are difficult, but we are seeing people leaving to other municipalities. We are seeing the quality of candidates that we have had to, that we are working on, and part of the reason why the vacancies have taken so long is people are just not meeting our minimum requirements. We see the same thing with fire paramedics. It's a new initiative that the City started this year. The folks that came to the City we've hired, all three have taken pay cuts to come work with us."

Ms. Whichel explained the options provided in the study how to adjust the salaries of City staff. Administrator Fragoso asked for clarity on how incoming Public Safety personnel with multiple years of service are compensated for that. Ms. Whichel explained how other municipalities value previous years of service, but cap it at a certain number. Chief Cornett and Chief Oliverius agreed that is how they have seen it done at previous departments. Chief Oliverius noted that retirement has been expanded from 25 to 28 years and the current step table does not reflect that.

Council Member Bogosian said he would like to handle the compensation plans for Public Safety personnel separately from General Government personnel. He would like to see a plan that adjusts the compensation of Public Safety personnel over a two-year period. Council Member Streetman expressed a sense of urgency in adjusting the Public Safety compensation in light of the City staff stating lower pay was their largest concern.

Administrator Fragoso said the City needs to recognize the specialties of Public Safety personnel, the increased call volume, and the increased expectations regarding level of service. She agreed there is a sense of urgency in increasing compensation to attract the best personnel.

She suggested, "If there is a recommendation that comes out of the Committee from a philosophical level, at a minimum, do we want to present to Council options that put police and fire first at a leading capacity compared to our peers? We can work with Evergreen to understand exactly what the numbers of that would be and how aggressive we can be to do that, to be competitive and present what the fully loaded cost would be to Council and what the projections would look like."

Council Member Bogosian agreed and would like to schedule another meeting following the holiday to dive deeper into the compensation for General Government.

B. Interviews for City's Boards and Commissions

Administrator Fragoso explained the openings that need to be filled across the City's boards and commission.

Ellen Gower explained why she would like to be on the Board of Zoning Appeals. She is involved in many island organizations including the Exchange Club and the Turtle Team. Ms. Gower believes the BOZA guidelines are clear so that if a variance request does not meet the guidelines, it cannot be granted.

Robert Miller also came before the Committee for a position on the Board of Zoning Appeals. He has no zoning experience, but he would like to be part of City leadership. He believes he may be tougher on variances as a lot of variances are not good for the community. He said he will learn about City code from the staff experts.

Susie Wheeler would like to be on the Board of Zoning Appeals. She does not have zoning experience but has worked in real estate settlements. She believes in listening to the concerns of those that come before the BOZA and balancing their requests with the law.

Laura Lovins explained her numerous works in support of the environment including the Turtle Team and the Audubon Shorebird Steward program. She also recently completed the South Carolina Master Naturalist Program to better understand the island environment. She would like to see the Environmental Advisory Committee address the "sleeping" problem related to septic tanks on the island. She would also like to see expanded leash laws to protect shorebird nests and restrictions on electric bikes on the beach.

Lucia Spiotta would like to be on the Environmental Advisory Committee. She is interested in learning how the government works, science, and how to use that knowledge to help protect the beach. She would like to learn more about the glass recycling program and bettering the flooding beach access paths.

Ted McKnight said he would like to be on ATAX so that he can learn more about how those tax dollars are used. He believes the ATAX money is being used to attract people to the island and is unsure how it helps the individual homeowner. He understands there needs to be legislative work done to change the 30% funds.

Mary Margaret Nelms believes her marketing, advertising, and leadership experience would benefit the ATAX Committee. She said she does not know about how intricacies of the ATAX law, but she would like to help grow tourism on the island. She was part of the "Know Before You Go" program helping visitors better navigate their trips to the beach.

Dane Buckout said he is primarily interested in being on the Environmental Advisory Committee, but he is willing to serve where needed. He said he does have a passion for protecting the environment and would also like to learn more about how the government works. He would like to see an increase in composting efforts on the island particularly with the restaurants. He believes the beach erosion at Breach Inlet is a big environmental challenge on the island and would like to learn more about the mitigation efforts.

Mike Boykin, interviewed via telephone, would like to bring his expertise of the sports and entertainment industry to the ATAX Committee. He sits on leadership councils in that industry and believes his leadership experience could be beneficial to the community. He would like to help optimize the ATAX money to benefit the island. Mr. Boykin believes his promotional experience could help bring events to the island.

MOTION: Council Member Bogosian made a motion to move into Executive Session in accordance with Section 30-4-70(a)(1) to discuss appointments to boards and commissions. Council Member Streetman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The Administration Committee moved into Executive Session at 4:58pm.

The Administration Committee returned from Executive Session at 5:21pm.

MOTION: Council Member Bogosian made a motion to recommend to City Council the appointment of Ellen Gower, Robert Miller, and Susie Wheeler to the Board of Zoning Appeals. Council Member Pierce seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Council Member Bogosian made a motion to recommend to City Council the appointment of Laura Lovins, Dane Buckout, and Lucia Spiotta (as a student member for a 1-year term) to the Environmental Advisory Committee. Council Member Streetman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Miscellaneous Business

The next meeting of the Administration Committee will be scheduled after the holiday to further discuss the wage & compensation study and interview additional candidates for openings on the Planning Commission and Environmental Advisory Committee.

7. Adjournment

Council Member Streetman made a motion to adjourn, and Council Member Pierce seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 5:23pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk