

**Joint Roundtable Discussion between the  
Planning Commission, City Council and Stantec**

5:30 p.m., Thursday, May 1, 2014

A joint meeting of the Planning Commission, City Council and representatives from Stantec was held at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, May 1, 2014 in Council Chambers of City Hall, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting from the Planning Commission were Noel Scott, Bev Ballow, Ron Denton, Rick Ferencz, Lisa Safford and Don Smith; from City Council, Councilmembers Bergwerf, Bettelli, Buckhannon, Carroll, Ferencz, Harrington, Loftus, Ward and Mayor Cronin; and representing Stantec were Rick Day and Rick Rieff.

Mayor Cronin commented that this meeting will be roundtable discussion with the Planning Commission, City Council and Stantec relative to options available to the City as it tries to manage the parking issues on the island.

Administrator Tucker introduced Rick Rieff, a transportation engineer with Stantec, who has worked with Rick Day on the City's parking problems.

Mr. Day stated that this meeting would be dedicated to parking – where Stantec is with its work and potential plans for the City; according to Mr. Day, Stantec wants to confirm that it is on the right path for the City. Mr. Day stated that Stantec has been working toward a parking permit program, and they are seeking guidance on how to proceed. Mr. Day related that Stantec had been contracted to do three (3) things and they are:

- (1) Work with the City to develop a parking permit implementation plan, per the contract this phase is due to be completed by December 31, 2014;
- (2) Look at an on-street parking review, particularly the four foot (4 ft.) offset from the road, and to indicate what streets can comply with it; through GIS mapping, Stantec has identified which roads will meet the various categories of offset from the pavement; this phase of work was to be completed by December 2013 and was on-time;
- (3) Look at on-street parking with field verification of properties with obstructions in the right-of-way; how many exist and where are they? This part of the contract was to have been completed by February 28, 2014; the work was completed per the contract.

On Task One, Mr. Day noted that Stantec is about half way through its work. He informed the group that he would begin with Task Two and end with Task One.

Mr. Rieff distributed GIS map books and first looked at the four foot (4 ft.) buffer on Palm Boulevard; the task then was to determine which and how many roads on the island can accommodate that buffer to enhance the safety of visitors to the island. The visitors using on-street parking are coming to the beach for the day loaded down with children, strollers, chairs, coolers, etc, leaving the vehicle car doors open for long periods of time. To accomplish the task, Stantec obtained the GIS-based property files from Charleston County and aeriels from Charleston County. Mr. Rieff stated that, for parallel parking, a width of eight feet (8 ft.) was used to accommodate the vehicles; to avoid visitors parking against property lines, an additional two to four foot (2-4 ft.) buffer to the property line was added. On the maps, the red lines indicate those roads on the island where the distance between the pavement and the property lines is less than eight feet (8 feet); no parking would be allowed in those areas at any time. The orange areas illustrate those places on the island where the car can get off the road, but there is not space to get the buffers on either side. The blue lines show areas where the width of the

right-of-way allows a four foot (4 ft.) buffer to the pavement and a two foot (2 ft.) buffer to the property line plus the eight foot

(8 ft.) parking area; therefore, the roads marked in blue would be the criteria for on-street parking. The green lines are roads where the right-of-way is sixteen feet (16 ft.) or wider between the edge of the road and property lines.

According to Mr. Day, the ideal parking area has a four foot (4 ft.) buffer between the pavement and the edge of the parked vehicle, eight feet (8 ft.) for the vehicle and four feet (4 ft.) for the door swing in order to stay off of private property. With those measures in mind, the best areas on the island for on-street parking are those with a right-of-way width of sixteen feet (16 ft.) or more.

Mr. Denton added that all of these measurements are predicated upon parallel parking.

Mayor Cronin confirmed that these distances as marked on the maps are using the GIS maps from Charleston County, and he reported that the City has learned that there are variances in the GIS system. Therefore, the widths of the right-of-way and the locations of property lines may be off by a foot or so, but the maps do illustrate the concentration of areas that do not meet the thresholds needed for safe parking.

Councilmember Bergwerf countered that, on the streets with minimal rights-of-way, parking four feet (4 ft.) from the pavement only puts vehicles closer to residences.

The Mayor noted that, in areas that cannot meet the four foot (4 ft.) rule, there is to be no parking by anyone – resident or visitor.

Mr. Rieff explained that the thick black lines indicate the areas of prohibited parking at fire hydrants, STOP signs and sight distances at intersections.

Councilmember Bergwerf directed attention to page 2H showing Palm Boulevard in the 50s blocks; she noted that the ocean side of Palm is marked with the heavy black line due to the sidewalk and the bike path.

Mr. Rieff explained that Stantec had taken these GIS maps and implemented the four foot (4 ft.) buffers to the road and property lines to determine how many parking spaces could be created, assuming that all rights-of-way were clear; for the entire island over three thousand (3,000) parking spaces were available.

Councilmember Carroll commented that the City had to plan for the future, but the citizens of the island must be the Number One priority.

Mr. Day commented that, if sixteen feet (16 ft.) or better were to be made the gold standard, many streets are eliminated from the any parking system/plan. In Mr. Day's opinion, parking will continue to move into the neighborhoods unless the City implements a parking permit program.

Councilmember Ferencz asked Mr. Day if Stantec had determined the number of spaces on the island where people can park safely. Mr. Day responded that the group would discuss how that number is determined later in the meeting, but that number has not yet been computed.

Cheryl Burns, 915 Carolina, asked why a parking deck was not a part of the discussion. Mayor Cronin stated that, when the City acquired the property for the municipal parking lots, certain restrictions were included in the contract relative to what the City can do with the property. The Mayor commented that a meeting was scheduled for Monday with an individual wanting to build a multi-level parking/multi-use facility on the property at their expense.

Ms. Burns continued by asking how many cars could be accommodated in the municipal lot and was told approximately four hundred (400).

Mr. Scott reminded the Mayor of an exercise he did several years ago to determine the number of people the beach could accommodate by looking at the average number of people per car, the number of parking spaces between the City and the County Park, the number of people typically occupying Seascape as well as the other condominiums. At Front Beach, the Mayor concluded that a person there had approximately two (2) linear feet of space; such density is the reason people are parking away from Front Beach.

Councilmember Bergwerf recalled a discussion at the Planning Commission several years ago that, if the City were successful in getting visitors to park in the parking lots/deck and out of the neighborhoods, the City would need to provide some type of transportation to disburse the people.

Administrator Tucker asked that, if any Councilmembers or members of the Planning Commission see errors, additions, deletions or other changes the need to be made to the GIS mappings, they contact her to get the change made. Having correct data when the City moves forward to SCDOT for permitting and supplying the data that will support the City in court should there be a challenge to whatever action the City decides to take.

Mr. Rieff proceeded to Task 3: the field data gathered on which properties have encroachments in the rights-of-way, what these encroachments are, and how many are there. He stated that the properties highlighted in white are properties identified as having an obstruction in the right-of-way. Stantec has an inventory of these properties' addresses, pictures of the obstructions and a classification of how obtrusive these obstructions are.

Concentrating on the two (2) index roads closest to the beach, more than six hundred (600) properties have obstructions. Stantec personnel determined how those obstructions impact the overall counts on the green and blue lines and found that the obstructions reduce the number of available parking spaces on the island by sixty percent (60%).

Mayor Cronin posed the question to the group as to what the City was going to do about the obstructions.

Mr. Scott recalled a Planning Commission meeting attended by SCDOT where SCDOT said that they would help the City with the right-of-way obstructions.

Mr. Rieff reported that Stantec had met with SCDOT early on the issue of obstructions; they indicated that they would not come to the island to remove the obstructions without the City's consent and support. SCDOT indicated that, if the City were to entertain the thought of removing right-of-way obstructions, they would support that action.

Mayor Cronin stated that the City would have to have the resources available to remove these obstructions and fight whatever battles come about, which could be property by property.

Councilmember Ferencz asked if a building permit included landscaping, and the Mayor said that a permit does not include landscaping. A few of the obstructions were permitted by SCDOT, but the majority was done by the property owner without a permit only to prevent parking in front of the residence. The Mayor added that the rights-of-way belong to SCDOT; therefore, the City has no jurisdiction over them.

Administrator Tucker explained that, at the permitting level, when the City becomes aware of a property owner having plans to do something in the right-of-way, the Building Department informs the property owner that nothing can be put into the SCDOT right-of-way without an encroachment permit issued by SCDOT. In some cases of new construction, the City has provided the property owner with the necessary forms to apply for an SCDOT encroachment permit. The Administrator opined that many obstructions are the evolution of existing properties and some of the obstructions have been deliberately placed in the right-of-way to prevent people from parking. When the City sees something happening, it tries to stop them from the standpoint that they are in the SCDOT right-of-way and that they need to obtain an SCDOT encroachment permit to continue. If a property owner gets a permit and goes beyond the scope of that permit, he is issued a deficiency notice, in which SCDOT is saying that the permit was issued, but more was done than the permit allowed. Once a deficiency notice is issued and nothing else happens and the property continues as out of compliance.

The Mayor added that SCDOT would authorize the City to enforce encroachment control in their rights-of-way.

Councilmember Carroll repeated that a primary consideration should be public safety; he stated that fire trucks cannot get down some streets because of the tourists parking on the edge of the road.

Mayor Cronin commented that the City cannot rely on SCDOT; however, SCDOT must approve anything the City wants to do.

Councilmember Carroll voiced his understanding that the City would need about a million dollars (\$1,000,000) per year if it was to take over the roads and have control to do whatever the City wants to do; however, the Beach Front Management Act stated that, if the City does not have public access, it will not qualify for state funds for erosion and renourishment.

Going back to Task 1, Mr. Day reported that Stantec had looked at a variety of ways to manage parking on the island and concluded that the permit would be the best way to accomplish that. He added that, in his understanding of the Beach Management Plan, the City must have access at specified distances and provide parking for that access; in his calculations, the City needs

one hundred eleven (111) spaces to meet the public access to the Beach Management Plan. In addition, the City has parking at the County Park that must contain one hundred fifty (150) spaces, but the actual number of spaces is higher. In Mr. Day's interpretation of the law, the City needs one hundred eleven (111) spaces at beach accesses plus one hundred fifty (150) at the Park to meet the Beach Management Plan; therefore, the City greatly exceeds those requirements.

In addition, Mr. Day interprets the law to say that the City must make parking available, but it is silent about whether one must pay or not.

Another major consideration is safety; the island can only safely park some number of vehicles; that number has yet to be determined. In his opinion, the City should look at a permit program that is analogous to that. Mr. Day noted that residents will like the idea, but it will be met with resistance from visitors.

From discussions with City Attorney Halversen, Mr. Day stated that, in a permit program, everyone must be treated fairly and residents cannot receive preferential treatment because these are public rights-of-way.

In framing out the permit program, Mr. Day stated that the City would not need the permit program twelve (12) months a year; it would be needed in the peak beach season. He suggested that the permit program be in effect from May 15<sup>th</sup> to September 15<sup>th</sup>; at all other times, parking would be free. Selecting a timeframe for the permit program would make the program easier for the residents.

Councilmember Bergwerf commented that she remembers that there was a discussion that the permit program would also be in effect for a specific period of time each day; Mr. Day recalled that the suggestion had been to enforce the permit program from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Day stated to the group that he was seeking agreement or alternatives to Stantec's recommendations for the permit program being proposed.

Councilmember Loftus expressed the opinion that the only people on the beach at 6:00 a.m. would be surfers and members of the Turtle Team; therefore, he thought the passes should be enforced between 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., the peak beach hours.

Mr. Day noted that a decision on the times of day did not have to be made at this meeting, but Council should be thinking about it to make a decision soon.

If Stantec was going to study the traffic, Mr. Scott suggested that they include the key times that people are coming to and leaving the beach.

Mr. Day explained that the City could change the specifics to the parking plan after Year 1 if the City found that something was not working as intended or it could add something.

Mr. Day also explained that Stantec personnel were going to be on the island during peak times to collect data to determine the size of the permit program. He said that the permit program is

intended to reduce the number of people coming to the island and direct them to parking in specified areas; on-street parking would be by permit only in designated areas.

Councilmember Loftus asked whether every car that parks on the island, resident or visitor, needs to be four feet (4 ft.) from the pavement; he expressed the opinion that this would be problematic for some residents. Based on the four foot (4 ft.) rule, enforcement will be based on anyone parking less than four feet (4 ft.) off the pavement.

Councilmember Bettelli asked where party guests were to park on Hartnett without being in violation because Hartnett does not have the width to support the four-foot (4 ft.) rule. Mr. Day answered that parking could be in a driveway or on the lawn.

Mayor Cronin stated that such a problem was why this meeting was taking place. For instance, if it is in a red or orange area, it will be marked NO PARKING, and the citizens who are accustomed to parking there and who live there would be told there is no on-street parking there. As streets are marked NO PARKING, visitors park further from the beach where parking was allowed.

Councilmember Loftus thought the solution was limiting the number of permits.

Mr. Day added that the City will sell permits for on-street parking and, when they are gone, they are gone, limiting the amount of parking. Stantec was recommending that the City sell three (3) types of permits:

- A seasonal permit for the designated space of time, i.e. May 15 to September 15;
- A weekly permit for someone visiting for a week from another state; and
- A daily permit to allow people to come to the island for one (1) day to park.

Mr. Day cautioned that the City must be careful in the number of each permit to be sold to make sure that the correct number of people is parked on the island. He noted that the first year will be a learning year; the numbers for each permit category might need to be tweaked for the second year. He also reminded the group that everyone who buys a permit is not going to be on the island at the same time.

Councilmember Buckhannon asked that, if the number of permits was sold out and someone came across the Connector to go to the beach, what will keep them from parking. Enforcement was the key in Mr. Day's opinion.

Councilmember Buckhannon then asked whether the permit program would be processed through passport parking or something electronically to sell the permits.

Options available for purchasing the permits are to go to the Public Safety Building, or on line. Mr. Day explained that one would log-on to the IOP website/parking, select the method of payment, such as PayPal, and purchase the permit which can be printed out. From a staffing point of view, Mr. Day recommended doing as much on line as possible and limiting the hours when someone could buy a permit face-to-face.

The person buying a daily permit would have an app – someone could go to their mobile device, pay for the permit purchase on-line or that person could be told that permits for the day have sold out and to try again the next day. The idea is that, if the parking lots are full and the permits have sold out, the visitors do not even come to the island that day.

Councilmember Buckhannon voiced the opinion that no permits should be sold face-to-face; all transactions should take place electronically.

On the issue of credentialing, multiple options are available, for instance a hang-tag or a sticker for the car. Mr. Day stated that Stantec recommends credentialing via the permit holder's license plate; this would make enforcement much simpler. If using license plates, the Police Department could use license plate recognition software to verify whether a vehicle was permitted as required. Stantec has found that a hang-tag or vehicle sticker increases the cost of enforcement.

Mr. Day said that he needed to know if this was a process that the City thought was realistic, and then the City would see presentations by various vendors who could support the program.

Councilmember Ward stated that he would be in favor of hiring a private vendor to handle the entire process, including enforcement. Mayor Cronin indicated that the City should look at both ways of operating the permit program.

Councilmember Ferencz said that, with this permit program and apps and on-line payment, she questions how residents were going to react to the program. Day-visitors who have been coming to the island for years and parking as they pleased would now be faced with an entirely new process. In her opinion, the City was going to have to do a lot of educating the public.

Councilmember Loftus opined that, once the permit program is in place, people will begin to car-pool to the island for a day at the beach, and that would certainly help parking issues.

Ms. Ballow stated that she did not understand that the City would find it more difficult to monitor and enforce parking if signs indicating RESIDENT PARKING ONLY were posted on residential streets.

Mayor Cronin responded that this came back to the issue that the rights-of-way are public and everyone must be treated equally.

Ms. Ballow added that she believed behavior would improve with visitors paying to park.

Councilmember Carroll asked what other beach communities have a parking permit program; Mr. Day said that he had talked with several other beach communities. The Councilmember then posed the hypothetical question of, if the City had fifteen hundred (1,500) parking spaces and sold two thousand (2,000) permits, what percentage of the permit holders will come to the beach on a day-in/day-out basis? He voiced concern that Mount Pleasant now has seventy-two thousand (72,000) residents and is growing rapidly; these residents know the IOP is the best beach in the area and is the easiest to access. How are those facts going to impact the permit program?

According to Mr. Day, two (2) factors to be decided upon are the number of permits to sell in each category and the price of those permits.

Beginning with Memorial Day weekend, Stantec representatives will be on the island collecting data on travel, traffic and parking to learn how a holiday weekend impacts the island.

Councilmember Loftus asked whether Stantec was going to include golf carts in their analysis. Mayor Cronin stated that, according to state law, golf carts are treated the same as vehicles; therefore, anything with wheels parked in the SCDOT right-of-way is a vehicle.

The Mayor stated that the parking permits would be tied to a specific license plate, making them non-transferable.

Mr. Rieff indicated that, in its data gathering, Stantec wanted the justification of how many people could be allowed on the island in terms core emergency services and overall safety; Stantec will quantify the safety issues over the coming Memorial Day weekend. On one (1) of the peak holiday weekends this summer, Stantec will quantify the amount of on-street parking and traffic backups on Palm Boulevard and the IOP Connector and equate those factors to find the elusive number of how many visitors the Police Chief and Fire Chief say they can adequately serve safely. Stantec will also have the historical traffic counts for the past couple of years. This data will be collected using aerial photographs of the island taken once, maybe twice, every hour; from these photographs, Stantec staff will see where people are parking, see the turnover of on-street parking and quantify the backups on Palm Boulevard and the Connector.

Mr. Scott noted that a parking permit program would not manage the traffic, but only serve to limit the parking. With the aid of the color-coded maps of the streets showing the widths of rights-of-way, the City can decide where people can and cannot park. Recalling past discussions in the Planning Commission, Mr. Scott stated that the island has fifty-six (56) beach accesses; the Commission proposed taking sections at each beach access and allowing "X" amount of parking at each, pushing parking to those access points.

Mr. Scott expressed the opinion that, once visitors are charged for parking on the street, they will migrate into the City parking lot or the County Park.

Mr. Day said that Councilmembers should be prepared from push-back from residents and from day-visitors, he added that it is highly likely that the City will be challenged legally. If challenged, the important factors would be that the program was defensible, logically thought out and justifiable.

In Stantec's view, the step following the data gathering would be to compile the data and meet with the Chiefs to decide what the number of permits should be, and then anticipate the program implementation for the beach season of 2015. Mr. Day stated that a "tremendous education campaign must happen" beginning at the first of the year for the program to begin as scheduled.



At Councilmember Loftus' suggestion, another roundtable was scheduled for 5:30 p.m., Thursday, August 21, 2014 at which Stantec would share the data collected, as well as general ideas, the number of permits and cost estimates for implementation. Administrator Tucker noted that money was budgeted for implementation in the FY15 budget.

Councilmember Loftus asked how much time the City's staff would have to invest to have the program operational in 2015; he remarked that, if the sale of permits begins in January, the City would have additional revenue to offset the costs.

Referring to the discussion of having an app and buying permits on-line, Councilmember Ward asked how older residents who were not computer literate would purchase parking permits; he added that he was uncomfortable with visitors having to check-in with City Hall or the Police Department when on vacation.

Mayor Cronin asked Councilmember Ward if he wanted a kiosk with an attendant set up for visitors or residents could purchase the parking permits.

Responding to Councilmember Ward's comments, Mr. Day reminded the group that visitors could park in a metered space on Front Beach, in the municipal lot or at the County Park, but he stated that the City would accommodate those who needed to purchase permits face-to-face rather than on-line. He added that this would be a cost factor involved in doing so.

Councilmember Carroll asked Mr. Day whether, as a traffic engineer who has had access to all meetings and open forums the City has held, he thought this was the direction in which the City should be headed.

Mr. Day responded that, if this Council was serious about getting "a handle" on parking, the parking permit program was the "way to go," but he cautioned that it would not happen without "bumps in the road" before the program operates smoothly in a couple or three (3) years.

Councilmember Loftus reported that this is the Number One problem on the island and the Number One thing that residents want to improve.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland  
City Clerk