

PUBLIC HEARING

6:45 p.m., Tuesday, July 26, 2011

The Isle of Palms City Council held a Public Hearing at 6:45 p.m. on Tuesday, July 26, 2011 in Council Chambers of City Hall, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the hearing were Councilmember Bergwerf, Bettelli, Buckhannon, Duffy, Loftus, Piening, Stone and Thomas, Mayor Cronin, City Administrator Tucker, City Attorney Halversen, Director Kerr, Assistant Dziuban and City Clerk Copeland. A quorum was present to conduct business.

1. Mayor Cronin called the meeting to order and acknowledged that the press and public had been duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

2. Ordinance 2011-08 – An Ordinance Amending Title 5, Planning and Development, Chapter 4, Zoning, Article 1, General Provisions, Section 5-4-15, Beach Regulations, of the City of Isle of Palms Code of Ordinances to Provide for Designated Parking on Beach Accesses.

After reading the title of the ordinance into the record, Mayor Cronin stated that this ordinance and a companion ordinance were on the City Council agenda for Second Reading, but he intended to move to defer action on these ordinances to give Councilmembers time to digest the input received from residents at this Public Hearing. In addition, he asked that citizens limit their comments to two (2) minutes.

The Mayor then asked Building and Planning Director Kerr to review the components to the ordinance for the Public Hearing.

By way of background, Director Kerr related that this ordinance was a by-product of a joint workshop between the Planning Commission and City Council in May, 2011 to discuss island-wide parking issues. As a result of the workshop, the City staff was charged with investigating one (1) section of the concepts discussed, i.e. establishing new, small parking lots at existing beach access rights-of-way. To accomplish that task, two (2) sections of the City Code would need to be amended; this Public Hearing is on the one (1) ordinance that falls under the Zoning section of the Code.

The Director explained that the current Zoning Code prohibits driving on beach accesses except in special situations, i.e. public safety access to the beach, access approved by City Council. This amendment would give City Council the authority to establish public parking at designated parking areas within the beach accesses. In addition, this amendment provides for a second (2nd) action to be taken by City Council to designate the specific access(es) to be opened to public parking.

John Ferrell, 702 Ocean Boulevard, read from a prepared statement, a copy of which is attached to the historical record of the meeting.

Beth Ferrell, 810 Ocean Boulevard, stated that she was “strongly opposed” to the proposed parking nodes; she stated that the island has a long history of putting residents first, but this action will only serve to make the island “a haven for more day-trippers.” Ms. Ferrell said that the quality of the island and the quality of life of residents should not be sacrificed for day-trippers. She commented that day-trippers should park in designated areas. In her opinion, the parking nodes would only move the problem from Carolina to Ocean Boulevard, which is no

solution to the parking problems. The existence of the parking nodes would generate more traffic, more trash and environmental problems; Ms. Ferrell said that “these access pads” cannot be installed in the beach access without encroaching on the “fragile dune area.” Additionally, Ms. Ferrell did not think the plan was fiscally responsible; she opined that the cost of construction and upkeep would not be offset by revenues. She also remarked that the presence of the parking nodes would adversely impact the property values of Ocean Boulevard – again reducing revenues to the City through property taxes.

Melinda Mitchell, 702 Ocean, commented that the island has two (2) types of day-trippers who come to the island; they are the good day-tripper who do not cause problems and the bad day-tripper who do not know or ignore the rules and regulations thereby causing a lot of problems. Ms. Mitchell suggested that “bad” day-trippers should be forced to park in the Commercial District only, and day-tripper parking in the residential areas should be by annual parking pass only. In acquiring an annual pass, the day-tripper would sign an agreement to follow the island’s rules and regulations; if the island’s rules are violated by an annual pass holder, the City could revoke the pass forcing the day-tripper to park in the commercial lots. In addition, Ms. Mitchell suggested zoned permit parking capping the number of day-trippers allowed to park in a specific area.

Will Millman, 408 Ocean Boulevard, noted that he has been a resident of the island for twenty-five (25) years. He reported that he had spoken to the Ways and Means Committee on June 21 to express his opposition to any paid visitor parking on Ocean Boulevard. He re-stated the fact that Ocean Boulevard is zoned SR-1, single-family residential, not commercial; he expressed his understanding that Council would be meeting to change that zoning. He commented that day-visitors should be parking in the County parking lot and “not on any residential street.” He concluded by saying that “we have elected you [Councilmembers] to maintain our quality of life and our property values, not to destroy them.”

Jim Radley, 3801 Hartnett, identified himself as a member of the Carolina Surf Club and stated that he and his wife had been day-trippers for two and a half (2½) years before moving to the island. One (1) benefit they saw to the Isle of Palms was the accessibility of the beaches. A solution he has seen work at Dewey Beach, Delaware is the annual parking pass; anyone could purchase a parking pass for use from Memorial Day to Labor Day. He stated his understanding that the parking nodes would be one hundred twenty (120) feet “in” from Ocean Boulevard; having taken measurements using Google maps, Mr. Radley found that the closest house on Ocean Boulevard was only seventy (70) feet from the street, but most houses are one hundred to one hundred five (100-105) feet from the road – his point being that the parking nodes would extend beyond the houses. Another point of interest was that Ocean Boulevard ranges from two hundred ninety to three hundred sixty (290-360) feet from the ocean; therefore, a one hundred twenty (120) foot parking node consumes a lot of that space. In Mr. Radley’s opinion, another manner of dealing with day-trippers is through parking kiosks, for example, at the end of 9th Avenue with one (1) parking space where visitors could park while they get a parking pass. He suggested that the number of day-trippers would diminish when they are required to pay-to-park at a dollar (\$1.00) an hour. As a surfer, he asked that pay-to-park begin at 10 a.m. because surfers are out early in the day and off the beaches by 10 a.m.

Lucas Whitney, 403 Ocean, reported that he deals with lots of parking issues due primarily to a vacant lot to one (1) side where day-trippers leave trash, relieve themselves, etc. Despite this, he expressed opposition to the parking nodes primarily because of the destruction of the sand dunes which create a natural buffer in storm surges.

Wayne Jones chose not to speak, but say he was opposed to the nodes.

Wayne Barfield, 500 Ocean Boulevard, commented that “the Isle of Palms is not only known nationally but internationally as one (1) of the most beautiful island communities anywhere,” because many people have worked to preserve the character of the island. He stated that, “If we start down the path of inserting commercial into, what is currently, a residential area, I think we do start down the path of destroying part of what has made Isle of Palms Isle of Palms.” He strongly encouraged the City Council not to follow that path.

Mary Ann Luttrell, 316 Charleston Boulevard, stated that she also owns the property at 5th and Carolina indicating a long-term investment in the island. She noted that she had e-mailed Councilmembers and thanked those who had responded to her comments. She stated that her first (1st) reaction to the proposed parking nodes was “feeling . . . heartsick at the notion of putting a parking lot at the beginning of what I think is one (1) of the most beautiful beach paths on the island;” she described the parking nodes as an “unenlightened approach to solving the [parking] problem.” She agreed with a previous speaker that the nodes would only serve to shift the parking problem from one (1) area to another. In her opinion, the City would be de-valuing its natural value found in the marshes and marsh and beach views. Ms. Luttrell requested that the City put together workshops with citizens, similar to those for the Front Beach revitalization, to draw the creativity of the citizens to solve the parking problems on the island.

Micheal Cervous, 415 Ocean, stated that he has resided on the island since the 1960s and is directly affected by the parking issues. He expressed deep concern and strong opposition.

Willy McRae, owner of a lot on 6th Avenue, described a public safety hazard in the parking nodes as parents are weighed down with beach preparations, and the small child darts away toward the beach to be hit by a departing vehicle that cannot see him/her.

Peter Zervos, 5th and Ocean, stated that he and his family have been associated with the island since 1953. He expressed concern over who Councilmembers were representing – residents or people who do not live on the island. He stated that the City does not owe anything to day-trippers who come to island and damage it.

Eddie Brown, 901 Carolina, also had printed comments that are attached to the historical record of the meeting.

Susan Burns, 3603 Palm Boulevard, noted that she has been a resident of the island for twenty-eight (28) years. She stated that property values are good in the area of the island where she resides and that, whatever is decided to be done for the Ocean Boulevard area, should be fair to all of the island.

3. Conclusion/Adjourn

Mayor Cronin closed the Public Hearing at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk