

## **PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**

2:00 p.m., Monday, March 6, 2017

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 2:00 p.m., Monday, March 6, 2017 in the City Hall Conference Room, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilmembers Bergwerf and Carroll, Chair Bettelli, Administrator Tucker, Fire Chief Graham, Police Chief Buckhannon, Assistant Administrator Fragoso and City Clerk Copeland; a quorum was present to conduct business.

1. Chair Bettelli called the meeting to order and acknowledged that the press and public were duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

### **2. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes**

**MOTION:** Councilmember Carroll moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of February 6, 2017 as submitted; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

### **3. Citizens' Comments**

#### **Presentation on Meducare Air and AirMedCare Network – Wes McAden**

Initially, Mr. McAden distributed an information packet to the Committee similar to the data included in the meeting packet. He stated that he represents Meducare Air who is the helicopter ambulance service for the Charleston area and the preferred provider for MUSC and the Children's Hospital. More specifically, he said that he represented the AirMedCare Network of Meducare Air, which is a member-based program that eliminates the financial burden for families and households when someone under that roof must be air-lifted due to a medical emergency; he reported that the average flight costs the patient's family tens of thousands of dollars. According to Mr. McAden, most insurance companies either do not cover the cost of the service or cover only a small portion of it.

As a member-based program, the AirMedCare network is very simple, i.e. when someone is flown, AirMedCare first files with the patient's health insurance and, whatever the insurance company pays is accepted as final payment for the service. If someone has no insurance or has no coverage for the service, the patient has no out-of-pocket expense for the service. As long as someone is a member, he/she has unlimited flight coverage; since the memberships are per household, everyone who lives under the roof is covered. The company currently has two hundred sixty (260) air bases across thirty-two (32) states; membership is inclusive with all of them, and they have both rotary and fixed-wing aircraft.

Mr. McAden stated that he was presenting the Committee with two (2) options available as a municipality. One (1) is a business plan that would cover the employees of the City; the second is referred to as a municipal site plan, which is a limited version of the membership program that protects the residents, property owners and long-term renters of the island. Four (4) local municipalities are participants in the municipal site plan, McClellanville, Kiawah, Seabrook and Edisto, and they are presenting to other municipalities to expand the service. It is a limited version of the program in that one must be an insured resident, property owner or long-term renter in the community; for those who are uninsured at the time of pickup, the company bills the MediCare allowable rate for transport. Another limitation is that the flight would must originate in Charleston

County. As a resident of the community, a person has the option to upgrade, meaning the individual household can upgrade to full member status for a small fee that would eliminate the insurance and flight limitations. Typically, when a local government enrolls in the municipal site plan, AirMedCare sends out a notification to every household, letting them know what the City has done on their behalf.

Chair Bettelli commented that the Committee was always interested in the cost of the service.

Mr. McAden stated that the fee would be twelve dollars and a half (\$12.50) per eligible household; for Kiawah, it is approximately eighty-one hundred dollars (\$8,100) annually; for Seabrook, it is approximately ninety-two hundred dollars (\$9,200) and a quote for Sullivan's Island is seventy-six hundred dollars (\$7,600) per year. For an individual household to become a member costs sixty-five dollars (\$65) per year.

Responding to Councilmember Carroll, Mr. McAden said that they are called upon primarily for instances of loss of life or limb or permanent disability; he noted that the helicopter is outfitted as a mobile intensive care unit.

Considering the number of visitors to the island in season, Mr. McAden stated that they will fly someone whether he is a member or not, and the AirMedCare would file against the person's health insurance and accept that payment as payment in full.

The Administrator recalled that, in the most recent discussions with Charleston County, the City asked about the quick response vehicle (QRV) that had been on the island; staff was told that the call volume on the island did not warrant stationing one (1) here full time. The Chair of County Council suggested that the City might need to consider more helicopter rides. The Administrator explained that the QRV had been most useful in season due to the volume of traffic on and off the island and the fact that IOP personnel can only do medical treatment up to a point, for instance they are not qualified to administer pain medications when needed.

Battalion Chief Smith reported that Charleston County is trying to distribute its QRVs evenly throughout the county.

Chair Bettelli asked that Mr. McAden develop a proposal for the City and to provide an agreement to study the terms and conditions.

Mr. McAden stated that the other beach communities had requested a tourist plan, which has been developed and puts the municipality in a fee collecting position; in addition, he stated that, if the City chose to participate in the municipal site plan, the City employees can be covered at thirty-five dollars (\$35) each.

#### **4. Old Business**

##### **A. Update on efforts to remove encroachments in rights-of-way**

Chief Buckhannon reported that fifty-eight (58) letters have been sent to residents and that some have indicated that they are going to try to get an encroachment permit from SCDOT; the letters noticed a time frame for action on the part of the resident.

**B. Update on golf cart parking at Front Beach**

Chief Buckhannon reported that the City has not heard back from SCDOT for the encroachment permit request to put a curb cut onto the grassy area across from the Windjammer, which is DOT right-of-way.

Administrator Tucker informed the Committee that the encroachment permit for the beach parking signs has been approved.

**C. Consideration of a contract award to Munnerlyn Pyrotechnics for 2017 Fireworks Show**

Chief Graham recalled that the Committee asked in its January meeting that Mr. Munnerlyn generate proposals for them to consider; he has submitted two (2) proposals, i.e. one (1) would be for a repeat of the 2016 display at twenty-five thousand one hundred dollars (\$25,100) and a second for an alternate show at thirty thousand one hundred dollars (\$30,100). Both programs would be choreographed to music and would last twenty to twenty-three minutes (20-30 min.).

Councilmember Carroll reiterated that, last year, the City was presented with a contract renewable for three (3) years at the same price; therefore, he did not understand what was to discuss.

Chief Graham stated that the City got more than it paid for in 2016 and that renewing the original contract would mean a slightly shorter show.

**MOTION: Chair Bettelli moved to accept the Munnerlyn Pyrotechnics July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks proposal for \$25,100; Councilmember Carroll seconded.**

Councilmember Carroll asked the Chief if she knew the number of shells by size that made up last year's show; she thought she had the numbers, but not at this meeting.

**VOTE: The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**D. Update on progress on overgrown lots**

Chief Buckhannon reported that notices were sent to the two (2) property owners of the lots on Wills Way; the owner at #17 has indicated that he will clear his lot. The letter sent to the owner of #18 was returned; a new address was found and the letter was sent again.

**E. Status of solar speed signs for 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue**

Stating that the poles have just been received, Chief Buckhannon anticipates the signs being installed and functional by the end of the week.

Administrator Tucker thought it important for everyone to know that the City must go through the process of getting permission from the SCDOT in order to do these things; the process is more complicated than being assigned the task, buying the signs and installing them.

**F. Consideration of schematic drawing from Liollo for public restrooms**

This item was put on the Agenda in error.

**5. New Business**

**A. Discussion of the concept of a senior check-in service**

The Administrator recalled a request from a citizen to look at the service the City currently provides, i.e. contacting a list of residents prior to a storm event to offer whatever assistance they might need to prepare, to consider being more assertive toward the people on the list by calling them every day to ensure they are alright.

Chair Bettelli agreed that it might be a good thing, but it raised many questions like to whom would the task be assigned? Who is going to track the data from the calls and the personnel hours the calls would demand?

Chief Graham asked what action would be taken if someone simply was not at home when the call was made. In her opinion, the only way it would work would be made in some automated fashion and, due to the amount of time involved, she thought that the calls could be made maybe once a week. If only once a week, the call would show the recipient that someone is concerned about his/her wellbeing, making them more likely to call when they need assistance. The list is referred to as "priority assistance" and has about fifty (50) people on it. The Chief also stated that an organization, Ever Bridge, might offer this kind of service.

Chief Graham said she would try to think of a way to make a check-in service work for the island.

**B. Discussion of parking kiosks at Breach Inlet**

Administrator Tucker stated that a member of Council had suggested kiosks at Breach Inlet as a new source of revenue. She added that the area at Breach is not one (1) where people are encouraged to swim or wade although the space is well-used; the restaurant uses it for overflow parking in the evenings as well. The property also is under SCDOT jurisdiction; therefore, the City would have to get an encroachment permit. And to do so, the issue has to be a matter of controlling parking for safety reasons, not revenue.

Councilmember Carroll voiced the opinion that Breach Inlet is among the most dangerous areas for swimming; therefore, he was opposed to the City collecting money from people who park there and, possibly, go swimming.

Councilmember Bergwerf commented that, by charging people to park there, they might be dissuaded from parking there. She said she was inclined to ask for further research before making a decision.

Speculating, the Administrator stated that, if the City felt it needed that lot to be better regulated for safety reasons, like preventing people from parking on the sidewalk, etc., SCDOT would have no problem with the City installing a kiosk there. She based her theory on the fact that SCDOT owned Ocean Boulevard when the parking meters were installed there.

Chief Buckhannon remarked that, if the City's goal was more orderly parking there, SCDOT should put up NO PARKING ON THIS SIDE signs.

### **C. Report on internal audit of the Police Department**

As detailed in the auditing agreement, Administrator Tucker stated that, every audit period, the auditors are to randomly select one (1) department for audit; for this year, the Police Department was chosen. The auditors tested several areas and had no findings; one (1) test conducted was to test bank deposits against the data provided by the kiosks, and they found discrepancies of several hundred dollars on several bank deposits from the kiosks collections. Councilmembers will receive written reports from the auditors along with the City's response to their suggestions. Doing the forensics into the discrepancies, several possibilities were considered, including the following:

- An error by an employee;
- Changes made to a deposit between the collection and delivery to the bank by armored vehicle;
- A problem at the bank by the person receiving the money or the person who actually deposits the money; and/or
- A problem with the actual kiosks.

The process of handling money from the kiosks begins with the removal of the money and the tape showing what has been collected from the kiosk, the money is then taken to an area in the Public Safety Building where the deposits are prepared, the money is then picked up by the armored car service and transported to the bank. Since the City's current protocol involves two (2) employees from the point when the kiosk is accessed to the point when the deposit bags are made and placed in a locked bag, staff finds it very unlikely that money would have been taken from the time between the removal on the money from the kiosk to its being transported. Staff has concluded that the problem is at a different level and is beginning its own investigation to determine that. One (1) suggestion from the Police Department has been to add a camera to the existing system in the room where the money is taken in the Public Safety Building, adding one (1) more level of protection. Staff continues to pursue answers; they believe that the two (2) possibilities are that the machines are not counting correctly and/or a problem at the bank. Both the armored car service and the bank have been notified of the problem, allowing them to do their own forensics.

## **6. Highlights of Departmental Reports**

### Fire Department – Battalion Chief Smith

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, personnel responded to a report of storage tanks that washed up on the beach; the Coast Guard was contacted, and they supplied the name of the owner. After contacting him,

the tanks were safely removed. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, personnel responded to a report of a gas leak at a residence on Palm Boulevard; they were told that the smell was emanating from underneath the house; upon investigation, they located a broken low pressure gas pipe that was leaking. Personnel secured the flow of gas and used the gas meter to insure that the air was within safe levels; they also told the owner to contact the gas company to make the necessary repairs. Personnel responded to a total of forty-seven (47) calls, including twenty-three (23) EMS calls. A total of seven (7) pre-incident surveys were done along with thirteen (13) fire inspections. The Knox box at the IOP Marina were brought on-line; a Knox box provides a non-destructive emergency access to commercial or residential properties. On February 21, Fire Department personnel met with the project manager at the Palms Hotel about fire related issues. In February personnel received an average of sixty-four point seven hours (64.7 hrs.) of training; all officers received training on "Reasonable Suspicion of Alcohol for Supervisors," and all engineers received training on Intersection Safety. All employees successfully completed the class from the South Carolina Fire Academy on Auto Extrication. Listed under vehicle maintenance were several annual fees for which the Department has contracted. Two (2) employees continue to be out of work due to work-related accidents.

Councilmember Carroll asked whether all businesses could have Knox boxes, and Chief Smith answered in the affirmative. Chief Graham added that the Police Department would need Fire Department personnel to unlock the box.

#### Police Department – Chief Buckhannon

Chief Buckhannon reported that, on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, officers responded to a collision on Front Beach; the description of the other vehicle involved was given to Mount Pleasant Police who located the vehicle and its driver at Town Center. The driver told the Mount Pleasant officer that he intended to settle up with the other driver at a later date. On February 1<sup>st</sup>, Officers Hardy and Couche participated in the Keenagers Luncheon; on February 4<sup>th</sup>, Animal Control Officer Enourato, BSO Hyleman and Communications Specialist Stewart participated in Doggie Day at the Rec where they issued eighty-four (84) dog licenses. On February 27<sup>th</sup>, the Department hosted a Meet and Greet at the Public Safety Building for residents between the Connector and Breach Inlet; approximately thirty-five (35) residents attended. The Chief also announced that the City was chosen as one (1) of the safest cities in South Carolina. Over the month, dispatchers received four thousand fifty-five (4,055) calls, and three thousand three hundred thirty-five (3,335) were for the Police Department. Two hundred thirteen (213) traffic stops were made in the month, and officers issued thirty-seven (37) tickets. Officers wrote a total of two hundred thirty-seven (237) reports in the month and made fifteen (15) arrests. The Animal Control Officer wrote eight (8) citations in the month. From the Livability Report, the Chief stated that four (4) noise reports were made in the month, but no citations were issued; residents reported five (5) coyote sightings. At this time, the Department is down only one (1) officer.

Councilmember Carroll noted that coyotes had been a source a lively conversation at the annual Wild Dunes Community Association meeting, but the number of sightings reported is low.

#### **7. Miscellaneous Business**

Next Meeting Date: 2:00 p.m., Monday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Conference Room

8. **Executive Session** – not needed

9. **Adjournment**

**MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:20 p.m.;**  
**Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland  
City Clerk