

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
5:00 p.m., Thursday, January 7, 2010

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 7, 2010 in the Training Room of the Public Safety Building, 30 J.C. Long Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Committee members Bergwerf, Bettelli and Loftus, City Administrator Tucker, Fire Chief Graham, Police Chief Buckhannon and City Clerk Copeland.

1. As senior member of the Committee, Councilmember Bettelli 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. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Councilmember Bergwerf nominated Councilmember Bettelli to serve as Chair; Councilmember Loftus seconded and there were no additional nominations. Councilmember Bettelli was unanimously elected Chair of the Public Safety Committee.

Councilmember Bergwerf nominated Councilmember Loftus to serve as Vice-Chair; Chair Bettelli seconded and there were no additional nominations. Councilmember Loftus was unanimously elected Vice-Chair of the Public Safety Committee.

3. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of November 15, 2009 as submitted; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. **Citizens' Comments** – None

5. Old Business

A. Update on Public Safety Building

Referring to emails she had sent to City Council, Administrator Tucker noted that there had been moisture problems in the Public Safety Building during the recent heavy rains; the ventilation issues in parts of the building still remain. She noted that many of the subcontractors have been on site in the past couple of weeks to inspect the problems that have occurred; there are also photographic records of these occurrences. Arrangements have been made for a meeting on January 20 with Dave Johnson of Cole+Russell, Chief Graham, Chief Buckhannon and the Administrator to review the problems; later on the same day, these parties will meet with the contractor and the subcontractors about the issues that remain to be resolved.

B. Update on Civil Engineering for 41st Avenue & Palm Boulevard Intersection

The Administrator reported that the engineering and design contract has been signed with Thomas and Hutton and the Notice to Proceed has been issued. The goal is to have the project completed before the peak season.

C. Consideration of Crosswalk at 45th/46th Avenue and Palm Boulevard

Councilmember Loftus noted that he had asked to have this item included on the agenda because Wild Dunes has completely reconfigured its entrance to include a bike path that feeds into Palm Boulevard, creating a natural flow of foot and bike traffic from there. Since the City has recently approved the request for a crosswalk at 43rd Avenue and Palm Boulevard, he thought it would be reasonable to include a request for a crosswalk at 45th Avenue, which could provide additional safety for residents and visitors to Wild Dunes. Administrator Tucker commented that the new sidewalk in Wild Dunes is actually at 46th Avenue; therefore, Councilmember Loftus revised his request for the crosswalk to be added at 46th Avenue and Palm Boulevard.

Chair Bettelli asked if the Administrator would ask SC DOT to look at the feasibility of adding a crosswalk there. Councilmember Loftus asked how a request for a crosswalk at 46th Avenue and Palm would differ from the request for 43rd Avenue and Palm; Chair Bettelli responded that the City does not currently have any crosswalks in that area of the island.

Administrator Tucker clarified the process of acquiring a crosswalk as one where a Committee and City Council make a recommendation about a situation; she then forwards the request to DOT. The SC DOT engineers then make a visit to the location and respond to the City's request with an approval, a disapproval with the reasoning behind it or a suggested alternative, also accompanied by their reasoning. The City's request for a crosswalk at 43rd Avenue and Palm Boulevard has been submitted to DOT for their evaluation; assuming that Council agrees with the request for 46th Avenue, Administrator Tucker would request that it be added to SCDOT's list for evaluation.

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to recommend the installation of a crosswalk at 46th Avenue and Palm Boulevard; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

D. Discussion of Possible Amendments to Recently Amended Animal Control Ordinance

Administrator Tucker reported that she had received communication from an island resident following Council's approval of extending the times that dogs would be allowed on the beach off-leash; in the email, the resident suggested that the City consider dividing the beach into two (2) areas, i.e. one that would allow dogs off-leash and one that would require that dogs remain on a leash at all times. The Administrator interpreted the resident's intention to one where "people should have an option of a section of the beach where they did not have to worry about times when dogs might be running free . . . because of occasions when dogs sometime run up on people and frighten them." Administrator Tucker related that she had assured the resident that she would bring her concerns before the Committee for their consideration.

Councilmember Bergwerf stated that this was not a valid option; as a dog owner, it would mean that she would have to take her dog in the car to an area of the beach where he could run free. This would take something away from dog owners that they have always had available.

Councilmember Loftus asked Chief Buckhannon if there had been reports of aggressive dogs on the beach; Chief Buckhannon stated that there had not been any reports since the amendment had passed, and he did not remember any in recent history. There have been occasional reports of aggressive behavior at the Dog Park at the Recreation Center.

Chair Bettelli suggested that enforcement would be more difficult if the beach were divided. Chief Buckhannon voiced his opinion that to divide the beach would make it more confusing for residents and visitors, which would, in turn, make enforcement more problematic, and there would definitely be a need for more signage on the beach.

Chair Bettelli indicated that it was the consensus of the Committee to take no action on this issue.

Councilmember Loftus reminded the Committee that it would be appropriate to continue the discussion on increasing the fees being charged for dog licenses. Chair Bettelli agreed and expressed that he liked the system that Sullivan's Island employs; they use a colored collar with a tag, and residents and visitors must have their dogs licensed. The Chair stated the opinion that, should the City not require visitors to license their dogs, there would be a considerable increase to the number of dogs on the beach due to Sullivan's Island visitors wanting to avoid the license fees. From his recent research, the cost of the colored collar and tag are about ninety cents (\$.90) each when purchased in quantities of five hundred or one thousand (500 or 1,000).

Chief Buckhannon expressed the belief that the City would see greater compliance from its own residents since officers could identify licensed dogs immediately by the collars.

More discussion followed during which it was agreed that the City would charge residents ten dollars (\$10.00) for the collar and tag while visitors would be charged twenty-five dollars (\$25.00). It was also decided that residents would include full-time residents, long-term renters and property owners.

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to amend the animal control ordinance to implement a collar and tag system, to require that residents and visitors/non-residents license their dogs and to increase the fees for dog licenses to \$10 for residents, long-term renters and property owners and to \$25 for visitors/non-residents; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

E. Discussion of Livability Issues Related to Rental Agencies

Councilmember Loftus referred to discussion at the November 2009 meeting of residents who have been asked to call rental companies rather than the Police Department to report livability issues; he asked Chief Buckhannon what actions the Department had taken in response to that discussion.

Chief Buckhannon reported that Livability Sergeant Meekins had visited the rental agencies to remind them that the Police Department is the first line for citizen contact and to conduct their

business so as to encourage people to call the Police Department should they have a livability issue.

The livability discussion progressed to the subject of refrigerator magnets with the phone number for the Livability Hotline. Chair Bettelli re-stated that the primary cost to the City is in mailing the magnets to residents, not the actual cost of the magnets.

Chief Buckhannon showed the Committee the magnet that is distributed by Sullivan's Island that is approximately 4"x7" and includes not only important phone numbers but also information that is generally important to residents and visitors. If the City were to select a magnet like this one, the minimum order would need to be five thousand (5,000) pieces at a cost between twenty-eight and twenty-nine hundred dollars (\$2,800-2,900).

The Committee agreed that this was too large and contained too much information; they were interested in a magnet the size of a business card similar to the one seen on the City's website. Chief Buckhannon was insistent that the magnet have the numbers of the Livability Hotline and the Police Department as well as 911 and the City's website address. The Chief was asked to obtain a cost for such a magnet to include on the Ways and Means agenda for January.

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to recommend to Ways and Means the purchase of refrigerator magnets, approximately 3"x5", advertising the number of the Livability Hotline to be distributed to all structures on the island; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Councilman Loftus asked if there has been an update on the road and bridge closures for the replacement of the Ben Sawyer Bridge; Administrator Tucker stated that there has been no updated information.

6. New Business

A. Update from Chief Buckhannon regarding Camera Surveillance

Chief Buckhannon reported that the construction of the Public Safety Building had cut the link between the City Hall and the Front Beach camera surveillance system; he has received a quote from Technology Solutions in the amount of thirty-one hundred fifty dollars and five cents (\$3,150.05) for new wireless access between the Public Safety Building and the surveillance cameras. In response to Councilmember Loftus' query, Administrator Tucker stated that the expense could be paid from the Public Safety Building Contingency Fund.

MOTION: Chair Bettelli moved to recommend to Ways and Means the award of a contract to Technology Solutions in an amount not to exceed \$3,200 to be paid from the Public Safety Building Contingency Fund for wireless access between the Public Safety Building and the Front Beach surveillance camera system; Councilmember Loftus seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

B. Consideration of Increasing Parking Fees at Front Beach Parking Meters

Included in meeting packets was a memorandum from Lieutenant Wright suggesting an increase in the hourly parking rate on Front Beach from seventy-five cents to one dollar (\$.75-\$1.00) per hour. Chief Buckhannon noted that, according to the memo, the parking rates have not changed in more than six (6) years, but that costs associated with the parking meters have increased. The cost of the upgrade to the equipment and new signage was quoted at thirteen hundred fifty dollars (\$1,350), but the revenue increase to the City should be in excess of forty-two thousand dollars (\$42,000). The Lieutenant noted that, if this increase were to be approved in February, it could be implemented for the re-opening of the kiosks in March 2010.

MOTION: Councilmember Bergwerf moved to recommend to Ways and Means an increase in parking meter rates from \$.75 to \$1.00 per hour and to fund the signage and upgrade costs from Municipal Accommodations Fees; Councilmember Loftus seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

C. Discussion of State Laws Relative to Cyclists

Councilmember Loftus recounted that, during the fall campaign, he heard complaints from residents about cyclists not following the laws of the road, specifically not stopping at STOP signs; the residents also expressed a feeling that police officers were lax in enforcement. The Councilmember asked Chief Buckhannon if he saw the cyclists as a problem.

Chief Buckhannon distributed the state laws applicable to cyclists to the Committee. He stated that, like motorists, there are some cyclists who disregard the laws, but he expressed the opinion that Isle of Palms officers have been relatively vigilant in enforcing bicycle safety laws. The Chief stated that, in order to catch a cyclist running through a STOP sign, an officer would, in all likelihood, have to be sitting at the STOP sign waiting for someone to break the law, and that action has, in the past, brought many complaints from residents.

Chief Buckhannon assured the Committee that he would encourage his officers to be more vigilant with the bicyclists and STOP sign violations, and he assured the Committee that he targeted areas about which residents complained.

E. Award of Contracts in Excess of \$10,000

1. Award of Contract to Nafeco, Inc. in the amount of \$11,085.00 for one (1) thermal imaging camera as budgeted for the Fire Department

Chief Graham indicated that this equipment would be like the thermal imaging camera purchased in the prior fiscal year; with this acquisition, the Department would have two (2) new, lightweight cameras and one (1) older type. The Chief indicated that the goal was for the Department to have four (4) of the new cameras

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to award a contract to Nafeco, Inc. in the amount of \$11,085.00 for one (1) thermal imaging camera; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

2. **Award of Contract to Love Chevrolet, Columbia, South Carolina in the amount of \$19,474.00 (State Contract Pricing) for one (1) Chevrolet Impala police sedan, as budgeted, to be funded from Municipal Accommodations Fees**
3. **Award of Contract to Love Chevrolet, Columbia, South Carolina in the amount of \$38,180.00 (State Contract Pricing) for two (2) Chevrolet Impala police sedans, as budgeted; the first to be funded through State Accommodations Taxes and the second to be funded from the Victim Advocate's Fund**

Chief Buckhannon commented that the three (3) vehicles were provided for in the FY 10 budget and would be replacement vehicles, not additions to the City's fleet of vehicles.

There was some discussion about the value of keeping one (1) vehicle to use as a permanent decoy. Chief Buckhannon indicated that, when a decoy is set in place, the vehicle used is a spare, for instance, a vehicle not being used because an officer is in training.

On the subject of the method of selling the vehicles, Administrator Tucker explained that the City has sold City property using methods other than auctions; she stated that the measure of the value of the alternate methods is the amount of staff time and energy spent dealing with the sale versus sending the item to the auction. She recalled only one (1) instance when the City was very successful in selling a piece of Public Works equipment other than at the auction.

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to award the contract to Love Chevrolet, Columbia, South Carolina, in the amounts of \$19,474.00 and \$38,180.00, respectively, to purchase three (3) Chevrolet Impala police sedans with one (1) vehicle being funded from Municipal Accommodations Fees, one (1) from State Accommodations Taxes and one (1) from the Victim Advocate's Fund; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

D. Consideration of ATAX Request for Anti-Exposure Suits for the Fire Department

Chief Graham expressed her desire to approach the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee about purchasing more anti-exposure gear; she had a full set of the gear for the Committee to see. She stated that the Department is receiving more calls for water rescues throughout the year, not just in the warm months; these suits are to protect the rescue personnel, either on a jet ski or a boat, from the elements. The Chief stated that the justification for pursuing ATAX funding was that ninety-one percent (91%) of the water rescue calls are from non-residents.

Councilmember Loftus asked if the Chief could get a more competitive price if she sought pricing from multiple vendors; she stated that the Florida vendor being considered had provided other gear for the Department that had proven to be very sturdy and was the supplier for the Coast Guard. Chief Graham also reported that buying gear like the gear the Department is accustomed to using is a safety factor for the Fire Department personnel. She added that the Florida vendor has extended the IOP Fire Department government pricing.

Chief Graham agreed to pursue competitive pricing from other vendors, but asked that she be given approval to go forward with the Accommodations Tax application.

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to approve the ATAX application from the Fire Department for anti-exposure suits in an amount not to exceed \$7,000; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. Highlights of Department Reports

Fire Department, Chief Graham

In November 2009, the Department responded to forty-six (46) calls, twenty-two (22) of which were EMS calls. Career personnel received thirty hours (30 hrs) of training during the month. There were no outstanding vehicle maintenance expenses for the month. Chief Graham reported that she had attended the Digital Radio User Group meeting to review Motorola's proposal for the county-wide radio system upgrade; at that meeting, the statement was made that the City of Isle of Palms would need a tower to adequately compensate for the interference that Public Safety personnel are experiencing.

In December 2009, the Department responded to thirty (30) calls, thirteen (13) of which were EMS calls. The Department conducted nine (9) inspections where twelve (12) violations were found. Career personnel received thirty-one hours (31 hrs) of training during the month. The Chief reported that the repairs to Rescue 5 were completed in December after being in the repair shop for six (6) months; the repairs totaled thirteen hundred eight dollars (\$1,308).

Related to the digital radios, Chief Graham reported that Motorola, Charleston County personnel and other agencies have been studying ways to resolve the interference issues with the radios; it has been determined that the only way to overcome the interference being experienced by IOP Public Safety personnel is to install a tower on the island. She distributed copies of the City Code on communication towers and the recent amendment passed by Folly Beach as they have experienced the same issues. The City's existing ordinance allows for a one hundred foot (100 ft) tower; the tower that Motorola is recommending for the City would be two hundred fifty feet (250 ft) tall. For comparison, the water tower is one hundred thirty-five feet (130 ft) tall, and the communications tower at 41st Avenue is one hundred thirty-two feet (132 ft) tall.

Responding to Councilmember Loftus' question about a location for the tower, Chief Graham stated that Motorola had studied the island and determined that the best location for addressing the interference issues would be in the same vicinity as the water tower in the City's parking lot.

The overall plan from Motorola calls for nine (9) additional towers to be installed in the County, two (2) of which will be erected across the bridge; there will also be an upgrade to the site at Six Mile. Chief Graham repeated Motorola's report that the only way to fix the IOP's problems is the installation of a tower.

Councilmember Loftus asked what the problems would be in the event of a hurricane; the Chief indicated that she had been told the tower would withstand wind speeds up to one hundred

twenty miles per hour (120 mph), but added that the tower was designed to self-collapse and would need a footprint of seventy-five feet by seventy-five feet (75 ft x 75 ft).

Chief Graham explained that, for the City to move forward with the tower, City Council would have to pass an amendment to the existing code to allow for the two hundred twenty-five foot (225 ft) height. She noted that Folly Beach had already passed their amendment because the need for a tower there was identified last summer; since Folly Beach has a tower, they have to raise the tower to the two hundred fifty foot (250 ft) height required by Motorola.

The Chief did state that the expense for the tower would be borne by Charleston County, and Charleston County has set a goal of having many of these towers in place before tourist season begins. Charleston County plans to phase the program, and Folly Beach, Mount Pleasant and the Isle of Palms are included in Phase 1.

Administrator Tucker said that there was the potential for the tower to generate revenue for the City; should the Isle of Palms Water and Sewer take down the water tower, the City would be in the position to be in control of the co-location of other communication equipment on the tower.

Chair Bettelli emphasized that, to ensure the safety of the public, the need for the City's public safety personnel to have clear, concise communications was crucial.

Councilmember Loftus asked whether Chief Graham was recommending the site in the City's parking lot or whether she was continuing to study the other options. The Chief responded that Motorola was the expert with engineers who perform the simulations to determine the optimum location; therefore, she supported Motorola's recommendation.

The consensus of the Committee was for the City Administrator to proceed with the necessary changes to the City's ordinance to allow for a tower to meet the City's public safety needs.

Police Department, Chief Buckhannon

Chief Buckhannon reported that there were several scams going on in the area and related information on several cases that were worked in November. During the month of November 2009, the Telecommunications Office received and dispatched four thousand eleven (4,011) calls, and there were thirteen (13) arrests during the month. There were ten (10) noise complaints in November; eight (8) of the calls were for barking dogs with four (4) of those complaints involving island residents.

For December 2009, the Telecommunications Office received and dispatched thirty-two hundred seventy-seven (3,277) calls; there were twenty-nine (29) arrests during the month with thirteen (13) involving underage alcohol. There were five (5) noise complaints, and four (4) involved island residents. Chief Buckhannon reported that all police officers must qualify with firearms once a year, and all of Isle of Palms' officers successfully qualified.

8. Miscellaneous Business

Next Meeting Date: 5:30 p.m., Monday, February 8, 2010.

9. Adjourn

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 p.m.; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk