

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
5:30 p.m., Tuesday, February 8, 2011

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 8, 2011 in the Training Room of the Public Safety Building, 30 J.C. Long Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilmembers Bergwerf and Loftus, Chair Bettelli, City Administrator Tucker, Fire Chief Graham, Police Chief Buckhannon, Assistant to the Administrator Dziuban 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 had been duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

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

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of January 11, 2011 as submitted; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. **Citizens' Comments – None**

4. **Old Business**

A. **Update on Public Safety Building**

Chief Graham reported that a plumber and electrician have been found that will be the first contact if, and when, problems occur for the life of the building.

B. **Consideration of Amendment to the City's Alarm Ordinance**

Assistant to the Administrator Dziuban stated that the Committee had been presented with the staff's recommendations for changes to the alarm ordinance related to false alarms and failure to respond to notification of an alarm. The Assistant noted that the City policies referenced in Section 7-4-4(g) and 7-4-5(f) had been stricken from the ordinance since the Police Department policies have changed. The fines have been increased from fifty dollars (\$50) to one hundred dollars (\$100.00) for the fourth, fifth and sixth false alarms and from one hundred dollars (\$100.00) to two hundred dollars (\$200.00) for the seventh and subsequent false alarms. At the end of the ordinance are exemptions to the false alarm penalties and the penalties for failure to respond of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) for the first violation and two hundred dollars (\$200.00) for each subsequent violation. In addition, Assistant Dziuban indicated that both chiefs have reviewed and approved the changes, but the amendment has not been through legal review.

Chair Bettelli suggested that there should be a window of time, possibly thirty (30) minutes, for the property owner/manager to respond to the notification of a false alarm; Councilmember Loftus commented that he did not want the ordinance to be punitive for the property owner/manager who cannot logistically arrive on the scene in thirty (30) minutes. Chief Graham stated that the Department was asking for a commitment by phone that the property owner/manager was en route.

Another question from Councilmember Loftus was how the property owners/managers would be notified of the ordinance changes. Chief Graham responded that the City could incur a one-time charge to mail the notification to them or the changes could be noticed with the renewals that are sent out each December. Chief Buckhannon commented that the notice could also be posted on the website, in the newsletter or the press, as well as notifying the various alarm companies that service residences on the island; the Chief stated that the island has approximately four hundred fifty (450) alarms.

Responding to Councilmember Loftus' question about the number of times any residence had a fourth, fifth or sixth false alarm in 2010, Chief Buckhannon stated that the instances are rare, but they do occur – probably fewer than ten (10) instances per year.

Chief Graham related that two (2) ladders and two (2) pumpers with a total of nine (9) personnel respond to every alarm; therefore, the Chief stated that her goal with this amendment was to get a confirmation from the property owner/manager within thirty (30) minutes that he/she would be on-scene in an hour.

Administrator Tucker noted that the amendment would give the City a tool to have a penalty to use at the discretion of the Fire Department; the amendment intends to address the issue of the property owner/manager being notified and refusing to respond.

MOTION: Chair Bettelli moved to forward the recommendations for an amendment to the City's alarm ordinance to the City Attorney for review; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded.

The Administrator commented that she would inform the City Attorney of Councilmember Loftus' concerns and that the City Attorney may have alternate language to address them.

VOTE: The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

C. Consideration of Amendment to the City's Short-term Rental Business License Application

Chair Bettelli informed the members of the Committee that no action was required from the Committee for the recommended changes to be incorporated into the application.

Assistant Dziuban explained that a requirement for working smoke detectors in all sleeping areas, areas used as sleeping quarters and all areas of egress would be incorporated into the rental application from this point forward.

Councilmember Loftus asked whether the application forms were completed filled out when returned to the City; in his opinion, the City should not accept any applications that were incomplete. The Councilmember also suggested that line A.8. should indicate a cell phone number since just about everyone has a cell phone that they carry with them constantly; Councilmember Bergwerf suggested that the application have a space for two (2) numbers, one (1) of which would specify cell number. Assistant Dziuban assured the Committee that their recommendations would be heeded.

5. New Business

A. Consideration of an Amendment to the Zoning Ordinances to Allow for a 200 foot Communications Tower

Administrator Tucker stated that this amendment was the result of the Special Meeting of City Council where Charleston County staff members and representatives of Motorola and Crown Castle made a presentation explaining the options available to the City regarding a communications tower. At the January City Council meeting, staff was charged with proceeding with an amendment to the City's zoning ordinances to allow for a two hundred (200) foot tower for public safety purposes. City Attorney Halversen used several sources in crafting the amendment including ordinances from Folly Beach and York County, as well as the Crown Castle consultants and Building and Planning Director Kerr.

Included in the amendment is the limitation of a tower/antenna constructed by governmental entity for the purposes of public safety not to exceed a height of two hundred (200) feet. Other conditions included in the amendment are as follows:

- The communications tower/antenna shall meet the approval conditions defined earlier in the ordinance;
- Reasonable efforts shall be made to reduce the fall zone;
- The tower/antenna shall have the capacity to accommodate a minimum of four (4) commercial carriers; and
- The tower/antenna shall meet the wind speed standards.

The Administrator noted that Crown Castle, the tower owner, has assured the City that the type of tower that will be erected would telescope down, rather than fall over, should it ever be compromised. The tower would accommodate, at a minimum, the four (4) commercial carriers who have space on the tower at 41st Avenue currently.

Should the Committee approve the amendment in its current form, it can go forward to City Council at the February meeting for First Reading; from there the amendment would go to the Planning Commission for their review and recommendation and back to City Council for a public hearing and Second Reading.

Chair Bettelli pointed out that that tower will be under that two hundred (200) foot limit that requires it to be lighted.

MOTION: Chair Bettelli moved to recommend to City Council approval of the amendment to the City's zoning code to allow for communications tower for the purposes of public safety not to exceed 200 hundred feet in height; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded.

Councilmember Loftus suggested that the City Administrator offer space on the City's tower at 41st Avenue to the commercial carriers presently on the water tower; Administrator Tucker said she would look into that possibility.

VOTE: The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

B. Discussion of 3rd Avenue Right-of-Way Parking

Chair Bettelli reported receiving an email from an island resident about the sight limitations at Third Avenue; Councilmember Loftus added that the way people park creates blind spots. Chair Bettelli asked for Chief Buckhannon to study the problem and to come back to the Committee with a recommendation.

Councilmember Bergwerf stated that a similar problem exists as one leaves the beach at the intersection of 9th Avenue and Carolina Boulevard; she reported that a large bush obstructs a driver's line of sight for vehicles approaching from the right.

Chief Buckhannon commented that he would look at both intersections and noted that the Department is currently involved in getting the rights-of-way cleared.

C. Review of FY12 Capital Budget and Long-range Plans for the Fire and Police Departments

By way of introduction, Administrator Tucker stated that the annual budget process begins with a look at capital budgets and the long-range plan; the Administrator explained that staff looks at the life expectancy of equipment to determine when it will need to be replaced as well as the refinements made the previous year, and, at times, staff will add a new item or an item that has been overlooked in prior years. Administrator Tucker commented that one (1) reason the City has survived the economic downturn as well as it has can be attributed to good long-range planning.

Police Department

Replace patrol cars (3 in FY12 – purchased in FY06) 69,000
Administrator Tucker that the City has developed a rotation cycle that works well in that vehicles are replaced before the maintenance costs become burdensome.

Councilmember Bergwerf asked how many vehicles were in the Police Department; Chief Buckhannon stated that there are twenty-one (21) patrol cars, one (1) truck for the beach services officers, one (1) truck for animal control, a bobcat and one (1) low-speed vehicle. The Councilmember commented that she was unaccustomed to officers taking their vehicles home because that adds mileage to them; she wanted to know whether consideration was given to eliminating that "perk." Chief Buckhannon responded that the majority of departments in the area have the same policy of allowing officers to take their vehicles home; the City has learned that the vehicles last longer and are kept in better condition when the officers can drive them home. The Chief noted that vehicles that make up a fleet are driven twenty-four (24) hours a day and do not last as long; additionally driving the vehicles to and from home is a benefit in lieu of higher pay.

Chair Bettelli remarked that, at one time, the City had limitations on the distance the vehicles could be driven to and from home, but had changed that policy to be more competitive with neighboring departments.

Replace VHS in-car camera systems with digital (4 in FY12) 13,600
This is the City's continuing effort to go to digital. Councilmember Loftus questioned that three (3) patrol cars were planned, but four (4) cameras; Chief Buckhannon stated that the cameras were not on the same rotation schedule as the vehicles.

Replace mobile data terminals (patrol laptops) (2/year) 4,500
Chief Buckhannon explained that these laptops are not like a laptop one would purchase for an office or home; they are constructed to endure the difficulties of being in a police vehicle, i.e. they hold up to being dropped from a few feet and having coffee spilled on them.

Chair Bettelli questioned that the price of the laptops had not been reduced as a result of the City's purchase of a software licensing agreement in this fiscal year; Chief Buckhannon explained that the agreement was for the Microsoft Office, not the basic operating system.

Replace body armor (4 or 5 sets per year) 3,120
Routine annual expenditure.

Replace staff computers (9 computers/4 yr. average life = approx. 2/year) 1,800
Administrator Tucker stated that a replacement schedule of all City computers is being generated for the Council meeting.

Replace computer servers (3 yr. replacement) w/backup system 6,500
Councilmember Bergwerf asked if the servers to be replaced were older than three (3) years. Chief Buckhannon stated that the servers being replaced are older than three (3) years and have an older operating system that is being phased out; the City's servers also operate twenty-four hours (24 hrs.) a day seven (7) days a week.

Replace existing digital camera for investigations 1,200
The Administrator commented that a camera was purchased for the Victim's Advocate, and the purchase for FY12 would be for investigations.

As a photographer, Councilmember Bergwerf asked what kind of camera they were considering; she thought they could find a less expensive camera that would meet their needs.

Councilmember Loftus questioned whether the two (2) departments, Investigations and Victims Advocate, could share the camera purchased last year. Chief Buckhannon said the biggest issue with sharing is the availability of the camera when it is needed; he said that the ideal situation would be for each of the two (2) investigators to have a camera in-hand upon arriving at a crime scene to take photographs before anything could be disturbed waiting for a camera to arrive.

Replace Animal Control Officer 4WD truck 24,000
Administrator Tucker directed the Committee's attention to the vehicle information sheet for the Police Department; this purchase would replace the 2006 Ford F150 with an excess of one hundred twenty-nine thousand (129,000) miles.

Radar unit replacement 5,000
The radar units are on a four (4) year rotation, but the units to be replaced were purchased in 1995 and 1997.

Facility Maintenance

Pressure wash exterior (50% of PSB) 1,000
Administrator Tucker noted that City buildings wear better when pressure washed annually.

Elevator Maintenance (1.5 of 2 elevators in PSB) 3,330
Routine annual expenditure.

Based on her calculations, Councilmember Bergwerf stated that the City spends in excess of eighty dollars (\$80.00) per week on elevator maintenance for the Public Safety Building, which she thought was exceedingly high. After discussions, Chief Graham said that she would contact the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation to get a list of the companies who are licensed on the elevators in the building. Chief Buckhannon noted that the current contract should expire in September; Administrator Tucker said that the City could go out to bid on the contract for elevator maintenance.

Generator maintenance (50% of PSB generator) 750
Routine annual expenditure.

HVAC maintenance (50% of annual contract) 1,500

Fire Department

Existing lease pmt. on '03 95 ft. ladder truck (10 yrs.) 82,113
Existing lease pmt. on 75 ft. ladder (cost-\$500K) (10 yrs.) 55,210
Existing lease pmt. on '09 E-1 pumper (10 yrs.) 40,383

Regular recurring:

Replace SCBA air packs and cylinders 27,020
Replace 10 sets of bunker gear 15,000
Replace fire hose and appliances 11,000

Replace Boston Whaler rescue boat (City has owned since 1989) 50,000
Chief Graham noted that the boat gets frequent use and, in the prior year, its use had to be cancelled due to problems with the boat; the existing boat was a recreational boat that was modified for use by the Fire Department. The replacement would be a like-replacement with a commercial hull that is constructed for fire rescue use.

Councilmember Loftus express his opinion that the Department could locate a boat by another manufacturer with the same specifications that would be less expensive, and the Chief agreed to do more research before the next meeting.

3 mobile radio repeaters (this will allow one (1) repeater per big truck)	36,000
Three (3) repeaters were included in the FY11 budget, but have not been purchased because the FCC is not yet releasing licenses; therefore, a portion of the funds indicated here is a roll-forward from the FY11 budget.	
8 mobile data terminals (computers in vehicles) needed for consolidated dispatch	18,000
Chief Graham stated that her understanding is that the in-vehicle computers will be a requirement once the City transitions to the Consolidated Dispatch Center; the general information on an emergency call will be given via telephone, but the details will be relayed via computers to the vehicles. The City Administrator added that the City hopes to get a grant to pay for the computers, but thought it prudent to have a placeholder in the budget in case the grant does not materialize. Chief Buckhannon stated that the City is scheduled to transition to the consolidated dispatch system in 2012 after the tourist seasons ends.	
Thermal imaging camera (City has 3 – goal is to have one (1) for each truck)	11,000
Safety harness system (10 individual sets – goal to outfit entire staff)	5,500
Chair Bettelli suggested moving this line item to Regular Recurring, but Chief Graham noted that, once each firefighter has a suit, the City will not be purchasing them annually.	
Replace staff computers (7 computers/4 yr. aver. Life = approx. 1.75/yr.)	1,800
Vent saw for cutting roofs (have 1, want 2 – 1 for each engine)	2,200
Chief Graham explained that this is a heavy-duty saw used for ventilation.	
Two (2) 4-Gas meters w/calibration (tests for dangerous gases)	3,400
The meters detect explosive gases; the City does not have any at this time.	

Facility Maintenance

Generator maintenance (50% of PSB generator)	750
Generator maintenance – Station 2	1,100
Contribution to SIFD training facility maintenance	1,000
This is a new item to the budget; the City uses the Sullivan’s Island facility for training.	
Elevator maintenance – Station 2	2,200
Elevator maintenance (50% of 1 elevator in PSB)	1,100
HVAC maintenance (50% of annual PSB contract)	2,500
HVAC maintenance – Station 2	2,000
Pressure wash exterior (Station 2 plus 50% of PSB)	1,800

D. Consideration of Award of Contracts in Excess of \$10,000 – None

6. Highlights of Department Reports

Fire Department

Chief Graham commented that the Department had responded to a fire on Ocean Boulevard on January 9; the smoke detectors in the house alerted the tenants to the danger. In the month of January, the Department responded to fifty-four (54) total calls; of that number twenty-six (26) were EMS calls. Personnel conducted fifty-eight (58) fire inspections and found ninety-seven (97) violations. Training in January included a demonstration by the Charleston County Rescue Squad about the web-based motor vehicle information system, which is software that provides information on alternative fuel vehicles and special features to responders in the field. On January 19th and 20th, representatives for the Insurance Services Office (ISO) were on the island for their Public Protection Classification evaluation; the City will receive the results in approximately three (3) months.

Police Department

Chief Buckhannon alerted the Committee to a common email scam, in which an acquaintance requests money via Western Union for an emergency, that appeared on the island in January; he noted that any money sent via Western Union is lost forever. Officers found two (2) businesses and three (3) homes with open or unsecured door in January. Dispatchers processed thirty-three hundred ninety-one (3,391) calls in January, and twenty-one hundred nineteen (2,119) were for the Police Department. Officers made one hundred ninety-eight (198) traffic stops and wrote eighty-five (85) tickets. Of the ninety-one (91) reports written, fourteen (14) arrests were made. A total of four hundred seventy-four (474) hours of training took place in January with ninety-one percent (91%) focused on the field training of the new officers. For January, two (2) noise violations were reported and one (1) citation was written; two (2) warnings were issued for fireworks violations.

7. Executive Session – Not necessary

8. Miscellaneous Business

Councilmember Loftus recounted that an ordinance received First Reading in January allowing 2x3 sandwich board signs; he asked Chief Buckhannon whether he saw any public safety implications related to it. Chief Buckhannon responded that he has not had any experience with sandwich board signs, but he did not think the signs would be a problem on wide sidewalks like on Front Beach.

Councilmember Bergwerf asked about the impact on the Police Department for enforcement since the ordinance states that the signs cannot be left out overnight; the Chief commented that enforcement of the ordinance would be under the Building Department. Administrator Tucker interjected that the Police Department would record the violation and report it to the Building Department for enforcement.

Jim Owens of 2805 Palm Boulevard remarked that he had arrived late and asked whether Citizens' Comments could be re-opened to allow him to ask question.

MOTION: Chair Bettelli moved to re-open Citizens' Comments; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Owens asked the Chiefs whether the City maintained a data base of emergency contact information on residents in the possibility that a resident, away from home for an extended time, might have the home burglarized or even experience a fire creating the need for the emergency information. Chief Buckhannon explained that the situation he was describing was the reason the City had initiated the Special Patrol Request (SPR) program whereby residents can notify the Police Department of an emergency contact when they plan to be away for any period of time. During the resident's absence, an officer will make additional patrols by the address and, if requested, get out of the patrol car to walk around the residence to ensure that all is as it should be.

Mr. Owens noted that a public forum is planned for Wednesday, February 23 about parking on the island; he expressed concern about emergency vehicles getting access to properties when vehicles are parked at meters along the streets. Mr. Owens then asked Chief Graham and Chief Buckhannon to express how emergency vehicles will handle the proposed parking plan.

Chair Bettelli explained to Mr. Owens that Citizens' Comments is not a question and answer period and suggested that Mr. Owens speak to the Chiefs after the meeting.

Next Meeting Date: 5:30 p.m., Wednesday, March 2, 2011.

9. Adjourn

MOTION: Councilmember Bergwerf moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 p.m.; Chair Bettelli seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted

Marie Copeland
City Clerk