

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
5:30 p.m., Wednesday, July 13, 2011

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 5:30 p.m., Wednesday, July 13, 2011 in Council Chambers of City Hall, 1207 Palm 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 June 7, 2011 as submitted; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Citizens' Comments – None

4. Old Business

A. Consideration of Revisions to Ordinance 2011-04

Chair Bettelli explained that preparations for the July 4th activities had kept staff occupied, and the Committee has indicated that the alarm ordinance is not an action that should be rushed.

B. Consideration of Title Changes in the Fire Department

Chief Graham provided all Fire Department job descriptions, existing and proposed organization charts and current and proposed salary ranges; copies are attached to the historical record of the meeting.

The Chief pointed out that no new positions are being created and no wage increases are being sought. The changes being proposed are title changes only, i.e. Captain to Battalion Chief and Lieutenant to Captain; the changes are being proposed to be consistent with other local governments in the area as the City prepares to become a part of the Charleston County Consolidated Dispatch system. Changes to other job descriptions in the department are to replace existing titles with the new titles – housekeeping issues. The only costs to the City will be the cost of badges and business cards.

MOTION: Councilmember Bergwerf moved to recommend approval of the title changes in the Fire Department to the Personnel Committee; Councilmember Loftus seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

C. Discussion of Consolidated Dispatch

Based on the decision of Folly Beach to pull out of the Consolidated Dispatch System, the Chair thought it prudent to look at the problems Folly Beach encountered and the status of the City's switchover.

According to Chief Buckhannon, groundbreaking for the new Consolidated Dispatch facility in North Charleston will take place at the end of July, 2011; with a construction time of eighteen to twenty-four (18-24) months, the earliest the City would move would be the summer of 2013. Of course, the Chief assured the Committee that the City of Isle of Palms would not make any change of this magnitude in the middle of the season; therefore, the move would occur in the fall of 2013.

The City continues to move forward with plans to join the Charleston County Consolidated Dispatch System, but both Chiefs are monitoring the program carefully. Chief Graham stated that the IOP Fire Department had been asked to join the system independently of the Police Department, but she had decided against dividing the island's public safety agencies. At this time, Isle of Palms, Sullivan's Island and Mount Pleasant plan to move as a group to the new system.

Chief Buckhannon indicated that, with two (2) years to observe and plan, he thought the City could avoid the type of issues that had been problematic to Folly Beach. For instance, the Chief plans to maintain some type of contact point on the island for non-emergency issues during business hours, for example, answering general questions from the public, issuing dog tags, providing information to visitors, responding to general concerns of the residents, etc. This was not the case at Folly Beach; every call went into the Consolidated Dispatch Center.

Councilmember Loftus asked if the Livability Hotline would stay on the island; Chief Buckhannon stated that calls during normal business hours would likely be answered on the island or rollover to the Dispatch Center after a certain number of rings.

Councilmember Loftus expressed a lack of complete confidence in Charleston County to provide for the needs of the residents; he opined that personnel at the Dispatch Center should be required to spend time on the island during their training to learn the island to ensure a smooth transition. He encouraged the Chiefs to be assertive and demand that certain steps be taken to protect the residents and visitors to the City.

In conclusion, Councilmember Loftus suggested that an update on the Consolidated Dispatch System appear on the Public Safety Committee's agenda on a quarterly basis.

5. New Business

Consideration of Award of Contracts in Excess of \$10,000

A. Award of Contract to Carolina composites LLC in the amount of \$39,798.00 for one Pioneer 197 Boat, motor and trailer to be funded equally by State and Municipal Accommodations Taxes as part of the FY12 budget.

Chief Graham reported that the state contract pricing, quoted when FY12 budget discussion began, expired in March 2011, and the new state contract pricing were dramatically different. The original price was held from 2006 into 2011; the new pricing includes increases from a five (5) year period of time and the price of a two hundred horsepower (200 hp) motor, rather than a one hundred fifty horsepower (150 hp) motor.

Chief Graham was able to negotiate credit for the larger motor and replacement with the one hundred fifty horsepower (150 hp) motor to get the price below forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) including taxes. If the purchase is approved, the turnaround time is two (2) months.

At the Chair's urging, Chief Graham related that she had contacted state surplus in an effort to find a suitable used boat, but the boats in their possession were in less-than-desirable condition. One (1) boat she expressed interest in had been sitting for two (2) years and turned out to be the same age as the boat the Fire Department is currently using.

In addition, the Chief stated that she had contacted a broker two or three (2-3) months ago and described the type of boat and uses of the boat she wanted; he has not called back.

Chair Bettelli asked Chief Graham to tell him what she thought the City's boat would bring at auction; she responded fifteen hundred dollars (\$1,500) to ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) to someone who had the resources to restore a Boston Whaler.

The Pioneer boat would come with a seven (7) year warranty, but Chief Graham indicated that she would be pushing for a lifetime warranty. She noted that this is not a commercial boat, but it is being offered for use as a commercial boat.

Councilmember Loftus voiced his opinion that Chief Graham should continue to look for a more reasonably priced boat; he suggested that she engage additional brokers, possibly some out of the Charleston area. He noted that, if the Pioneer boat were ordered today, it would not arrive before this tourist season ended.

As Chief Graham was beginning to relate her experience with looking at boats in local dealerships, Administrator Tucker reminded the Committee of the City's procurement code which states the following:

- For purchases from \$10,000 to \$25,000, written bids must be received, bidders must have a reasonable opportunity for competitive bidding, and a written contract executed.
- For purchases greater than \$25,000, sealed bids must be received, the City must issue a public invitation to bid and a written contract executed.
- The only exceptions to the bidding requirements are purchases (1) under state contract, (2) considered an emergency affecting the public welfare or (3) for professional, legal, medical or accounting services.

If the City were to entertain putting the boat out for bid, the City would need to compile the specifications for the bidders to meet. The Administrator assured Chief Graham that to buy from a broker would require a bid package.

Responding to Councilmember Bergwerf's question about how long it would take to prepare a bid, the Administrator stated that bid preparations typically took two to three (2-3) months. Chief Graham commented that she would need assistance in writing the specifications, because, although she knew what the Department needed, she did not have the knowledge to write boat specifications.

Administrator Tucker pointed out that the benefit of buying on state contract is that the vendor has already gone through the competitive procurement process at the state level to ensure the best price for the best product.

Chief Graham stated that, if the City were to purchase from a local business, she would need assurances that the warranty would not be voided by the Fire Department's use of the boat; if the City were to buy a used boat, it would have no warranty.

Chair Bettelli stated that Chief Graham had worked diligently to get the best boat for the least amount of money; originally the price had been fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000), and it is now under forty thousand dollars (\$40,000). He indicated that he had purchased used boats in the past, and the shelf-life has been short. In his experience, the Chair stated that state contract pricing has repeatedly been the best deal available.

Councilmember Bergwerf stated that she was disappointed to learn of the bid option so late into the process; she suggested that a bid package could have been developed months ago, and the City would know whether state pricing is the best deal.

Administrator Tucker explained that she would have discouraged developing a bid package before the budget was passed, because the budget could have been passed without the inclusion of the boat.

Chief Graham informed the Committee that, on two occasions this summer, other agencies had to be called to handle calls originally directed to the Isle of Palms.

Motion: Councilmember Bergwerf moved to recommend to the Ways and Means Committee approval of the contract to Carolina Composites LLC in the amount of \$39,798.00 for one Pioneer 197 boat, trailer and motor to be funded equally by State and Municipal Accommodations Taxes as part of the FY12 Capital Budget; Chair Bettelli seconded.

Councilmember Loftus repeated his comments that the City should explore every opportunity to reduce costs and seek bids.

VOTE: The motion PASSED on a vote of 2 to 1; Councilmember Loftus cast the dissenting vote.

B. Award of Contract to Safe Industries in the amount of \$26,322.40, state contract pricing, for air packs and accessories, as included in FY12 Budget.

Administrator Tucker reminded the Committee that Council must approve all purchases in excess of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000).

Councilmember Loftus asked how much money had been budgeted for this purchase; Chief Graham responded twenty-seven thousand twenty dollars (\$27,020). She reported that she had requested credit for trade-in of the City's existing equipment to reduce the price by twenty-one hundred dollars (\$2,100).

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to recommend to the Ways and Means Committee the approval of a contract to Safe Industries in the amount of \$26,322.40, state contract pricing, for air packs and accessories, as included in the FY12 Budget; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

6. Highlights of Departmental Reports

Fire Department – Chief Graham

Chief Graham reported, as activity highlights, extricating two (2) people from an elevator stuck between floors in a condominium on Palmetto Drive on June 2 and extinguishing a structure fire on Morgan Place Drive on June 6 that involved mutual aid from Sullivan's Island and Mount Pleasant. On June 28, a stranded boater with severe lacerations to his feet was located at Marker 90 and transferred to Charleston County EMS. The Fire Department responded to one hundred twenty-eight (128) total calls in the month of June, seventy-seven (77) of which were EMS calls. On the EMS Response Report, Chief Graham stated that the time spent transferring calls passed between two (2) dispatch centers is the explanation for some response time delays. Another reason for the longer response times is that Charleston County rates their calls based on degree of seriousness, i.e. a call for a stubbed toe ranks lower than a call for chest pains.

Chief Buckhannon explained that, in the near future, the City will be move into Charleston County's dispatch system software, which will link the City into their current calls as they are occurring. As IOP dispatchers react to calls on the island, the information will appear on their system just as dispatching EMS calls to the island will appear to the City's dispatchers; therefore, there should be no discrepancies in response times.

In Chief Graham's opinion, the fact that the Fire Inspector performed sixteen (16) inspections and found only one (1) violation is indicative of the follow-up procedures he has established to ensure violations are corrected.

Sixty (60) hydrant inspections were conducted during the month, and twenty (20) needed maintenance.

All career personnel completed water rescue training; all career and volunteer personnel completed the hazardous materials refresher training.

In the Communications Report, Chief Graham indicated that personnel are experiencing increased difficulties with the digital radio system, which are being recorded. Upgrades to the Charleston County digital radio system remain on schedule; Crown Castle has signed the lease agreement with Wild Dunes related to the 41st Avenue tower site; the Isle of Palms site is expected to go on-line by the end of the year assuming no natural or human-made disasters.

Police Department – Chief Buckhannon

Chief Buckhannon reported that a common Craigslist scam has reappeared; in this scam, a seller receives a check in excess of the asking price for merchandise and is asked to return the overpayment via wire transfer. A public service warning has been posted to the Police Department's website.

In the month of June, telecommunicators received a total of four thousand seven hundred seventy-eight (4,778) calls, an increase of five percent (5%) over June 2010. Of that total, three thousand six hundred sixty (3,660) calls were for the Police Department; year-to-date, the Police Department's call have increased sixteen percent (16%) over the same period in 2010.

For this period, two hundred forty (240) traffic stops were made that resulted in sixty-nine (69) citations being issued. Officers wrote one hundred ninety-six (196) reports; fifty-one (51) were non-criminal and eighteen (18) noise ordinance violations. Of the thirty-eight (38) arrests, fourteen (14) were for liquor law violations.

Due to the emphasis on weekend activities at Front Beach, overtime for June was at two hundred sixty and three quarter (260.75) hours.

Of the seventeen (17) noise ordinance complaints, officers wrote two (2) citations; the remaining fifteen (15) complaints were found to be unfounded or were issued warnings.

7. Executive Session – unnecessary

8. Miscellaneous Business

Chief Buckhannon stated that he had asked Captains Caldwell and Usry to attend the meeting to present to the City, via the Public Safety Committee, the Police Department's fourth national accreditation. The Chief noted that the re-accreditation is for a three-year (3 yr) process where four hundred sixty-four (464) standards are measured; some of the standards are mandatory and others are optional. Of the optional standards, the City must comply with eighty percent (80%); the IOP Police Department complies with eighty-eight to eighty-nine percent (88-89%). Of the two hundred seventy-six (276) state and local agencies in South Carolina, approximately thirty-five to thirty-eight (35-38) are nationally accredited.

Next Meeting Date: 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, August 2, 2011.

9. Adjourn

MOTION: Councilmember Bergwerf moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:40 p.m.; Chair Bettelli seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk