

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
5:30 p.m., Monday, January 7, 2008
Isle of Palms, South Carolina

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, January 7, 2008 in City Council Chambers, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Present were Mayor Sottile, Council members Bettelli and Buckhannon, as well as City Administrator Tucker, Fire Chief Graham, Police Chief Buckhannon, Assistant to the Administrator Dziuban and City Clerk Copeland.

1. Call to Order. Mayor Sottile called the meeting to order and stated that the press and the public had been duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

2. Election of Chair and Vice Chair.

MOTION: Councilman Buckhannon moved to elect Councilman Bettelli as Chairperson; Mayor Sottile seconded.

Mayor Sottile commented that this Committee has operated without a Vice Chair since its inception. Administrator Tucker reminded the Committee that the City's code does state that committees have both a chair and a vice chair, but ultimately the decision is left to the committee. There was general agreement between the members that the Public Safety Committee did not need a vice chairperson.

Call the Question: The vote was unanimous to elect Councilman Bettelli Chairperson for the Public Safety Committee.

3. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes:

MOTION: Mayor Sottile moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of November 12, 2007 as submitted; Councilman Buckhannon seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. Citizens' Comments

Councilman Michael Loftus distributed a diagram he had prepared and explained that he wanted the Committee to reconsider the intersection of 41st Avenue and Palm Boulevard. (A copy of the drawing is attached to the minutes.) He commented that, with the Villages coming on-line in the spring, traffic was going to be much heavier than in the past; therefore, backups will be longer and more time consuming than ever. He voiced his understanding of the November minutes that there was support for a roundabout at the intersection, but that a half million-dollar price tag and a two (2) to three (3) year completion time cry out for an interim solution. Councilman Loftus handout was a

diagram of a suggested alternative that could be accomplished at a nominal cost to the City and be ready for the upcoming tourist season. The alternative he proposed included the following:

- Move the intersection to the other side of Cameron and 41st;
- Two (2) options for Cameron Boulevard
 1. make it a right turn only street or
 2. close off Cameron entirely;
- Install lane delineators coming off Palm forcing drivers to the right turn;
- Install STOP signs at end of intersection of 41st and Palm stopping traffic coming off Palm to make a left turn.

Councilman Loftus stated his opinion that any of these options would greatly speed up traffic at the intersection and would give the residents on the north end of the island temporary relief at a minimal cost until the funding for a roundabout could be obtained. He, therefore, asked that the Public Safety Committee consider his suggestions and to fast track actions at the intersection of 41st Avenue and Palm Boulevard.

Mayor Sottile stated that the City has a file on this intersection that goes back several years that contains options presented by DOT; as he remembered, certain of Councilman Loftus' suggestions were included there. The Mayor asked that the City Administrator or Assistant Administrator locate that file and forward it to Chief Buckhannon to review and follow up with DOT since they must approve any changes.

Chairman Bettelli related that, as in the past, police officers would be posted at the intersection during the busiest times; Chief Buckhannon concurred.

5. Old Business:

A. Consolidated Dispatch – Update

Administrator Tucker stated that the Committee needs to recommend to City Council the adoption of the resolution, that was drafted by the City's attorney, authorizing the City to enter into the Consolidated Dispatch Agreement. She added that agreement had been reached to give the island communities a seat on the Consolidated Dispatch Committee.

MOTION: Mayor Sottile moved that the Public Safety Committee recommend to City Council the approval of the resolution to enter into the Inter-governmental agreement for Consolidated Dispatch; Councilman Buckhannon seconded.

Mayor Sottile remarked that he thought a three (3) year term on the dispatch committee was too long since it would mean six (6) years between representations by the individual

island communities. The Administrator noted that this was one of the issues she was going to discuss with Lori Lambert, the Charleston County contact on the project.

Assistant Dziuban recalled from her conversations with Lori Lambert that the Dispatch Committee wanted consistency with the "islands" seat until the consolidated dispatch project was on-line; therefore, whoever fills the seat initially will serve until 2012. The Mayor stated that he could agree to that, but, once the system is running, the term should be changed; he also stated that the Isle of Palms should hold the seat first. Administrator Tucker assured the Mayor that she would most definitely present his thoughts to Ms. Lambert.

Chief Buckhannon added that Isle of Palms is one (1) of six (6) PSAP (Public Safety Answering Points) in Charleston County.

Call for the Question: The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

B. Status of Public Safety Building

Chief Ann Graham gave this update; a copy of her remarks is attached. A subject that received considerable discussion was the placement of the telecommunicators in light of the consolidated dispatching project. The issue is whether to leave the dispatch in City Hall or to relocate to the new Public Safety Complex; Administrator Tucker related that she and Chief Buckhannon planned to provide City Council with a pros and cons evaluation of the two (2) options with a recommendation from them. Chief Buckhannon stated that the biggest concern with leaving the communications department in City Hall was the security of the facility because it could not be accessed by anyone other than law enforcement personnel because the NCIS and the 911 system must be totally secured. Another possibility that needed to be considered was that the consolidated dispatch system did not take off; in which case there would be the need to retrofit the new building if the telecommunications area were not relocated initially. Administrator Tucker confirmed that the existing plan for the Public Safety Building provides an area for communications.

**C. Continued Discussion of Citizens' Concerns:
Re: 25th Avenue and Waterway Boulevard**

The complaints that were now being received were the exact opposite of the original ones; the residents were protesting the placement of the barricade at the end of 25th Avenue because it obstructed their access to the water. Mayor Sottile recounted the previous complaints as ones where residents of Goat Island, it was assumed, were using the end of 25th as a water access and strange, or unknown, persons were walking through the residents' yards; there was also the problem of persons tying up to people's bulkheads. As a result of those issues, the Public Safety asked the Department of Transportation to

blockade the water access and place several NO PARKING signs along the street, which in Mayor Sottile's opinion, makes 25th Avenue a private street.

Chairman Bettelli commented that only small boats could be launched from the area, so possibly a portion of the barricade could be removed leaving enough access to easily launch these small boats.

All present were in agreement that, if the barricade were to be removed, the same problems that caused it to be installed will return.

Mayor Sottile asked Chief Buckhannon to work with DOT to alter the barricade to more resemble the red and white one at Breach Inlet. Options that the Committee believed to be viable were as follows:

- to move the existing barricade over and place another beside it leaving space between the two (2) for a person to walk or
- to install one (1) wider barricade that a person could walk around.

The Mayor felt that the NO PARKING signs would deter people from launching their boats. He also remarked that Frank O'Brien, who had initiated the complaints, would be expecting a response from the City; Administrator Tucker responded that she or Assistant Dziuban would take care of the communication.

Before proceeding to NEW BUSINESS, Mayor Sottile congratulated Chief Buckhannon for getting the speed limit reduced to 25 mph on Cameron Boulevard; the Chief commented that the primary reason the speed limit was reduced by DOT was the width of the road, not the speeds recorded on it.

Councilman Buckhannon noted that he perceived that there was still a major problem on 32nd Avenue that was being used as a cut through between Palm Boulevard and Waterway. He stated that he would like 32nd to be the subject of the next street study in an effort to get the speed limit reduced on it as well.

With the Ben Sawyer Bridge shutdown for the week, Mayor Sottile asked Chief Buckhannon to explain to the Committee how the Police Department would handle the increased traffic flow. Chief Buckhannon reported that there would be an extra officer working to monitor and to manipulate the traffic light at Palm and the Connector, in addition the two (2) detectives would be in uniform. The Mount Pleasant police would be monitoring the intersection on the opposite side of the Connector to expedite backups if they occurred. If backup east of the Cooper River should become significant, Chief Buckhannon could call upon the Charleston County Sheriff's office for support.

5. New Business:

A. Sea Oats Parking Issues

Administrator Tucker expressed her surprise that Laurie Schueler from Sea Oats was not present for the meeting. The Administrator explained that the residents of Sea Oats have believed that they had parking and right-of-way issues before the City constructed the emergency access path and that the emergency access had only exacerbated those problems.

Mayor Sottile asked if there was a parking plan for 42nd Avenue; Chief Buckhannon replied that there was no parking plan specifying that parking must be parallel or diagonal. Golf carts were required to follow the same restrictions as an automobile. Mayor Sottile noted that to allow only parallel parking at that beach access would certainly reduce the number of parking spaces that exist on the island.

One the resident's complaints was that beachgoers park diagonally and run into or damage their fence, that was in the right-of-way; parallel parking should eliminate vehicles from coming into contact with the fence. Chief Buckhannon expressed his understanding that the residents would like to see parallel parking since it would limit the number of vehicles in that area, as well as reduce the risk of damaging the fence.

Administrator Tucker asked if the placement of concrete parking stops parallel to the road and before one could reach the fence would help the situation. She stated that this would allow for parallel or diagonal parking. Chief Buckhannon responded that he thought this was a good idea, but also that it would lead to parallel parking because, with the angular parking, there is not enough room to back a vehicle into the roadway in a safe manner.

Having visited the area earlier in the day, Chairman Bettelli reported that, when vehicles park diagonally, they extend into the roadway.

Chief Buckhannon recalled that he and Chief Graham had measured the spaces for parking both parallel and diagonally and found that there could be nine (9) spaces for parallel parking and twenty (20) for diagonal. Chief Graham suggested configuring the spaces so that golf carts and small cars were designated for parking nearest the beach.

Chairman Bettelli reported that across from this parking area, the residents have pilings sunk into the ground that are in the right-of-way, and DOT has informed the City that it has the right to remove these obstructions in the rights-of-way. He added that he saw more and more residents planting palms and oleanders in the rights-of-way simply to prevent others from parking in their yards. He contended that the rights-of-way will disappear if something is not done.

Ending the discussion, Chairman Bettelli assigned Public Works Director Pitts the task of going to the area to measure for spaces, both parallel and diagonal. He will assist Director Pitts and together they will try to devise a satisfactory plan. He also asked that the Committee members try to arrive at appropriate verbiage for signs to discourage beachgoers from setting up their gear at the end of the emergency access paths.

B. Triathlon – Discussion of Last Year’s After Action Report

Administrator Tucker explained the staff’s concerns that had been expressed after the previous triathlon event; they were as follows:

- The event lasted much longer than had been anticipated;
- The event had many more people involved; and
- There were several “near misses” in the course of the event.

The affected department managers met with Paul King, the key contact for the Triathlon, to discuss the above-listed concerns. The Administrator expressed her feeling that this event could be dropped from the list of approved events for the Isle of Palms, and, if not dropped, then the event must be “seriously curtailed” and the City must be adequately compensated. She stated, matter of factly, that the Isle of Palms was the municipality that was most impacted by the event. In addition to these facts, there was the fact that there is not a clear trail as to where all of the money is going; Administrator Tucker commented that she had concerns about a for-profit business operating on the beach. She was seeking a response from the Committee should Mr. King approach the City about holding the event again in 2008.

Mayor Sottile expressed his opinion that the City’s next step should be to send a letter to Mr. King outlining the City’s requirements and adding that, if he was unable to meet all of them, that the City was not interested in participating again. At this point, Mr. King has not contacted anyone with the City about holding another event.

Chief Buckhannon reported that, after the meeting with Mr. King, Mr. King was to meet with Mount Pleasant about logistics and get back with the department heads for another meeting; Mr. King has not communicated back with any Isle of Palms’ department managers at this point. The Committee agreed that Mr. King needed to be informed that, if he could not provide the City with the plan for this year’s event within a week, the City would not be in a position to participate since there would not be time to prepare logistically.

On a different matter, Mayor Sottile related that he had spoken with a resident who had a problem having gotten a ticket for a security alarm that was not properly permitted - a permit the resident alleged he was not aware that he needed. Chief Buckhannon stated

that every entity that installs alarm systems on the island knows that the City has a permitting process, and the City relies on these entities to inform new installs of it; he also noted that the policy was posted on the City's website. The Chief reported that once a ticket is issued, the resident would receive a letter notifying them of the action to be taken to come into compliance; once the resident complied, the ticket is often dismissed.

7. Highlights of Department Reports – Fire and Police Departments

Administrator Tucker explained that, since the Public Safety Building is going to be on the agenda for the next several meetings, the Chiefs would not go through the individual reports but would answer questions from the Committee related to them.

Mayor Sottile reflected on the Accomplishments of 2007 that he used for his report at the swearing in ceremony that had many statistics relative to the increase in traffic stops, alcohol related offenses and livability citations. In his opinion, there was a big spike in alcohol related offenses, and he was interested in knowing if there was anything the City could do to reduce these numbers. Chief Buckhannon stated that these numbers did not concern him because he did not consider them to be crime issues, but a fact of beach life. He also pointed out the Isle of Palms was the largest beach in Charleston County. The Chief also stated his belief that one reason that Isle of Palms did not have more true crime was the constant visibility of the officers on the island.

8. Miscellaneous

Mayor Sottile encouraged all members of the Public Safety Committee to attend CALEA in Atlanta in March, 2008. Administrator Tucker reported that the staff was at work making the arrangements for attendance.

Next Meeting: 5:30 p.m., Monday, February 11, 2008.

MOTION: With no further business to come before the Committee, Mayor Sottile moved to adjourn at 6:45 p.m.; Councilman Buckhannon seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marty Bettelli, Chairman