

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
5:30 p.m., Monday, March 10, 2008

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 5:30 p.m., Monday, March 10, 2008 in Council Chambers of City Hall, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Chairman Bettelli, Mayor Sottile, Councilman Buckhannon, Chief Buckhannon, Chief Graham, City Administrator Tucker, Assistant to the Administrator Dziuban and City Clerk Copeland.

1. Call to Order and acknowledgement that the press and the public were duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

Chairman Bettelli announced that the Mayor had another commitment later in the evening.

MOTION: Councilman Bettelli moved to revise the AGENDA by discussing Item B under Old Business and Item A under New Business at the start of the meeting; Mayor Sottile seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. Old Business

B. Prioritization of FY 2008-2009 Capital Budgets for Fire and Police

Fire Department Prioritized Capital Budget

1	Construct Public Safety Building	\$7,551,605
1a	Portable radio repeater for Wild Dunes Village area	22,000
1b	Two thermal imaging cameras (1 for each station)	21,000
1c	Safety harness system (50 individual sets)	25,000
1c	*** compatible belts will be purchased w/current yr FD budget	(3,400)
1d	RAD-57 medical monitor for carbon monoxide and oxygen (new est)	4,000
1e	Replace SCBA air packs and cylinders	20,000
1f	Replace bunker gear (1 full set costs approx \$1300)	13,000
1g	Replace Fire Hose and appliances	10,000
2a	Replace 2 Yamaha jet skis purchased in 2005	18,000
2b	Two portable deck guns to be mounted on pumper trucks	8,000
2c	Replace cutters, spreader and hose for 1999 "jaws of life" equip	11,984
2d	Replace 1 LT laptop	2,000
2e	Two portable hydrants to be mounted on ladder trucks	3,000
2f	Four K-12 lightweight rescue saws	8,000
3	Replace 3 older 800 Mhz radios	16,500
4	1 stair chair to be located at Sta 2 (Sta 1 has one)	3,000
5	Training Video Library	5,000

Administrator Tucker presented the Fire Department Prioritized Capital Budget as stated above. The number one priority of the Fire Department mirrored the number one priority of the City – the construction of the Public Safety Building. The Administrator directed attention to the highlighted items on both the Fire and Police Departments' budgets for portable radio repeaters for the Wild Dunes Village area; she related that, since the Village has opened, Chief Graham has found several "dead" spots where radio communication was not possible. The fact that the Fire and the Police are on different channels make it necessary to acquire two (2) repeaters to resolve the problem. Administrator Tucker noted that she did not feel the full extent of the problem had been evaluated at this time, but, if it were to be proven that the repeater was the only way to guarantee that emergency personnel can communicate in that building, then the acquisitions would be necessary. Fire Chief Graham has given the repeater a priority of 1a while Police Chief Buckhannon designated the repeater a priority of 4.

Mayor Sottile asked the Chairman to allow comments as the discussion progressed rather than at the end of the budget presentation. Chairman Bettelli consented.

Mayor Sottile expressed the need to seriously evaluate the necessity of getting two (2) radio repeaters totaling \$44,000. The Mayor turned to Chief Graham and asked if the dead zone was inside or outside of the structure; she answered, "Inside." Chief Graham replied that there were other areas on the island, as well, but that the Villages was the worst one. Mayor Sottile commented that the need for the repeaters – if the need was found to be genuine – was created by the construction of these very large buildings at Wild Dunes; therefore, the cost should be borne, at least in part, by those who have created the need, as well as those who would benefit. She added that there were two (2) set-ups for the repeaters, fixed or mobile; she expressed her opinion that the mobile unit would be more useful to the needs of the island since problems exist outside of Wild Dunes. When asked about dead zones, Chief Buckhannon responded that he was unsure of the extent of the problem for his officers. It was decided to leave the repeaters in the budgets until the true need was determined.

Administrator Tucker explained that, in Chief Graham's numbering scheme, the 1s related more to personnel safety and the 2s related more to citizen safety.

In response to Councilman Bettelli's inquiry, Chief Graham answered that the Fire Department did currently have one (1) thermal imaging camera, but it was of older technology, was heavier and did not generate as clear an image. Councilman Bettelli asked the Chief if she could not get by with one (1) this year and possibly another next year; she agreed to reduce the number to one (1) for FY 2008-2009.

Administrator Tucker recounted that there had been a line in the Fire Department FY 2007-2008 budget for safety belts; Chief Graham has suggested that belts that are

compatible with these harnesses be purchased in this fiscal year – thereby reducing the FY 2008-2009 Capital Budget.

Chief Graham explained that she has spoken with a sales representative since the last meeting and gotten an estimate on the cost of the RAD-57 carbon monoxide and oxygen monitor that was higher than the previous figure quoted. This would be a new piece of equipment for the department; currently, if one of the EMS crews encountered a person whom they suspected of carbon monoxide poisoning, they would treat the symptoms and take the person to the hospital.

The Committee was reminded that the purchase of the replacement jet skis would not take place until May of 2009 for use in the 2009 summer season. Chief Graham explained that the jet skis were considered to be first line equipment and that they were used multiple times per day in the summer months.

Councilman Buckhannon asked if the cutters, spreader and hose for the “jaws of life” equipment were replacement items and if the ones the Department currently has were functional. Chief Graham replied that these were replacement items because the existing ones had reached the point of being beyond economical repair.

Councilman Bettelli asked the age of the laptop that was to be replaced. Chief Graham stated that the laptop was purchased in 2001 or 2002 and that it has some fifteen (15) regular users.

Councilman Buckhannon asked if the Fire Department could get by with two (2) rather than four (4) rescue saws. Chief Graham stated that, since they have two (2), they could do with only two (2) additional to be placed on the ladder trucks.

The Committee agreed to reduce the number of thermal imaging cameras from two (2) to one (1).

The Administrator pointed out that the rubber boat was going to be purchased by ATAX this year, so that item had been removed from the FY 2008-2009 budget.

Chief Graham remarked that there were still unanswered questions on whether or not a jet dock could be placed at Breach Inlet; Mayor Sottile stated that he does not want that item left in the budget if it is not going to happen.

Chief Graham explained to Councilman Buckhannon that to have the training videos on-hand would mean that the firefighters would not have to leave the island as often to get training, and the videos would be a tremendous asset with new employees.

Councilman Bettelli stated his opinion that items 1e, 1f and 1g should be moved up to 1a, 1b and 1c because they were items which were repeated every year.

Police Department Prioritized Capital Budget

1	Replace 1 patrol car (repl 1 sedan 4WD)	22,000
1	Replace 4WD patrol vehicles (2 in FY09)	56,000
2	Replace body armor (4 or 5 sets per year)	2,500
3	Replace VHS in-car camera systems w/digital (2 in FY09)	6,500
4	Portable radio repeater for Wild Dunes Village area	22,000
5	Replace mobile data terminals (2 per year)	4,500
6	Replace computer servers	5,000
7	Enclosed panel trailer for emergency equip, lighting, cones, etc	2,000

Since the Police vehicles were on a rotation cycle, Chief Buckhannon made them his #1 priority.

Councilman Buckhannon asked Chief Buckhannon if the maintenance had been driven up on the vehicles that were being replaced. The Chief responded that the maintenance has gone up and was especially true of the 4WD vehicles. He reminded the Committee that the rotation had been changed to a six (6) year replacement cycle.

Responding to other questions from Councilman Buckhannon about the in-car camera systems, Chief Buckhannon noted that the digital evidence files could be attached to files and that the images could be placed on computer hard drives.

The Chief stated that the Impalas were serving well as police vehicles and that they had produced a significant savings in fuel usage, but there could be a problem if Chevrolet continued to downsize that model.

Chief Buckhannon explained that the enclosed panel trailer would house the emergency equipment, lighting, cones, etc., used for rapid deployment, that is currently locked up in the Public Works Building. Administrator Tucker added that currently these items are manually loaded and unloaded with each use.

Fire Department FY 2008-2009 Operating Budget - A complete copy of the proposed budget is attached.

Before discussing the details of the budget, Administrator Tucker made comments that would be applicable to all departmental budgets for FY 2008-2009. Staff has built into all of the operating budgets not only the cost of living and merit salary increases that are typically included, but also adjustments to those salaries that were recommended to bring

all employees to the minimum level and adjustments to fifty percent (50%) of the mid-point for some employees; these adjustments were based on the results of the "Compensation and Classification Study," and the staff's determination of what the City could afford to do in one (1) budget year. The Administrator informed the Committee that representatives of The Archer Company that produced the study will attend the March Ways and Means Committee meeting to provide additional information related to their methodology and their recommendations for implementing the recommendations.

The most significant change to the Fire Department budget was Chief Graham's request for two (2) additional people per shift per station for a total of twelve (12) additional personnel. For ease in studying the impact of this request, Treasurer Suggs added column H that contained only the budgetary information relevant to the addition of twelve (12) firefighters; based on current calculations, the total financial impact would be \$715,500 for FY 2008-2009.

Chief Graham justified her request with the following information:

- Based on the standards today, a two (2) story family residence should have fourteen (14) firefighting personnel on the scene of a fire:
- The Isle of Palms Fire Department now has nine (9) persons per shift;
- The department's evaluation in 2001 recommended 12 persons per shift per station; and
- Twelve (12) firefighters per shift would still be below minimum recommended standards.

Councilman Bettelli asked how the Department had gotten to the point of needing twelve (12) additional people without the Public Safety Committee having any indication of it until a new fiscal budget was presented. He also asked if standards had changed so dramatically since the last round of hiring, and Chief Graham answered in the affirmative.

Mayor Sottile's initial comment was that salaries had been increased based on a salary study that the City Council has not approved. He remarked that, as Mayor of the City, he, too, was hearing of the personnel shortage in the Fire Department for the first time as the budget was presented when he was the person who was ultimately responsible for the safety and well-being of the City's residents. The Mayor stated that, with all that was going on, the addition of twelve (12) new personnel was not financially possible, and it would take a great deal more information to convince him of the need.

Administrator Tucker suggested that the budget review continue concentrating on the figures in column G that did not include the additional personnel.

Councilman Buckhannon reflected on the number of times that the phrase “increased based on actual” appeared; he then stated that he understood that the purpose of a budget was for the departments to stay within the parameters established by that budget. In relation, he asked what evaluation was done to determine why a particular line item exceeded its budget before simply increasing it for the next year.

Administrator Tucker explained that certain of the increases was based on needs anticipated with the construction of the Public Safety Building, and Chief Graham noted that the budget has not yet been exceeded, but that, if trends continue, some budget line items might go over budget. The Administrator added that there were some items that were not controllable, but traditionally the City has operated either right on its budget or under budget. When Staff looked back to prior years’ audits, plus the current year financial at seven (7) months into the fiscal year, and has seen that a particular line item has been consistently over budget, it was only logical to increase it and to make adaptations in other areas.

With the increase in gasoline and diesel pricing, the *Vehicle fuel and oil* was increased for all departmental budgets and was reflected.

Based on the increased cost of supplies, the budget line for *Medical and lab supplies* was increased to cover them.

In response to Councilman Buckhannon’s question about the increase to *Uniforms*, Administrator Tucker responded that it could be attributed primarily to turnover in the department.

(Mayor Sottile was excused from the meeting at approximately 6:28 p.m.)

Additional life safety training that has been planned was the reason for the increase to the *Employee Training* line.

In concluding the discussion of the Fire Department Operating Budget, the Administrator explained that the final line entry would come into play only if the additional two (2) firefighters per shift per station were approved, and it would be addition to the Capital Budget.

In response to Councilman Buckhannon, the Administrator commented that the Personnel Committee has made no recommendations related to the Compensation Study other than to bring the consultants before the Ways and Means Committee to hear their recommendations in dealing with results of the study. Administrator Tucker recounted that Staff had built “a cushion” into the budget in anticipation of the results of the study and to be able to make wage adjustments in this current fiscal year. At the Personnel

Committee meeting, Administrator Tucker related that she had proposed that the City immediately move forward to make adjustments to the minimum recommended salaries since it was within what was budgeted for the current year. She informed the Committee that implementing the minimum salary immediately was Archer's recommendation and what most people did when faced with this situation.

Police Department FY 2008-2009 Operating Budget – A complete copy of the proposed budget is attached.

Administrator Tucker reflected that the same global increases applied to the Police Department budget that applied to the Fire Department budget. The primary areas of increases were reflective of the proposed increases to salaries and the affect on benefits. The reduction to *Meetings and Seminars* was attributed to the fact that CALEA accreditation only occurred every third year.

Parking Meter Department

Since the Beach Services Officers were covered by this budget, it was decided to include it as well. Administrator Tucker related that there was an increase in the hourly rate for the Beach Services Officers so that the City could continue to attract quality individuals. The service on the kiosks was included in the line *Maintenance and service contracts*. Chief Buckhannon explained that the increase to *Professional Services* was due to the fact that the maintenance on the handheld devices has gone up, as well as the software used to track down those persons who did not pay their tickets.

Chief Buckhannon informed the Committee that two (2) of the Beach Patrol Service employees from last year were returning and would begin working later in March. Advertising for the remaining two (2) positions would start after April 1.

MOTION: Councilman Bettelli asked to change the Agenda to go to Item D under New Business at this time; Councilman Buckhannon seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

D. Scout Project – Benches at 3rd, 5th and 7th Avenue Beach Access Paths

Councilman Bettelli asked Daniel Prentice and his father to come forward to discuss his request to the City to construct and place benches at certain beach access paths for an Eagle Scout project. Daniel stated that he has changed the locations to be the 3rd, 4th and 7th Avenue beach access paths. He related his plan to involve the scout troop by meeting on the weekend to build the benches; Ace Hardware has agreed to donate the fasteners, and Daniel reported that he has been given the name of someone who was willing to donate the wood. Following up on a letter from Director Kerr, Daniel told the

Committee that he has placed flags at the beach access paths where he planned to place the benches, and he has submitted a sketch depicting how the benches would be constructed and would look when completed.

MOTION: Councilman Bettelli moved to allow Daniel Prentice proceed with his Eagle Scout project to construct and place benches at the 3rd, 4th and 7th Avenue beach access paths; Councilman Buckhannon seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Administrator Tucker stated that Daniel's request would be presented to the full City Council at 7:00 p.m. on March 25.

2. Approval of Previous Meetings' Minutes

MOTION: Councilman Buckhannon moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of February 11, 2008 and the Special Meeting of February 25, 2008; Councilman Bettelli seconded.

Councilman Bettelli indicated that a correction needed to be made to the minutes of the Special Meeting; on page 3, seven (7) lines from the bottom, the word "floor" should be replaced by the word "flood."

Call for the Question: The motion was PASSED UNANIMOUSLY AS AMENDED FOR THE CORRECTION TO THE SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES.

3. Citizens' Comments - None

4. Old Business

A. Update on 41st Avenue Intersection

Chief Buckhannon reported that Robert Clark of SCDOT had responded to his letter and stated that the Department of Transportation recommended that there be no change at this time. Mr. Clark's comments included the following:

- "An all-way stop would not provide any significant decrease in delays on the approach from Wild Dunes Resort and would substantially increase delays on the SC-703 approach.
- In addition, the lack of adequate sight distance around the curve on the SC-703 approach would create significant safety issues. Therefore, we do not recommend converting this intersection to all-way stop control.

- The City could also consider closing the Cameron Boulevard approach which would improve operations and safety in the area of the intersection.”

Councilman Bettelli stated that he did not think there was enough contributing traffic from Cameron to support the closing of the end of the street.

Mr. Clark concluded his letter with the recommended long-term solution for the intersection being the roundabout, that this Committee favored, or a realignment of the intersection that would provide “more efficient through movement along Palm Boulevard.”

B. Status of Public Safety Building

Administrator Tucker informed the Committee that the bid notice had been published and that the City Attorney and architect on the project were still “tweaking” the contract. A pre-bid conference between the architect and interested contractors has been scheduled for 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 13 in Council Chambers.

5. New Business

C. Consideration of Enforceability of Beach Debris Ordinance

The Administrator stated that this ordinance had its origins in 2007 with more problems than in the past with large holes being dug on the beach and people leaving significant debris, particularly set-up tents. The Public Works Committee has forwarded it to the Public Safety Committee to determine the enforceability before making it law for the island. Chief Buckhannon reported that he had studied it, discussed it with the City Attorney and has a couple of problems with the way the ordinance was written. The Chief initially referenced “personal property” since it would include hobie cats that were frequently left on the beach at night. The Committee agreed to insert the phrase “except hobie cat type vessels” following the word “property” in 7-3-14(a), (b) and (c).

Another question the Chief had was a definition of “holes;” he thought it was meant to be something that can be filled by incoming tide.

Another problem that arose for the Police Department was that any articles they were removed from the beach by the Police would have to be held for ninety (90) days.

Councilman Buckhannon questioned who would patrol the beach after sunset; he expressed the need to hire an independent contractor since the City did not have the personnel to do this job. Councilman Bettelli noted that Public Works had been removing the type of debris referenced here, but Councilman Buckhannon noted that it was only debris after it has been affected by the weather and the salt water.

MOTION: Councilman Bettelli moved to toward this ordinance to City Council with the inclusion of the phrase “except hobie cat type vessels;” Councilman Buckhannon seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

D. Consideration of Expansion of Life-guarding area by Charleston County Parks and Recreation

Administrator Tucker directed Committee members to the letter from Tom O'Rourke offering to provide lifeguard “coverage along the entire commercial district between 10th Avenue and the County Park.” The Administrator remarked that, if the Committee was inclined to approve this request, final approval should be contingent upon consent from the owners at Sea Cabins.

MOTION: Councilman Buckhannon moved to approve the extended lifeguard coverage offered by Charleston County Parks and Recreation between 10th Avenue and the County Park contingent upon consent from the owners at Sea Cabins; Councilman Bettelli seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

E. Consideration of Extended Hours for Dogs on the Beach without Leashes

The Administrator related that she had received an inquiry from a resident to extend the hours that dogs are allowed on the beach without a leash. Chief Buckhannon had posed the situation to the Animal Control Officer who had thought it would not be a problem if that were the desire of the community. The Committee agreed that the present policy was working well and that there was no need for a change.

F. Golf Cart Parking

Councilman Bettelli reported that there had been a request from a Council member for additional golf cart parking at the beach access paths; presently there were three (3) parking spaces at 25th Avenue designated for golf cart parking. Chief Buckhannon was asked to express his opinion on the request; he stated that (1) he was hesitant to grant any parking along the access paths at all primarily because it was imperative that emergency vehicles have a clear path to the beach; (2) to allow parking at other access paths, the dune line would have to be stabilized as it was at 25th; (3) issues normally arose when special privileges were given to some and not to others; and (4) having spoken with the Highway Department, they were not in favor of special parking in an area that the general public has access – considered a restriction to the general public.

Councilman Buckhannon asked if the Chief would ask the Highway Department to provide a letter to the City stating their points. Councilman Buckhannon stated first that he completely supported the idea of increasing golf cart parking on the island; secondly he stated that, since there was a sixty (60) foot right-of-way at the 25th Avenue beach access, golf cart parking could be increased considerably there. He suggested requiring residents to obtain a special permit that would allow them to park in that area; signage could be placed there stating "GOLF CART PARKING ONLY BY PERMIT ISSUED BY ISLE OF PALMS." The Councilman asked that the situation be studied further before any decision was made. Chief Graham commented that she had the plat with surveys and proposed layouts that Councilman Buckhannon could get to generate a plan for the next meeting.

6. Highlights of Departmental Reports

A. Fire Department – Chief Ann Graham

Chief Graham reported that there had been no fire calls for the month and one (1) significant medical call. The Department had performed eight (8) inspections with ten (10) violations. Firefighting personnel averaged over forty-three (43) hours of training during the month.

B. Police Report – Chief Buckhannon

Chief Buckhannon reported that the early part of the month had been spent clearing up the burglaries on the island. Department personnel had assisted the Recreation Department with "Island Arcade Day," where 137 bicycles were registered, and with "Doggie Day at the Rec," where over one hundred (100) dogs were licensed. The Chief reported that the Department was working to get all required training completed before the beginning of the season.

He also introduced the new Livability report to the Committee; the various livability offenses were listed along with five (5) locations that gave the Committee information about the identity of offending owners. The categories of owners were island residents, long-term rentals, short-term rentals by an agency, short-term rentals by owner and rental owner occupied. The "rental owner occupied" category included those persons who owned but did not rent, rather inhabited the residence a few weeks a year or allowed family members to use the residence; this category had the majority of violations in the month of February.

Administrator Tucker emphasized that the report indicated that education had appeared to mitigate livability issues with short-term rentals through rental agencies; the primary

offenders were owners using their island residences for short periods or allowing members of their family to use their island property.

7. Miscellaneous

FEMA Guidance – The Administrator informed the Committee that the City had received direction from FEMA on the space debris and how it was to be handled should any land on the island. The focus of the information was DO NOT TOUCH and call the appropriate public safety agency to remove.

Next Meeting Date: 5:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 9, 2008

Administrator Tucker also wanted the Committee to take note of the letter from former Councilman John Marino thanking the Police Department for representation at a Cub Scout meeting by Sgt. Usry, Detectives Caldwell and Tarr and Schwenk.

- 8. MOTION: With no further business to come before the Public Safety Committee, Councilman Bettelli moved to adjourn at 7:37 p.m.; Councilman Buckhannon seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk