

Public Safety Committee
5:30 p.m., Wednesday, July 9, 2008

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 5:30 p.m., Wednesday, July 9, 2008 in Council Chambers of City Hall, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilman Buckhannon, Mayor Sottile, Administrator Tucker, Chief Buckhannon, Chief Graham, Assistant to the Administrator Dziuban and City Clerk Copeland. Since Chairman Bettelli was out of town, Councilman Buckhannon chaired the meeting.

1. Councilman Buckhannon called the meeting to order and acknowledged that the press and the public had been duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

2. Approval of Previous Meetings' Minutes

MOTION: Mayor Sottile moved to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of June 5, 2008 and the regular meeting of June 11, 2008 as submitted; Councilman Buckhannon seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Special Presentation

Chief Buckhannon stated that the Isle of Palms Police Department was affiliated with the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies and that every three (3) years the Department had to go through a re-accreditation/re-certification process. He explained that, in December of 2007, an on-site assessment had taken place where independent auditors reviewed 459 standards, of which 333 apply to the Isle of Palms; upon completion, they filed a report with the Commission of Accreditation. In March of 2008, a formal hearing was held in Atlanta, Georgia where the Commission voted unanimously to award the Isle of Palms Police Department its second re-accreditation – the culmination of three (3) years of hard work and compliance with the standards. He presented the City with the certificate to commemorate its achievement and hung it prominently in City Council Chambers.

Mayor Sottile expressed his pride in the fact that the Department received its first accreditation under his term of office six (6) years ago and to see the Department continue to excel in the performance of their job. The Mayor remarked that the certification indicated to the island's visitors that the Isle of Palms has a professional Police Department that has successfully met the same standards as any metropolitan police department in the country. He noted that one (1) issue that always has come up repeatedly was that the Department did not have enough space, and he was looking forward to the move into the new Public Safety Building that will provide ample space for both the Police and the Fire Departments.

Councilman Buckhannon congratulated Chief Buckhannon as well; he noted that he had learned that this certification was not a “rubber stamp” given to everyone, but required a great deal of work. He commented that the Commission was pleased with the City’s new Livability function.

4. Citizens’ Comments

Bev Ballow, 3009 Waterway Boulevard, commented that she had been unhappy to learn at the Public Works Committee meeting that the Public Works Department was encountering problems in the implementation of Ordinance 2008-03, Beach Maintenance. As a member of the Turtle Team, she stated that they would be willing to assist in any way possible; she distributed to Committee members the informational tag that the Turtle Team has used to educate people of the City’s lighting ordinance and loggerhead turtles. She suggested that the City adopt a similar tag that could be distributed by the Beach Services Officers when they come upon visitors who have put up tents on the beach. Mrs. Ballow did thank the members of the Committee for their support in passing the Beach Maintenance ordinance.

Councilman Buckhannon stated that he thought the Turtle Team was one of the City’s best resources on topics related to the beach since they were there every day.

Mayor Sottile suggested that the tags be given to the real estate offices for distribution to visitors to the island. The Mayor noted that, before the City began to dispense a tag, it should pass legal review; he thought there was also a question about the legality of the Turtle Team distributing a City authorized tag.

Tim Smith, 24 Twenty-ninth Avenue, expressed his opinion that a change to the golf cart parking at 25th Avenue was poorly timed to go into effect the weekend of July 4th and that the change created a great deal of confusion. He referred to photos Councilman Buckhannon had sent to him showing the 25th Avenue Emergency Path blocked to emergency vehicles by unattended golf carts; he stated that he thought they depicted an extreme situation. Mr. Smith commented that, the majority of times that he has gone to the 25th Avenue Access, he has seen only a few carts. One alternative he offered to totally eliminating golf cart parking at 25th Avenue was to limit the parking to certain days of the week when there was less golf cart traffic.

Councilman Buckhannon explained that the City was attempting to expand golf cart parking to other beach accesses on the island because there was so much congestion at the 25th Avenue emergency access. He noted that, despite there being the misplacement of signs at 25th, the parking was intentionally eliminated for July 4th to keep the path open for emergency vehicles. The goal is to have the 25th Avenue access become a drop off/pickup area only.

Mr. Smith offered another suggestion to move the emergency access to a different location; Councilman Buckhannon informed Mr. Smith that there were only two (2) access paths that were wide enough for emergency vehicles, and 25th Avenue was one.

Mayor Sottile remarked that the ideal way to stay on top of what was happening in the City was to routinely check the City's website, www.iop.net, because all meeting agendas were posted.

Noel Scott referred the Committee to the Wilbur Smith study on the 41st Avenue and Palm Boulevard intersection that frequently referred to the intersection with words such as "confusion, hesitation and inconvenience." He quoted the report as saying that the closure of Cameron Boulevard would reduce confusion and that "providing STOP signs on the north and south approach" to the intersection "would ensure that every vehicle would have to come to a complete stop at the intersection – this would reduce driver confusion and hesitancy on the westbound approach." Mr. Scott quoted from a letter from SCDOT that "a three-way stop improves operation." He stated that one hundred six (106) units of The Villages were either under contract or had closed; he noted that there was the opportunity for another 445 residential units to be built in the Wild Dunes community or another 3.83 Villages and another 3.76 Boardwalk Inns. He then quoted several emails he had received that were supportive of the SCDOT demonstration project. He concluded by again asking the Public Safety Committee to proceed with the SCDOT demonstration project to close Cameron and make the intersection an all way stop.

Garc Osborne, an employee of The Windjammer, represented his fellow employees in addressing the smoke-free workplace; he stated that "as a whole, the staff is opposed to it." He commented that they did not believe that they were at risk and that they enjoyed the freedoms that they and the patrons of The Windjammer were allowed.

Jimmy Ward, 2207 Hartnett, voiced his "support for The Windjammer and the other businesses that choose to allow smoking." He reported that he had recently returned from a trip to Ireland and Scotland; a nationwide smoke-free workplace ordinance went into effect in Ireland in 2004 for all public places except prisons and psychiatric hospitals. He related that he had had conversations with quite a few bartenders who had informed him that more than one thousand (1,000) of eleven thousand (11,000) pubs closed within the first year after the smoke-free workplace was made law; businesses with space to provide an outdoor venue managed to survive. He reported that the Acme Cantina had closed off the back section of the restaurant as a smoke-free area since the City began its discussions of an ordinance; one of the owners had told Mr. Ward that he has received many complaints. Mr. Ward expressed his hope that City Council would consider the business owners on the island

Tim Smith suggested that speed limit signs for the Connector be placed on the bridge rather than approaches to the bridge.

4. Old Business

A. Status of Public Safety Building

Administrator Tucker reported that a meeting with the contractor had occurred on June 24, 2008 where discussions were held regarding modifications to the site to try to accommodate beach goers over the July 4th weekend. The results of the test piling have been received, reviewed and discussed; the discussions have concerned reducing the depth of the pilings. Although testing showed that there could be the ability to go to a shallower depth, the decision was made to go with the depth of the original design because of what the City might experience with the instability of the soils there. She noted that the City Council would see a change order related to setting holes for permanent fencing versus buying movable fencing; this change has occurred for two (2) reasons, i.e. to accommodate additional parking and to leave a water line unobstructed for the Water and Sewer Commission. The oil and water separator has been removed, and the telephone box is to be moved on July 11. The Administrator commented that, at Tuesday's Ways and Means Committee meeting, the Committee would discuss the final budget for the project in order to move forward to close on the bond.

Chief Graham reported that the fencing would be moved back to its original position on July 13th; on July 14th the pilings were to be delivered for work to begin.

Mayor Sottile asked if there would be significant savings if the City were to decide to go shallower with the pilings. Administrator Tucker responded that there would be some savings, but that she would not consider them to be significant. She also stated that the design engineers had made a written recommendation to go to the depth prescribed in the original design.

The Mayor voiced his understanding that there were changes in the Public Safety Building and the renovation of the City Hall that have caused there to be a change in the construction budget; he asked if these changes should come before the Public Safety Committee for review and discussion before going to Ways and Means. The Administrator explained that none of the changes to the budget reflected changes to the building itself, but were, primarily, changes to estimates related to the Building Department building and City Hall. With the time constraints, Administrator Tucker stated that Public Safety would need to call a Special Meeting if they wanted to review the information before the Ways and Means meeting.

B. Update on Golf Cart Parking

Councilman Buckhannon stated that the topic had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

Mayor Sottile expressed his continued concern about golf carts on Palm Boulevard and their creating a road in the right-of-way in front of the shopping center. Chief Buckhannon quoted the law that “they (golf carts) are not supposed to be driven on any primary highway, which would include the shoulders.” He added that Highway 703 in the area of the shopping center was considered a primary highway; therefore, the carts cannot legally be driven on the shoulders as they have been.

Mayor Sottile suggested that, in the future, the City seek CTC funds for the creation of a path for the golf carts to get to Front Beach. Chief Buckhannon reminded the Mayor that the highway department would have to issue a permit and, to make the path safe, the Chief thought the path should be two (2) carts wide. At that point the question became if there was enough easement to do such a path. Another point made by Chief Buckhannon was that the City would lose its shoulder width at the shopping centers.

C. Discussion of Smoke-free Workplace

Councilman Buckhannon related that the direction given to the Public Safety Committee at the last City Council meeting was to review the information provided from the business surveys and the ordinances of other municipalities in the state in light of the safety and health of personnel who were employed rather than the possible fate of the business. He did state that, for the City to enact an ordinance, it first must determine the goal for that ordinance. Mayor Sottile suggested that the City Council hold a working session to debate the scope and to determine goal(s) of a City smoking ordinance; Councilman Buckhannon agreed. The Committee’s recommendation to City Council would be to hold a working session dedicated solely to the subject of a smoke-free workplace ordinance to be held early in August.

D. Discussion of 41st Avenue and Palm Boulevard Demonstration Project – Residents’ Responses to Letter from the City

Councilman Buckhannon reported that there had been fewer responses than he had expected to the City’s letter about the SC DOT Demonstration Project, and the responses had been pretty evenly mixed between pro and con. Despite having serious reservations about the project, Mayor Sottile stated that he would not hinder it. He stated that his primary concerns were a substantial increase in traffic on Waterway Boulevard and a backup on 41st Avenue. The Mayor stated to Chief Buckhannon and Chief Graham that they needed to have specific criteria by which to judge the impact of this project; he stated that, based on those criteria, they did not have to return to the Public Safety Committee for permission to remove the project if they determined that

was necessary. Chief Buckhannon remarked that if the implementation of the project led to more accidents at the intersection, a backup of traffic on 41st going to the marina or a backup on Palm Boulevard, he would have no problem requesting its removal. Chief Buckhannon commented that, assuming City Council approved the project, it could not be put in place before the middle of August due to the timing of the DOT public notices that must be sent. In answer to Mayor Sottile's questions, Chief Buckhannon stated that he would be the person to report on the effectiveness of the project to SC DOT and that he thought a six (6) month study would be sufficient time to determine the efficacy of the project – assuming there were no immediate negative impacts.

MOTION: Mayor Sottile moved to proceed with the SC DOT Demonstration Project at 41st Avenue and Palm Boulevard as soon as possible; Councilman Buckhannon seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. New Business

A. Purchase Requests Exceeding \$10,000

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|----|----------|------------------------|-------------|
| 1. | NAFECO | Thermal Imaging Camera | \$10,535.00 |
| 2. | Motorola | Radio Repeater | \$12,913.91 |

Councilman Buckhannon reported that these two (2) purchase requests had been approved and were included in the budget, but the Committee and City Council must approve the award of the contracts since they exceeded the ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) threshold.

MOTION: Mayor Sottile moved to approve the purchases of from NAFECO for a thermal imaging camera and from Motorola for a radio repeated; Councilman Buckhannon seconded.

Mayor Sottile asked Chief Graham if the repeater was for The Villages in Wild Dunes; she responded that it would be mounted on a fire truck for use all over the island. She also reported that she had found a repeater that was dual purpose, i.e. the repeater can be used before and after the City converts to digital radios in late fall.

Call for the question: The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

B. Request for Highland Games on the Beach

Councilman Buckhannon stated that this event was not on the City's list of approved annual events. Administrator Tucker reported that the event would involve men in kilts throwing heavy objects and the drinking of alcoholic beverages.

MOTION: Mayor Sottile moved not to approve the request for Highland Games on the Beach; Councilman Buckhannon seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

C. VC3 Proposal for Wireless Mesh Implementation

Administrator Tucker recounted that the City had been discussing becoming more wireless as a city for a couple of years. She stated that the VC3 proposal was a refined one where they have partnered with Cisco; it would be one component of a wireless community and could be tied into the construction of the Public Safety Building and municipal operations within that zone.

Chief Buckhannon stated that a wireless component of the City's computer network would provide for the City not only a private wireless component, but also a public side; the VC3 proposal represents the basis for a system as described by covering the City Hall area and the Business District (a Hot Zone). Within this Hot Zone, City staff could network with the parking meters on Front Beach, for instance, or accept credit card payments or the cruiser laptops could be "live;" the Water Commission has voiced interest in this type of project; there were numerous uses for the Public Works Department; and the Public Safety Building could be connected to General Government, Public Works and the Building Department. There would be no issues with the public accessing City information because the two (2) sides of the wireless component would operate on different band widths.

Administrator Tucker explained that the prices quoted in the VC3 proposal were good through the end of the month of July and that the cost could be included in the Public Safety Building budget. Chief Buckhannon noted that the proposal included all of the startup equipment and that additions/expansions to the system should not be as costly. When asked by the Mayor if being wireless would benefit the City, the Administrator stated that being wireless would be valuable in a disaster.

The Administrator reviewed with the Committee the items that were not included in the price quote; they were as follows:

- Costs for electrical services and electricity usage at water tower;
- Costs for pole attachment fees and electrical usage on all utility poles; and
- Costs for permits.

MOTION: Mayor Sottile moved that the VC3 proposal is referred to the Ways and Means Committee for further discussion by the City Council; Councilman Buckhannon seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mayor Sottile suggested that Administrator Tucker to determine the costs that were excluded from the proposal because Council would want to know.

D. Front Beach Parking – request from resident

Mayor Sottile commented that there were permanent island residents who went to Front Beach on a daily/nightly basis; one such resident, George E. Bowers, has requested that City Council consider free parking for full-time island residents on Front Beach at the City's parking meters. In his comments, the Mayor recalled what the City's attorney had said in the past that "if you do it for one, you must do it for all." The Mayor said he had inferred that residents – who lived on the island, who paid taxes and who supported local businesses – resented paying to park as well. From a different viewpoint, the Mayor noted that the meters were only operational six (6) months of the year and the meters were not enforced after 6 p.m.

It was agreed to carry this subject over to the August meeting when the Chairman would be present.

6. Highlights of Departmental Reports

Fire Department, June 2008 – Chief Ann Graham

On June 23, 2008, there was a major fire at Ocean Point; the fire was coming through the roof of a three-story structure when the firefighters arrived. Fire Departments from Sullivan's Island, Mount Pleasant and Charleston County EMS assisted the IOP Fire Department. The home was determined to be structurally sound, and certain items deemed to be "irreplaceable" were salvaged. There were no injuries. Over four hundred thousand gallons (400,000) of water were used in fighting the fire.

During the month, career personnel received, on average, 47.3 hours of training while volunteers received 13.1 hours. The training topics ranged from leadership to firefighter health and safety, medical training, aerial operations, rapid intervention and roof rescue.

Like the Public Works Director regarding fleet maintenance, Chief Graham praised the work and quick response from First Vehicle for the department's vehicle maintenance. She stated that the costs were less than they had been with the previous service provider. First Vehicle comes to the location to service the vehicle saving man-hours, associated wages and fuel, and the technicians were all emergency vehicle certified.

Police Department, June 2008 – Chief Buckhannon

Chief Buckhannon reported that in May and June there had been fourteen cases of thefts at the beach – people taking valuables (jewelry, wallets, watches, cameras, etc.) to the beach, going to swim or to walk and coming back to find their valuables gone. Following one of the thefts, the suspects used a stolen credit card at a local WalMart where surveillance cameras caught them on tape; from the tapes, detectives got general descriptions of the male and female suspects. The WalMart also had cameras in the parking lot, so the detectives got the make and model of the suspects' pickup truck. All of the IOP officers and Beach Services Officers were provided the suspects' descriptions and the information on the vehicle; on July 4th, a Beach Services Officer saw the suspects going into the parking lot on Front Beach and recognized the vehicle. An officer was sent to the beach and the suspects were captured as they were attempting another theft; they were charged with the July 4th theft and fourteen (14) others. The individuals have been charged with approximately fifty (50) offenses ranging from financial transaction card theft to petty and grand larceny as some of the items were valued at more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000).

There were fifty-five (55) arrests in the month of June; the largest percentage dealt with traffic or alcohol-related offenses. Chief Buckhannon stated that more courtesy summons were being written to avoid transporting to the jail in an effort to reduce fuel consumption.

The Livability Report indicated that there had been fifteen (15) livability calls, eleven (11) were noise violations. One citation was written for a noise violation, ten (10) warnings for noise, and four (4) garbage can warnings were written and five (5) business license violations.

Chief Buckhannon distributed the traffic information for July 4th; one schedule was combined for Breach Inlet and the second was the Connector. For Breach Inlet, there were six thousand (6,000) vehicles outbound and five thousand (5,000) inbound. For the Connector, there were fourteen thousand (14,000) vehicles inbound and 12,588 outbound. Although the traffic was down slightly, it was close to that of years past; average daily traffic on the Connector is around ten thousand (10,000) vehicles in each direction.

In response to reports of speeding on Waterway Boulevard, Chief Buckhannon reported that the traffic counter/speed-measuring device had been set up at approximately 3604 Waterway Boulevard, and the preliminary information was that 9,257 automobiles traversed Waterway in the week of July 1 through July 8. The speed limit on Waterway is 25 mph; 91% of the cars coming from the marina were going 25 mph or less; 99% of the cars were going 30 mph or less; two (2) vehicles exceeded 36 mph but less than 40 mph. Of vehicles traveling toward the marina, 73% were going 25 mph or less; 96.6%

were going 30 mph or less; sixteen vehicles were traveling between 36 mph and 40 mph; one car was traveling between 46 mph and 50 mph. Only 3.5% would be considered speeding, i.e. 31 mph or higher. Chief Buckhannon noted that he would email the complainant of the results of the study and report that the Department would continue to patrol the area and to periodically put out the speed trailer.

7. Miscellaneous

Receipt of State Grant for First Responder Interoperability in the amount of \$17,549.63

Administrator Tucker stated that this was grant receipt warranted big “kudos” to Chief Graham for seeking the grant and the successful award; it was unanticipated revenue and will offset some radio expenses. Chief Graham reported that the grant would purchase three (3) radios and that the grant was the maximum amount allowed, based on the state formula.

Mayor Sottile noted that he had asked the City Administrator to brief Council on the City’s disaster procedures at the July meeting.

Next Meeting Date: 5:30 p.m., Thursday, August 7, 2008

8. Adjourn

MOTION: Having completed the business of the Public Safety Committee, Mayor Sottile moved to adjourn at 7:00 p.m.; Councilman Buckhannon seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk