

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
5:00 p.m., Thursday, March 15, 2012

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 5:00 p.m., Thursday, March 15, 2012 in the City Hall Conference Room, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilmember Bergwerf, Mayor Cronin and 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 were duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

2. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

MOTION: Mayor Cronin moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of February 7, 2012 as submitted; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. **Citizens' Comments – None**

4. Old Business

A. Update on Connector Run – deferred awaiting Connector Run representative

B. Prioritization of Projects in Excess of \$250,000

After each Committee presented his/her priority list, the Committee discussed the merits of each item and agreed upon the following:

1. Drainage Project at 42nd -52nd Avenue
2. Disaster Recovery Fund Increase
3. Recreation Ball-field – lighting only
4. Dune Walkover Additions/Replacements
5. Island-wide Beach Access Parking Management System

MOTION: Mayor Cronin moved to approve the list as stated; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

A. Update on Connector Run

Kristin Powers, representing the Connector Run, joined the Committee for a progress report on preparations. Since the last meeting, representatives have met with the Front Beach businesses impacted by the race and the road closure to discuss how to make the event better for them and their expectations. The majority of the businesses were excited about the added celebration post-race, anticipating more people in attendance and staying in the vicinity longer. The businesses included in the discussions were the Acme Cantina, Banana Cabana, Ben & Jerry's, Coconut Joe's, Huck's, Luke 'n Ollie's, The Sea Biscuit, The Windjammer, Mingo's, the Island Mermaid and Splash; each business was offered a free vendor/sponsor space for the event to sell their food or merchandise. Off-island vendors will be charged a sponsorship fee for space.

The Sea Biscuit expressed concern about the road closure and its effect on access to their parking lot; the plan was revised to prevent the road closure from blocking access to their lot.

The Connector Committee wanted permission to set up the stage for the band in front of the Public Safety Building because they think it will create a great appearance. They will place the snow barricade to prevent any alcohol from being consumed on City property.

The Connector Committee will be purchasing the alcohol from and use the liquor license of the Acme Cantina, who will also serve. Ms. Powers asked if there would be issues with people being on the road with alcohol in-hand, assuming the use of the snow fence and barricades. The Administrator reported that the City has had events in the past where adult beverages were served, and, as long as there were no incidents and no alcoholic beverages were carried from the enclosed area, the City did not issue any tickets. Ms. Powers said that their plan was to barricade the property on which the event is taking place so that people are funneled to one (1) exit with a checkpoint where there would be trash receptacles and signs indicating that say "NO ALCOHOL BEYOND THIS POINT."

Chief Buckhannon noted that the situation in the past was held on a City-owned road, and this event is on a state-owned road. Administrator Tucker remarked that the event had been granted the road closure from DOT, and she did not remember there being any stipulations.

Ms. Powers stated that the organizers were more than willing to hire a private security firm to monitor the exits and check identifications. Chief Buckhannon indicated that it was the responsibility of the alcohol servers to ensure that the people they serve alcohol to are of legal age. Persons who are outside of the confined area of the event and who are in possession of alcohol will be ticketed.

The marketing efforts are going to be ramped up more than what has happened in the past, and the Isle of Palms will be featured in all of it. Copies of all advertising will be sent to the City to ensure that the City is satisfied with its content.

Administrator Tucker asked about the sound amplification at the stage; Ms. Powers explained that they typically use two (2) speakers, one (1) on either side of the stage. Ms. Powers said that she would check the City's noise ordinance to make sure that they stay within acceptable ranges. Ms. Powers offered to send letters to surrounding residents offering them free tickets to the event; the Administrator agreed that notification was always helpful.

As to a source of power, Ms. Powers said they could bring in a generator.

Chief Buckhannon asked if they had considered setting up the band in the parking lot of the CPA's office, next to the Sea Biscuit, closer to the vendors and beer sales; if they did that, the noise would be pointed toward the beach and some of the sound would be absorbed by the vendors, lessening the possibility that people would complain about the noise and people would be in a more confined area. Ms. Powers explained that they had decided against that layout because the owners of the Sea Biscuit wanted the business from the event, but did not want to be caught up in the frenzy of it.

Responding to Mayor Cronin's inquiry, Ms. Powers said the band would be performing until around 10:30 a.m.; the Connector Committee wants to be winding down by 11:00 a.m. to be gone by noon.

Ms. Powers indicated that they are hoping to have one thousand (1,000) participants in the Connector Run; plans are in the works to coordinate with island realtors to offer specials for rentals encouraging runners to stay on the island and make the event a destination run.

5. New Business

A. Discussion of Charges to Committee from Joint Meeting

1. Line of Sight Clearance at Intersections

Chair Bettelli referred to the new "NO PARKING HERE TO CORNER" signs that have been installed along Palm Boulevard; he said he thought that they were a great first step toward making the island safer.

The Chair asked if there was a way to make the exit from the shopping area on the ocean-side of Palm at 14th Avenue a "right turn only;" he told the Committee of seeing drivers exiting the lot and crossing four (4) lanes of traffic to gain access to the Connector. Administrator Tucker said that the City had corresponded with the owner of the shopping center in the past with that request, but would do so again.

Another safety concern from the Chair was the height of the shrubs as one exits left from the Red & White parking lot. Chief Buckhannon said that the shrubbery had been brought to the owner's attention in the past as well; Mayor Cronin suggested opening up a dialogue again.

Mayor Cronin reported seeing the white chalk lines drawn on both side of Palm Boulevard. Chief Graham pointed out that in areas where a fire hydrant is in the middle of a block, the chalk lines goes right up to the hydrant rather than ending at the required distance from the hydrant. As it is, someone would park there, be ticketed and argue that they were just following the implied parking area defined by the white line. Chief Buckhannon said he had spoken to Director Page about the hydrants and the parking limitations.

When the Mayor suggested that the City re-locate some of the signs, Chief Buckhannon stated that the Highway Department had not followed their normal sign placement when these signs were installed – the signs are supposed to be a set distance from the edge of the road, and some are too close to the edge. The Chief said that the errors had been brought to their attention to be corrected. Administrator Tucker remarked that she, too, has witnessed the communication breakdown between the group that gives the assignment and the group that executes the assignment.

Chief Buckhannon said that signs could be placed beside the hydrants saying NO PARKING WITHIN 15 FEET OF HYDRANT, but everyone agreed that the City has enough signs.

B. Parking Control Systems and Enforcement

Councilmember Bergwerf recounted dialogue at the Joint Meeting as to legalities of parking restrictions on the island; she voiced caution with moving forward until the legal aspects are resolved. The Committee agreed that the City's Attorney should be tasked with answering that question for the City before more time and money are invested in it.

Councilmember Bergwerf stated that she wished she had asked for a show of hands from City Councilmembers indicating their support for a parking pass plan. Mayor Cronin indicated that, until money is attributed to the cost of a pass plan, many Councilmembers will be noncommittal.

Mayor Cronin commented that restricting parking in the neighborhoods and pay-to-park are two (2) separate initiatives that overlap. To eliminate parking in the neighborhoods will require more signage, a great deal of control and a pass system.

Councilmember Bergwerf voiced her vision of the residents' pass being like the Wild Dunes stickers allowing residents to park anywhere at any time, except, of course, Front Beach. The Mayor commented that the Wild Dunes system requires two (2) people are on duty twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week.

The Chair summarized the discussion to this point as tasking the City Attorney with researching the legality of a pass system.

Councilmember Bergwerf expressed the fact that she does not favor the pass system, but she wants to give relief to the neighborhoods. For visitors from off-island, she believes that they will find the pass system to be very unfriendly.

Chair Bettelli stated that he understands the parking plan and pay-to-park as two (2) separate issues. The added signage affecting line-of-sight is a major step in a parking plan; a pay-to-park plan is going to cost a lot of money and no one has calculated what that number might be. Mayor Cronin added that pay-to-park is going to cost more than most people realize in the way of people and enforcement.

Administrator Tucker related that staff has devised a demonstration project related to parking to be brought before the Committee for consideration. The primary issue is that many of the complaints from residents are about those who come to the island and cause a problem, i.e. act inappropriately, leave their trash, block driveways, etc. The concept was "to staff up" with Beach Service Officers and to assign them to work in specific areas, for instance two (2) BSOs for 1st to 5th Avenues from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and two (2) BSOs for 6th to 10th Avenues for the same period; the idea being that they are there to act preventatively, to provide information about other areas for parking and to ticket offenders. Through this process, the City does some intense management of the crowds coming to the island already. To do this initiative the City would need to increase the number of BSOs substantially, equipping them with radios, and providing them uniforms and transportation; since four-wheel type vehicles are not allowed on Palm Boulevard, some number of small trucks would be required. If the demonstration project did not prove to be successful, the equipment and uniforms could go into inventory to be used at a later time.

From a staff-level viewpoint, the Administrator explained that part of the problem with parking is that the sworn officers, from Memorial Day to Labor Day, are tasked with the most serious type of crimes that tie them up so that parking enforcement falls to a lower priority; therefore, parking enforcement is, likely, not getting the level of attention that our residents want it to get – and perhaps, rightly so. Using BSOs in this manner will put the focus on parking and the issues related to parking that our residents are focused on; in addition, this project would give the residents someone to go to when they see problems happening. This demonstration project can be done relatively easily; it does not have the impact of changing lifestyles for the entire island, unlike the parking passes; and it could improve the parking situation to an extent that passes are no longer considered necessary. Staff has delayed generating a budget until the project gets a not from this Committee and Council.

Having heard the idea earlier in the day, Mayor Cronin commented that he had thought the service could be done Tuesday through Sunday.

The Administrator remarked that the idea was an outgrowth of how people react with a law enforcement presence – they tend to act better and react to having someone to go to talk to.

Councilmember Bergwerf said that the idea was interesting, but it was not a solution to the “crush” of parking. Chair Bettelli said that he could see the double-parked truck adding to the problems.

Mayor Cronin thought that it might be useful in the area of Breach to 10th Avenue with spaces designated for the vehicle to be parked.

Chief Buckhannon explained that currently the City hires four (4) BSOs; one (1) is on the beach and three (3) are dedicated to the Front Beach Area. Typically they are directing traffic from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. to keep traffic moving.

The Committee agreed for the staff to establish a budget for a demonstration project between Breach and 10th Avenue.

B. Review of FY13 Operating Budget for the Fire and Police Departments

As in other committees, Administrator Tucker covered the budgetary issues that are global to all departments, i.e. a three percent (3%) merit pool, six percent (6%) increase to the health insurance, fuel estimated at four dollars and a quarter (\$4.25) per gallon, an increase to the retirement for public safety employees from eleven point seven six five percent (11.765%) to twelve point three percent (12.3%) and for regular employees from nine point five three five percent (9.535%) to ten point six percent (10.6%).

Fire Department

Line items that were reduced based on actual experience are printing and office supplies, meetings and seminars, water and sewer, cleaning and sanitary supplies, medical and lab supplies, employee training and miscellaneous and contingency.

Increases in the Department are as follows:

Electricity and Gas	\$42,000
The budget in FY12 dealt with a billing error by SCE&G that has been corrected	
Telephone and Cable	39,996
The Charleston County radio user fee increases January 2013 from \$25/radio/month to \$38.50/radio/month	
Maintenance and Service Contracts	42,046
Detailed in budget documents attached	
Uniforms	24,500
Rents and Leases	3,500
Based on actual usage for the copier equipment	

Overall the Fire Department FY13 budget has a two percent (2%) increase over FY12.

Police Department

Administrator Tucker explained that the salaries and wages line does include the merit pool, but the line does not show a significant increase as a result of the reorganization that occurred in the Department with the retirement of Lieutenant Wright; in addition, the department has had military time issues included in the FY12 budget.

Lines with decreases based on actual experience are water and sewer, cleaning and sanitary supplies, rents and leases, and professional services.

Areas of the budget experiencing an increase are as follows:

Memberships and Dues	\$ 1,500
Based on actual expenses.	
Electricity and Gas	28,000
Same explanation as Fire Department	
Telephone and Cable	42,804
Based on the Charleston County radio user fee increase	
Maintenance and Service Contracts	47,521
Detailed in budget documents attached	

Overall the FY13 Police Department budget is flat with no increase or decrease from FY12.

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

6. Highlights of Departmental Reports

Fire Department

Personnel from the department assisted with the search of the Francis Marion National Forest for a missing female on February 17th. On February 19th, they responded to a report of a boat leaking diesel fuel at a dock behind Morgan Place Drive; they placed absorbent booms in the water to contain the leak.

Mayor Cronin interrupted the report to inquire whether the City had an ordinance prohibiting people from living on their boat. Chief Buckhannon responded that the prohibition comes in DHEC regulations. Administrator Tucker voiced her opinion that there is an ordinance against live-aboards in the City code and agreed to research.

In February, personnel responded to thirty-four (34) total calls, thirteen (13) were EMS calls. A Fire Inspector has been hired and will start to work in March.

The IOP Fire Department hosted the Charleston Area Training Officers Meeting.

The Chiefs were involved in several meetings about the transition to the Charleston County Consolidated Dispatch system.

Police Department

During the month of February, the Department had no significant calls. Dispatchers received a total of forty-two hundred six (4,206) calls in the month; thirty-five hundred sixty (3,560) were for the Police Department. Officers made three hundred sixty (360) traffic stops that resulted in seventy-six (76) tickets being issued. There were eight (8) noise complaints for the month, and four (4) warnings were issued.

Chair Bettelli asked whether the Department was fully staffed; Chief Buckhannon responded that the Department was down two (2) officers, and he is in the process of hiring both officers and BSOs.

The Committee praised the Chief for the Department's annual report; he indicated that it has been added to the City's website.

7. Executive Session – not needed

8. Miscellaneous Business

Administrator Tucker announced that "Army Wives" will be filming beginning on Wednesday, assuming the weather is good; the areas of the island impacted are the Front Beach parking lot, around the Windjammer and the 500 block of Ocean Boulevard.

Chief Graham noted that the Carolina Children's Charity is holding their annual telethon on the weekend of March 25th; she asked that Fire Department personnel be allowed to collect on the weekend of March 17th-18th for a couple of hours a day. Chair Bettelli recounted that collections were taken the weekend before the official event last year and had been very successful. The Committee was very supportive of the Chief's request.

Next Meeting Date: 5 p.m., Thursday, April 12, 2012 in the Conference Room.

9. Adjourn

MOTION: Mayor Cronin moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:40 p.m.; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk