

**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**  
5:00 p.m., Thursday, April 12, 2012

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 5:00 p.m., Thursday, April 12, 2012 in the City Hall Conference Room, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilmember Bergwerf, Mayor Cronin, Chair Bettelli, 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 Meetings Minutes**

**MOTION: Mayor Cronin moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of March 15, 2012 as submitted; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. **Citizen's Comments – None**

4. **Old Business**

**A. Update on Connector Run**

Administrator Tucker informed the Committee that she had nothing new to report at this time.

**B. Beach Access Parking**

**1. Enforcement**

Administrator Tucker stated that she had a tool for enforcement to bring before the Committee, specifically enforcement of keeping obstructions out of the right-of-way; a resolution was included in meeting packets. This is an updated version of a resolution that went before Council in the mid-2000s; the purpose was to give someone within the City the authority to move encroachments out of the right-of-way. The resolution goes through the process of cataloguing all of the encroachments and making a designation by priority, with the first priority being some type of public safety risk associated with them. The resolution calls for the Director of Building, Planning and Zoning, in coordination with the Police and Fire Chiefs, to determine priorities, but the enforcement arm is the Director. In a situation where the property owner refuses to comply, the matter would be turned over to the City Attorney for further action. The Administrator explained that she introduced the issue here because, when the rights-of-way are unobstructed, there is more space for parking.

Councilmember Bergwerf recalled that, at the March meeting, the Committee had tasked the City Attorney with defining the City's ability within the law of managing parking; the Administrator commented that she had the attorney's opinion to discuss next. In Councilmember Bergwerf's opinion, if the City cannot limit parking, the encroachments are a moot point. She added that object is to control parking, not to open up areas for more parking.

Mayor Cronin said the resolution is the state's giving the City the responsibility for enforcement.

Chair Bettelli voiced his opinion that there were good points in the resolution, but he agreed that a parking plan should be developed before tackling encroachments in the rights-of-way. But he was interested in letting the public know that encroachments would not be tolerated.

Mayor Cronin also thought the parking plan should come first, but he did not want to lose sight of this issue. He also reminded the Committee that DOT has actually permitted many encroachments on the island; therefore, the City would need to get that information from the state once the cataloguing was done.

Administrator Tucker informed the Committee that, currently, the City advises the property owners that they are required to have an encroachment permit, and the City gets a copy of what is submitted as well as copies of what is approved by DOT as part of the property files.

Mayor Cronin added this resolution to the agenda of his next meeting with Robert Clarke of SCDOT to get his input.

Chief Buckhannon said that the State wants to pass the liability responsibility to the City; if there is an accident and a lawsuit, it falls to the City.

The Administrator then reviewed the City Attorney's opinion on the City's rights to control parking; she informed the Committee members that she would forward the Attorney's work product to them tomorrow. In the research, generally speaking there was agreement that the prior opinion the City received that it could regulate parking on SCDOT roads stands; however there is another statute that was not found earlier that has specific language that confirms the need for SCDOT's permission and concurrence. The City has always felt that the City was better off to have SCDOT's approval for anything that the City did. Another issue was resident versus non-resident discrimination in having resident passes at no charge, but non-resident passes would be charged a fee for a parking pass. While it is possible to develop residential parking zones, there is a case involving Arlington, Virginia where the system was challenged; the results of that case lead the City to the need to follow the model established by Arlington, which is also used by the cities of Columbia and Charleston for residential parking stickers. Considerations in this model are that the parking sticker allows one to park in the district in which one lives, but does not mean that the vehicle can park elsewhere without paying, but the payment could be less. Another key factor is the area covered by the parking districts, for instance, drawn to include beach accesses. Another issue addressed toggles over to the public trust doctrine; the area from the high water mark down is the public trust and the public should have access to the public beach. Some local governments, including the City of Charleston, have a few spaces, one or two (1-2), at each of the accesses, that are available on a first-come first-served basis and have a time limit on them; therefore, the local government is offering free public parking.

All of the legal language related to fee-for-parking passes suggests that the fee must be reasonable; it cannot be so steep as to eliminate many people who would enjoy the area and the number of passes cannot be so limiting as to invite a challenge.

In the Administrator's opinion, the City can do something to limit parking, but to do so will require read and study to be modeled after designs that have already been tested legally.

2. **Beach-finding signs**
3. **Status of Consultant**

Administrator Tucker reported that she has spoken with Charleston County in an effort to get the names of consultants who have experience with way-finding signs and who can execute the plan through securing encroachment permits and installation. The Administrator is hopeful of having three (3) candidates and in keeping the cost under that which requires a formal bidding process. In addition, the Administrator has told the candidates that, if the way-find endeavor is successful and a positive relationship is forged, the City may change order the contract to do other things or engage in a new contract.

Despite having consultants recommended to her from out of the area, the Administrator stated that she prefers to deal with a local company because a local consultant will require less time to be educated on the City's issues.

Chair Bettelli stated that he has been pondering over something that the City could do this year, and what comes to mind is parking on Ocean Boulevard. When he asked which City Committee had been tasked with that topic, he was told that the Real Property Committee was working on that issue.

Councilmember Bergwerf expressed the opinion that the City needs to present a whole parking plan, not just move the parking problem from one place on the island to another.

### **C. Review of FY13 Operating and Capital Budgets for the Fire and Police Departments**

#### Consolidated Dispatch

8 ruggedized laptops for Fire vehicle FY12 expense, partially offset by grant	\$ 18,000
TriTech & CAD (Computer aided dispatch) and Records Management System link software	7,500
Metro ethernet connection (\$600/mo beginning January 2013)	3,600
Station Alerting System	15,000
Increased Firehouse software maintenance expense	1,665
Re-numbering of helmets & vehicles	2,500
County-wide accountability system	2,000

Chief Graham reminded the Administrator that the laptops have been purchased in FY12; therefore, that expense can be removed for FY13.

Mayor Cronin stated that he would like for the City Treasurer to keep a running total of expenses that the City has, is, and will incur as a result of transitioning to the Consolidated Dispatch Center.

Chief Graham also reported that helmets have already been renumbered; she is confident that eight hundred dollars (\$800) will cover the cost of renumbering the vehicles.

Administrator Tucker again asked the Committee members to refer to the items below the line which are described as "Considerations which may impact capital and operating budgets for FY13 and/or FY14." The issues listed in this section are very important for the City to attain its goal of a successful transition that is as painless as possible for the island's residents and visitors.

#### Fire Department - Capital Projects

The Administrator said that no changes have been made to this budget since reviewed earlier.

Porta-Count machine for SCBA mask fit testing	\$ 9,000
Replace Ford F250 (removes 2003 pickup from fleet)	29,000

According to Chief Graham, both of these items can be deferred to FY14.

#### Fire Department – General Fund Expenditures

Administrator Tucker listed the expenses that are global to all departmental operating budgets as a three percent (3%) merit pool, state-mandated increases to the retirement fund and health insurance, increase in Charleston County radio fees as of January 2013, and an increase to property and liability insurance.

Chief Graham reminded the Committee that vehicle maintenance had been reduced by five thousand dollars (\$5,000), but she was unsure about meeting that budget. The person who has been performing the biggest percentage of work on the City's vehicles on-site has recently found full-time employment, therefore, may not be available to meet all of the City's needs.

Administrator Tucker explained that the City is the custodian of the Volunteer Fire1% fund; expenditure decisions are made by members of the Fire Department. The largest share is spent on supplemental insurance; funds are also used to buy supplies, additional channels on the television, etc.

#### Police Department – Capital Projects

Software to integrate with new Court system (tickets auto upload)	\$ 15,000
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An addition since the initial review; allows Police Department ticket writing devices to automatically upload into the court system; covers licensing and the software

Per Chief Buckhannon, this is a one-time expense, but annual maintenance costs will be a recurring expense to the Police Department.

The Administrator reminded the Committee that the equipment to enable automatic upload of patrol videos is a new item for the FY13 budget.

Police Department – General Fund Expenditures

No changes have been made to this budget.

Parking Meter Department – General Fund Expenditures

An increase of fourteen thousand two hundred fifty dollars (\$14,250) has been added to part-time wages for fifteen hundred (1,500) additional BSO hours to do better and more enforcement for parking as discussed at the March meeting.

Federal Narcotics Fund Revenues – No changes since initial review

Federal Narcotics Fund Expenditures – No changes since initial review

State Narcotics Fund Revenues – No changes since initial review

State Narcotics Fund Expenditures – No changes since initial review

Victims Assistance Fund Revenues – No changes since initial review

Victims Assistance Expenditures – No changes since initial review

**5. New Business**

**A. Delay in Re-surfacing**

Administrator Tucker explained that the resurfacing of portions of Palm Boulevard by Charleston County conflicts with capital improvements planned by the IOP Water and Sewer Commission. To avoid cutting a newly re-surfaced road, Charleston County has agreed to postpone until FY13 the resurfacing of Palm Boulevard from 42<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue where the drainage project work was done.

Mayor Cronin asked that the Administrator ask the IOP Water and Sewer Commission to look at their capital plan for the next couple of years to determine if they will be making further improvements along Palm that could delay future re-surfacing.

**B. Discussion of Emergency Call Boxes**

The Administrator explained that this issue was referred to the Public Safety Committee at the last Ways and Means Committee meeting to decide whether the City wants to maintain the emergency call box system at the Front Beach based on the proliferation of cell phones.

Councilmember Bergwerf asked how often the phones are used. Chief Buckhannon noted that there are three (3) emergency call boxes, i.e. Box 1 at Ocean and J.C. Long, Box 2 in front of the public restrooms and Box 3 near The Windjammer

As to the usage, Chief Buckhannon provided the following call history:

	<u>Box 1</u>	<u>Box 2</u>	<u>Box 3</u>
Calls made in 2011	127	120	124
Calls made in 2010	245	520	142

From research done by dispatchers, none of these calls generated a service call; some of the calls are from people checking in and some are the resulting of some type of cycling of the call boxes.

Responding the Councilmember Bergwerf's question about the service costs of the call boxes, the Chief stated that the annual service agreement is five hundred fifty dollars (\$550) per year per call box, and the monthly cost is approximately eighty dollars (\$80) for all three (3) phones for a total of approximately twenty-six hundred dollars (\$2,600) annually.

Chief Graham asked if a call box could be re-located to Station 2 because people come there and will ring the bell for service over and over, getting no response because the crew is on a call. Chief Buckhannon explained that the call boxes have a cell phone-like chip embedded in them and are solar powered, and, according to the Chief, the boxes can be moved, but he did not know the difficulty involved. Chief Graham thought that there could be benefit to having a call box installed at the Public Safety Building once the dispatchers move to the Charleston County Consolidated Dispatch Center. Chief Buckhannon agreed to research the re-locations of two (2) boxes for better utilization and the elimination of the third.

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

**6. Highlights of Departmental Reports**

Fire Department – Chief Graham

In describing the events that unfolded on March 18<sup>th</sup> when personnel were sent to an incorrect address, Chief Graham reported that the caller had been excited and confused and had clearly given the dispatcher the incorrect address. A total of seventy-four (74) calls were received in March, and forty-one (41) of them were EMS calls. The Chief remarked that she hopes to have an EMS unit assigned to Station 1 again this summer. The new fire inspector has started to work and has been meeting with business owners on the island. In March, personnel inspected the fire extinguishers in all City buildings. The firefighters collected between five and six thousand dollars (\$5,000-6,000) for the Carolina Children's Charities – the best year yet. Beach access signs were relocated between Breach Inlet and 54<sup>th</sup> Avenue; the green signs are for foot traffic, and the red signs are for vehicle traffic.

Police Department – Chief Buckhannon

Chief Buckhannon reported that the Craigslist scams are picking up; officers dealt with several instances throughout the month and the Chief expects the numbers to increase. In March, dispatchers received fifty-one hundred forty-three (5,143) calls; forty-one hundred fifty-three (4,153) were for the Police Department – an increase of forty-one percent (41%) over 2011. Of the four hundred eighty-one (481) traffic stops, one hundred sixty-one (161) citations were issued; thirty-seven (37) arrests were made from the one hundred thirty-eight (138) reports written. The Animal Control officers wrote seven (7) citations, and fourteen (14) noise complaints were lodged in March.

Administrator Tucker referred Chief Buckhannon to the number of traffic stops made in the month and questioned that the increase was attributable to the warm weather or to stepped-up enforcement; the Chief thought that the volume was due to the weather.

Chair Bettelli asked Chief Buckhannon if the Department was fully staffed; the Chief responded that he needs two (2) BSOs, having hired one (1) and needs two (2) patrol officers. He indicated that all local agencies are having difficulty filling positions.

**7. Executive Session – not needed**

**8. Miscellaneous Business**

Chair Bettelli asked the Administrator about the “Runners on the Road” signs that were along the roadside; Administrator Tucker stated that whatever was happening was not authorized by the City.

**Next Meeting Date: 5 p.m., Thursday, May 3, 2012 in the Conference Room.**

**9. Adjourn**

**MOTION: Councilmember Bergwerf moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:15 p.m.; Mayor Cronin seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland  
City Treasurer