

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
5:00 p.m., Wednesday, July 11, 2012

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 11, 2012 in Council Chambers of City Hall, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilmember Bergwerf, Mayor Cronin, 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 had been 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 June 12, 2012 as submitted; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Citizens' Comments

Barb Gobien, 5 Fifty-first Avenue, displayed an enlarged photograph (Exhibit A) of a vehicle parking on her street with all four (4) tires on the roadway and asked whether this vehicle was legally parked. She questioned that an emergency vehicle could pass this parked vehicle since the road is only eighteen (18) feet wide.

Chief Buckhannon stated, "In the state of South Carolina, vehicles are to park off the road where practicable; if it is not practicable to pull off the road because of an obstruction, a vehicle is allowed to park along the edge of the road, on the side of the road or in the road as long as there is a sight distance of greater than two hundred (200) feet on either side so that cars can see from the approach and there is sufficient width for cars to pass in the opposite direction."

Councilmember Bergwerf countered that this was not the rule in her neighborhood; Chief Buckhannon noted that, on 8th Avenue between Ocean and Carolina, there is not two hundred (200) feet from the middle of the road to the end of the road.

Councilmember Bergwerf stated that, if there is two hundred (200) feet of visibility, one can park in the middle of the street and not be ticketed; Administrator Tucker added that would be true unless the street is posted indicating otherwise.

Chair Bettelli interrupted the discussion because it was outside the realm of *Citizens' Comments*.

Chief Buckhannon read the statute into the minutes as follows:

No person shall stop, park or leave standing a vehicle whether attended or unattended upon the roadway outside a business or residential district when it is practicable to stop, park or leave the vehicle off the roadway. An unobstructed width of the highway opposite a standing vehicle must be left for the free passage of the other vehicles and a clear view of a stopped vehicle must be available from a distance of two hundred (200) feet in each direction upon the highway.

Chief Buckhannon summarized that in one sentence the statute tells you to park off the roadway, but in the next sentence it says one can park on the road if the sight distance exists.

Administrator Tucker expressed the opinion that Ms. Gobien's photograph might be useful in Chief Buckhannon's training of officers and asked that she email a copy to him for that purpose.

4. Old Business

A. Update on Wayfinding Signs with Stantec Presentation

Chair Bettelli welcomed Jerry Regenbogen, Rick Reiff and Marie Langlois from Stantec and asked that they come forward to begin their presentation; Mr. Reiff distributed the handouts that duplicated the visuals that would be discussed. Mr. Regenbogen recalled the initial meeting of May 16th where the issues and concerns of the City were presented; since that meeting, Mr. Reiff and Ms. Langlois spent the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend riding with a patrol officer to see "first-hand" the traffic and parking issues of the island. Based on the information gathered, Stantec defined the mission of its project to be "getting visitors quickly and seamlessly to available parking in the municipal lots and the Charleston County Park." Mr. Regenbogen reported that a lot of signage, or signage clutter, exists in the area of the Connector and Palm Boulevard, the heart of their project. He pointed out that, when there are areas of concentrated signage, the individual signs lose their impact and people lose the ability to respond quickly. The goal of their project was to create effective wayfinding signs to provide access for drivers and pedestrians.

Components of a successful way finding system are

- Understanding the types of users, i.e. drivers, pedestrians and cyclists;
- Understanding the user experiences;
- Understanding the ultimate destinations; and
- Clear and concise signage.

The criteria used in developing the signs include the incorporation of color, text sizes – from guidelines based on the speed of the vehicles, and uniform symbols easily identified.

According to Mr. Regenbogen, the purpose of today's presentation is to share their process with the Committee, to determine what the wayfinding package should be, to look at the existing conditions which have a major impact on the placement of signs, to look at proposed alternatives, and, ultimately, to provide Stantec personnel with the City's recommendation or selection of the alternatives offered.

Mr. Reiff reviewed the existing signage conditions which were depicted on page one of their handout and their recommendations for the future; each numbered circle represented an existing sign. Each numbered sign was pictured on the subsequent pages with Stantec's recommendation for that sign in the future.

As a driver exits the Connector onto the island, a driver encounters six (6) sign posts in a space of approximately three hundred (300) feet, and some of those posts carry multiple messages creating a flood of information for drivers. The goal for that area is to simplify some signs, to relocate other signs and to remove others completely, making the approach more direct for drivers coming to the island.

Another issue they addressed is that no signage presently directs drivers to turn right onto Palm Boulevard for an alternative route to the municipal lots via J.C. Long. For those unfamiliar with the island, Stantec thought it was important to alert visitors to an alternative; by directing vehicles on the alternate route, the through movement of traffic can be improved as well.

Mr. Reiff directed the Committee's attention to Sign 17 as an example of sign clutter – one (1) post with four (4) different messages for drivers; this sign is an example of what Stantec is trying to clean up and make simpler for visitors to the island.

With these issues in mind, Page 4 of the handout displays the proposed changes to sign placement; it shows existing signs that will remain, directional pavement markings, and large and small vehicular directional signs. In addition to the signage, pavement markings at the Connector and Palm and on Palm at J.C. Long will direct drivers to public parking.

Mayor Cronin asked if the City could place signage further up onto the Connector bridge; Mr. Reiff reported that, in casual discussions with Mark Nesbitt of SCDOT, SCDOT was not inclined to approve signs on the bridge structure. Administrator Tucker added that SCDOT also was not in favor of pavement markings, so she suggested that Stantec use bridge signage as leverage to get approval for pavement markings for parking further on the bridge.

Marie Langlois reviewed the specific sign designs Stantec has developed for the island; they are a seven foot by seven foot (7 ft. x 7 ft.) sandblasted wood signs with white recessed lettering and a seven foot by seven foot (7 ft. x 7 ft.) powder-coated metal signs with white paneled, vinyl lettering. In addition, Stantec has developed smaller directional signage, following each style, specific to parking. Ms. Langlois informed the Committee that they were proposing three (3) of the large signs, three (3) directional pavement markings and twelve (12) smaller directional signs. The sandblasted signs have a ten (10) year life span before refurbishing is needed; the metal signs have a life of seven (7) years before needing to be repainted. Fifteen (15) total signs, three (3) large and twelve (12) smaller sandblasted wood signs cost eighteen thousand four hundred dollars (\$18,400); the same number of metal signs cost twenty-two thousand three hundred dollars (\$22,300).

Since the sandblasted signs have a longer life and are less expensive, the Committee selected the sandblasted wood signs with the green and yellow color scheme and design presented in the metal signs.

Assistant Dziuban asked if the removal of existing signage was included in the pricing; Ms. Langlois said that removal was not a part of their quote.

Mr. Regenbogen informed the Committee that SCDOT has “strongly suggested” that the only way they will allow the stylized signage is for the City to commit to a plan for the entire island so that they know that the City is going to implement the use of this signage island-wide. Ms. Langlois and Mr. Regenbogen acknowledged that this would be a phased program and that SCDOT only requires a commitment relative to vehicular signage.

Assistant Dziuban asked whether the pavement markings were included in the sign pricing and was told that they are included.

Mr. Regenbogen reminded the Committee the SCDOT does not like the pavement markings, but, knowing the City’s stand on them, the Stantec staff will work to have them approved. Mr. Reiff stated that he has concluded that DOT does not think pavement markings have the same visual impact; there is also the issue pavement markings not been seen when traffic backs up on top of them. In addition, there is the matter that pavements markings are not approved in the federal guide book.

Mayor Cronin suggested that Stantec take the approach that the pavement markings would be a demonstration project for SCDOT for a couple or three (2-3) years like the 41st Avenue project a couple of years ago.

Assistant Dziuban noted that Stantec’s scope of work, as originally conceived, was fairly small, focusing on the downtown area; if SCDOT will require a larger scale plan to permit the specialized signs, the City must consider expanding the scope of work for Stantec. Mr. Regenbogen offered to compile a proposal with a scope of services and related fees; Administrator Tucker recommended that Stantec approach the proposal an amendment to the existing scope of services to include these activities.

Mr. Regenbogen stated that the permitting process could proceed once City Council approves the sign package; permitting typically takes a month. The new signage is expected to be in place before the start of the next tourist season

B. Continued Discussion on Beach Access Parking

The discussion continued from earlier in the meeting about parking in the roadway. Chair Bettelli wanted to know what the City needed to do to get people to park off of the roadway and to standardize enforcement over the island. Chief Buckhannon explained that the City would have to pass an ordinance stating how the City wants people to park, and then to have the proper signage in place indicating what is acceptable parking.

Administrator Tucker cautioned that DOT would have to concur that the City’s decision-making was valid in passing a parking ordinance. Chief Buckhannon noted that this situation also brings up the impediments to parking in the rights-of-way that prevent people from getting out of the roadway.

MOTION: Mayor Cronin moved to have a “No Parking on Pavement” statute generated and to request authorization from DOT to place necessary signage; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Councilmember Bergwerf expressed frustration in the fact that the methods for managing parking that have been discussed have all met with roadblocks from SCDOT; she suggested that the City find out from Charleston County what has been spent in the past five (5) years to maintain the island's road as a basis for the City's considering taking over the island's roads.

Chair Bettelli said that one (1) storm on the measure of Hurricane Hugo that could to wash out a lot of island roads would devastate the City; he stated that the "what ifs" are his biggest concern.

Councilmember Bergwerf suggested that, in ten (10) years, if every day is like July 4th, then people will not want to own a home here or to pay eight to ten thousand dollars (\$8,000-10,000) a week to rent one. She thought residents would support a tax increase for a fund to maintain the roads if the City could control parking; she recommended putting the issue before the residents in a referendum. In her opinion, owning the roads would give the City the flexibility it wants to control parking.

Administrator Tucker indicated that, if Council were to embrace the idea, the City would need to engage transportation experts to put together a package of credible estimates of the cost to own the roads.

Mayor Cronin said he and the Administrator would talk to some people to determine if the proposal is worthwhile.

Administrator Tucker cautioned that recent maintenance costs to Charleston County for island road maintenance would be misleading because many different things impact road maintenance. She recalled that when Mount Pleasant got into the "road business," they hired a traffic engineer and a staff of maintenance people; these are the types of costs the City will have to consider. Assistant Dziuban commented that the cost to the island would be significant with no infrastructure of people or equipment. The Administrator questioned that the City could afford to insure the roads.

When residents voice dissatisfaction that they cannot see that progress is being made on parking management, Administrator Tucker encouraged the Committee members to cite the impact of the white chalk line on Palm Boulevard, to look at the changes brought about by the "NO PARKING HERE TO CORNER" signs, to point to the increased enforcement, and to note the hiring of a consultant to drive visitors to the municipal parking lots.

5. New Business

A. Consideration of Revision of Parking Enforcement Officer Job Description to Beach Services Officer

B. Consideration of Revision of Patrol Sergeant Job Description

Assistant Dziuban explained that these changes are the result of work the Administrator did to get the funding from Charleston County for the added Beach Services Officers this summer; from reading the existing job description, she learned that the job description was not in line with

the job being done. The Personnel Committee asked for a change in language relative to training and had unanimously approved the changes.

The only change to the Patrol Sergeant's job description was the addition of the sentence "Supervises overall field training process for police recruits."

MOTION: Mayor Cronin moved to approve the revised job descriptions; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

C. Consideration of South Carolina HEART Drill on January 4-6, 2013

Chief Graham explained that this will not be an event, but be a training activity of the National Guard and the South Carolina Fire Marshall's office. IOP personnel will participate as well.

Mayor Cronin stressed the need to inform island residents since helicopters will be landing at the Recreation Center.

D. Approval of ATAX Request for Purchase of Rescue Sleds in the amount of \$3,014.13

Assistant Dziuban reported that the ATAX Committee had met earlier in the day and unanimously approved this funding request and noted that, in addition to the rescue sleds, the Fire Department will be purchasing two (2) VHF handheld radios with microphone speakers. Chief Graham explained that this item was not included in the FY13 budget because the Department had not been able to test one; she then described how the sled will make water rescues more efficient and safer for both the rescuer and the person in the water.

MOTION: Councilmember Bergwerf moved to approve the purchase of the rescue sled and radios; Mayor Cronin seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

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

6. Highlights of Departmental Reports

Fire Department – Chief Graham

When the pool façade of the Palms Hotel collapsed on June 14th, Fire Department personnel secured the area; personnel also rescued two (2) people trapped in an elevator at the condominiums on Palmetto Drive on June 23rd. In the month of June, personnel responded to one hundred thirteen (113) calls; sixty (60) were EMS calls. Sixteen (16) fire inspections were done in the month where nine (9) violations were found and corrected. Chief Graham attached several letters of thanks to the Department; the Committee decided that these letters should be shared with all of Council and asked that they be included in Council packets.

Police Department – Chief Buckhannon

Responding to a complaint, officers entered a residence and found an underage party taking place; twelve (12) subjects were charged with Underage Possession of Alcohol. While in the residence, officers observed two (2) street signs, and a subject was charged with Petit Larceny. A traffic stop on a golf cart resulted in the operator being placed under arrest for Driving Under Suspension. (Chief Buckhannon took this opportunity to report a change in the state golf cart laws in October that will allow golf carts to travel on any road with a speed limit of 35 mph as well as a greater distance they can travel.) Telecommunicators took fifty-two hundred nine (5,209) total calls in June; forty-one hundred nine (4,109) were for the Police Department. Three hundred forty-eight (348) traffic stops generated ninety-four (94) tickets. The majority of arrests in June were for the underage possession of alcohol. Nine (9) noise complaints were made in June, and one (1) citation was issued.

7. Executive Session – not needed

8. Miscellaneous Business

Chair Bettelli informed the Committee that attendees of the Municipal Association Annual Meeting had been told of a recent Supreme Court decision that prohibits an addition to an agenda once that agenda has been posted and printed. This situation seldom occurs at City Council or Committee meetings, so the ruling is not expected to be an issue.

A. Follow-up on Disaster Expo

Chair Bettelli thanked the all of the City personnel who worked to make the Disaster Expo a successful event; he stated that there had been a good turnout. Assistant Dziuban added that, in the follow-up of the 2010 Expo, staff had questioned how many residents the event reached in a significant way; therefore, this year, a staff member was assigned the task of talking to residents to get their general impression of the event. Residents of the islands voiced interest in learning about what they needed to do to prepare, what they wanted to take, how to prepare their children to evacuate and what the evacuation routes are; they were pleased with the level of information provided at the Expo.

B. Holiday Traffic Counts

Chief Buckhannon directed attention to the graph of Memorial Day weekend traffic counts that indicated a total of nineteen thousand four hundred twenty-six (19,426) vehicles incoming to the island and a total of nineteen thousand four hundred seventy (19,470) vehicles outgoing from the island. In the Chief's opinion, the significance is that the volume has continued to increase a little each year since 2005; he noted that rain was forecasted for two (2) days of the holiday weekend this year. Additionally, the Chief had offered a graph of incoming and outgoing traffic for the month of May from 2005 through 2012. The graphs for the months of June from 2005 to date show a similar trend. Chief Buckhannon had similar information for the Committee for July 4th from 2006 to 2011.

Next Meeting Date: 5 p.m., Thursday, August 9, 2012 in the City Hall Conference Room.

9. Adjourn

MOTION: Mayor Cronin moved to adjourn at 7:25 p.m.; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:
Marie Copeland
City Clerk