

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
5:00 p.m., Wednesday, June 5, 2013

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, June 5, 2013 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 Meeting's Minutes

MOTION: Mayor Cronin moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of May 13, 2013 as submitted; Chair Bettelli seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

MOTION: Chair Bettelli moved re-order the *Agenda* to have the Departmental Reports at this point in the meeting due to Councilmember Bergwerf's delayed arrival; Mayor Cronin seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

6. Highlights of Departmental Reports

Police Department – Chief Buckhannon

The Chief related an incident on Memorial Day described as “suspicious circumstances and weapons violation” that occurred on the beach in the area of Pavilion and Ocean Boulevard; several officers were in the area and saw a large group exiting the beach after some kind of fight that had either taken place or was about to take place. One (1) subject decided to point some type of firearm at people on the beach; the incident occurred between 7:30 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. Officers did not get a great deal of cooperation from the beach-goers, yet did get an identification, but no name. By the time officers got good descriptions from two (2) individuals, the subject had fled the scene and was headed back to North Charleston.

Two (2) Meet and Greets were held in the month. The first was on May 9th on Forest Trail at 34th Avenue with approximately fifteen (15) citizens attending; the second was May 16th at Morgan's Cove Drive and Yacht Harbor Court at the request of the homeowners association and fourteen (14) residents attended.

In the month of May, dispatchers handled four thousand two hundred eighty-four (4,284) calls; thirty-three hundred eighty-eight (3,388) were for the Police Department. Officers made four hundred thirteen (413) traffic stops and issued one hundred seventeen (117) tickets. Two hundred five (205) reports were written in the month; included in that number are an additional four (4) burglaries, bringing the total year-to-date to twenty-one (21). Many of the burglaries are occurring in rental properties; the Police Department continues to work with the rental agencies on tagging electronic equipment, especially flat-screen televisions, for easier identification if pawned. With the start of the tourist season, training has slowed, but continues with a total of one hundred one and a half (101.5) hours in May. From the Livability Report, the Chief reported that officers responded to forty (40) noise complaints in the month, but no citations were issued.

Attributed primarily to the holiday weekend, Police Department personnel generated five hundred fifty-one and a half hours (551½ hrs.) of overtime.

Chair Bettelli asked the Chief how crowds and traffic over the weekend compared with the Memorial Day weekend. Although less than the holiday weekend, Saturday was a busy beach day; with the forecast of rain on Sunday, the crowd was considerably smaller. The County Park was full at 11:00 a.m., having parked eleven hundred (1,100) cars, and turned over two and a half (2½) times on Saturday.

Referring to the traffic counts for the Memorial Day weekend, Mayor Cronin noted that twenty thousand (20,000) cars entered the island Saturday, Sunday and Monday. By applying the traffic engineer's factor of two and three tenths (2.3) passengers per vehicle, an additional forty-six to forty-seven thousand (46,000-47,000) people were on the island, and that does not take into account the number of people who were already on the island visiting. The Mayor admitted that he had not considered the people-impact when thinking about the traffic counts.

Chief Buckhannon stated that he does not agree with the traffic engineers that the two and three tenths (2.3) people per vehicle applies when people are driving to the beach for a day; he thinks it is closer to four (4) per vehicle. He added that the two (2) lane roads on the island were not built to withstand that volume of traffic.

Fire Department – Chief Graham

Administrator Tucker took this opportunity to officially welcome the Chief back and to thank her for her work in the recent deployment of a federal team for more disaster relief to the areas affected by Hurricane Sandy.

The Chief reported that personnel were involved in several water missions in May, including the drowning on Sullivan's Island; in addition, personnel assisted Awendaw Fire Department multiple times. In the month, personnel responded to one hundred (100) calls; of that number fifty-three (53) were EMS calls. EMS response times were better than they have been recently.

Chief Graham announced that Charleston County EMS was on the island over the weekend and she anticipates that they will continue to be at Station 1 on the weekends throughout the summer.

The Administrator added that Charleston County EMS had participated in the post-holiday meeting and appear to want to do everything to make the summer as good as it can be.

Eight (8) fire inspections were conducted over the month and no violations were found. The Chief informed the Committee that Fire Inspector Kunitzer has resigned and gone to the City of Charleston; she added that he performed his job very well and will be missed.

A variety of training occurred over the month, and a newly hired firefighter completed his recruit training. Participation in the wellness program continues to be strong.

Mayor Cronin took note of the large number of water missions that occurred so early in the season; his comments sparked a discussion of water missions in general.

Chief Graham stated that she had just come from a meeting at the Consolidated Dispatch Center attended by public safety personnel from other local communities with the means to respond to water missions. In recent years, the number of municipalities with such assets has continued to grow, and, when a call goes out over the harbor channel of a water-related incident, agencies that can do so get in the water and head to the location, resulting, at times, with more assistance than the incident requires. The purpose of the meeting today was to better organize and coordinate the response to water missions in an effort to be more efficient.

3. Citizens' Comments – None

4. Old Business

Consideration of Modification of Section 6.3.5 of IOP Code to allow for chickens as pets

Chair Bettelli read the code into the minutes as follows:

It shall be unlawful for any person to keep within the City limits any domesticated fowl, including, but not limited to, chickens, ducks, geese or pigeons.

The Chair voiced the opinion that the island has smaller neighborhoods and lots that are not conducive to raising chickens; he added that he does not support changing the City's code.

Mayor Cronin stated that he had read the information provided, which he thought was dated, but all of the places referred to that have authorized keeping chickens required significant separation, fifty to ninety (50-90) feet, between the chickens and the neighbors. The setbacks on the Isle of Palms are only ten (10) feet, resulting in a maximum separation of only twenty (20) feet. In the Mayor's opinion, the City cannot reasonably accommodate chickens given the neighbor-hoods on the island and, at the same time, present an image to the public that comes to visit as a resort, a quiet and peaceful place, to enjoy and relax.

Councilmember Bergwerf stated that, in Charleston, a person would have to the permission from his/her neighbors and that both Sullivan's Island and Mount Pleasant allow their residents to keep chickens.

Mayor Cronin indicated that he had not received a groundswell of support for having chickens on the island and recommended that the Committee take no action, and the balance of the Committee agreed.

5. New Business

A. Review of Beach Traffic Management

Administrator Tucker stated that everyone was aware of the numbers of visitors to the island on the first pretty beach weekend which coincided with a holiday weekend; as a result, City staff

met with the other key agencies that offer support in this situations, i.e. Mount Pleasant, the Sheriff's office, the manager from the County Park, etc. The weekend after Memorial Day, Mount Pleasant did alter the light at Rifle Range and had a presence at the light, which was a significant part of the problems on Memorial Day weekend. The newspaper has covered the fact that Charleston County has upped the schedule for improvements to the intersection at Rifle Range and the Connector, which should begin in September. Robert Clark with SCDOT responded to a query from the Administrator and Chief Buckhannon about a lane reversal on the Connector at specific times; he indicated that, if that was something that the City was serious about doing, the decision needed to be made regarding what the time periods would be and develop a specific plan. Mr. Clark provided the Administrator an outline of the steps the City would need to take and expressed a willingness to work with the City as it considers this option. Staff has concluded that it is not feasible to continue to tie up all BSOs and most of the officers doing traffic management for the length of time they are needed; the City must have some assistance. Charleston County will provide some assistance at a small charge, and Chief Buckhannon is working with the constable system through SLED to see if they can be available for help as well. The City's patrol officers need to be on the island making sure that it is safe for residents and visitors alike.

Administrator Tucker stated that the staff is open to ideas and tweaks to the ideas presented. The Administrator indicated that everyone the City has reached out to has been extremely cooperative and extremely willing to assist; she believes that it is obvious that all the beach communities must work together to figure out how to manage these huge crowds and the traffic associated with them every year when they occur.

In addition, the Administrator reported that SCDOT has offered to make available communications initiatives and that Mr. Clark has reinforced that the messaging sign system and highway advisory radios can be freed up for the City's use. Administrator Tucker indicated that the City will try to get these systems deployed and working by July 4th, but admitted that they may be more useful next year. Mayor Cronin noted that the City will need someone who can monitor the traffic conditions to be constantly updating the messaging systems.

As to the issue of reversing a lane on the Connector, Chief Graham pointed out that the bridge has a rating that might be exceeded by such an action.

Beginning with the new fiscal year, the City is hoping to get permission from SCDOT to put one of the City's cameras on the bridge with public access for people to see the traffic conditions.

In addition, City staff has generated a map that is being distributed by employees at the County Park that will direct visitors through Sullivan's Island to expedite exiting the island. Chief Graham cautioned that the Ben Sawyer Bridge opens every hour on the hour during the summer months.

B. Consideration of Extended Hours for Parking Kiosks and Parking Lots

Administrator Tucker initiated her comments by stating that the City's staff "resoundingly" favors extending the hours for the kiosks and the parking lots; they believe that it may serve to mitigate the wave of visitors who wait to come to the island when they can park for free. Staff would like

a trial period to see if it will have an effect to reduce the number of people who delay their visits until the lots are free and kiosks are not in use; if there is no impact on the volume of visitors, the City can go back to closing the lots and not checking for parking slips at 6:00 p.m.

The Administrator commented that she had held conversations with several Front Beach businesses and they are no longer opposed to keeping the kiosks operational until 8:00 p.m. The possibility of keeping the parking lots open later was a component of new parking lot lease, so Mr. Schupp was aware that keeping the lots open later was a possibility.

Mayor Cronin asked what signage would have to be changed to make this change; Administrator Tucker and Chief Buckhannon agreed that the signage on the meters was the only sign change.

MOTION: Chair Bettelli moved to recommend to City Council to extend the pay-to-park hours at the kiosks and in the parking lots to 8:00 p.m.; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

C. Consideration of Request from *The Windjammer* for 2 Volleyball Events on the Beach

Bobby Ross, manager of *The Windjammer*, stated, since there will be no travelling tournaments this year, he has been approached to host two (2) volleyball tournaments – the first on July 20th and 21st and a second on August 31st and September 1. On Saturdays, men and boys will compete, and, on Sundays, women and junior girls will complete, and possibly a co-ed division; both tournaments will have the same format. Mr. Ross said these will be not-for-profit events; money collected will be for participation and prizes with no sponsors. Mr. Ross asked permission to leave the courts on the beach overnight because the players like to start playing at sunrise; he plans to have nine (9) courts on the beach and the one (1) court at *The Windjammer*.

MOTION: Mayor Cronin moved to approve 2 volleyball tournaments at *The Windjammer*, July 20th and 21st and August 31 and September 1; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

D. Contracts in Excess of \$10,000 – Discussion of July 4th Fireworks

Administrator Tucker noted that 2013 is the last year of a three (3) year contract; therefore, the City needs to decide if it wants to enter into a new contract or have the fireworks on an alternate date. It is a known fact that people come to the beach on July 4th whether there are fireworks or not, but there are other times of the year when the City works to get people here. The question is whether to enter into another three-year (3 yr.) contract or to re-schedule the fireworks away from July 4th or to schedule two (2) smaller events during the year.

The Administrator noted that she thought it would be useful to get input from the property management companies to determine whether they would anticipate an adverse effect from re-scheduling the July 4th fireworks display. Mayor Cronin agreed that he would prefer to make a decision after information has been gathered from other involved entities.

Councilmember Bergwerf indicated that she had spoken with many island residents to get their feedback on the July 4th fireworks display, and she stated that ninety percent (90%) were in favor of eliminating the activity on July 4th. She voiced her opinion that the gridlock that occurred on Memorial Day may have influenced many people with whom she spoke.

Chief Graham suggested changing the date of the fireworks display to Labor Day. Some have suggested having a fireworks display as the highlight of the Christmas tree lighting ceremony, but Chief Graham informed the Committee that, having spoken with Zambelli personnel, they had remarked that it would be really cold on the end of the pier and that the conditions in winter make the process more dangerous for the shooter.

Chair Bettelli recalled the frustration of residents at the volume of traffic on July 4th and the number of intoxicated people.

The consensus of the Committee was to gather more information from rental agencies and residents and to discuss the matter at the Council meeting.

7. Miscellaneous Business

Chair Bettelli informed the Committee that Ms. Dief, who was requesting permission to raise chickens as pets, has given him a letter of support for her request that he would give to the Clerk to add to the historical record of the meeting. For Ms. Dief's benefit, the Chair again stated that the Committee had decided to take no action on this request.

Chief Graham reported that she has seen that more and more people are putting up beach chairs for hire very near the emergency access paths. She was seeking direction from the Committee to discourage the placement of these rental chairs.

Based on the Chief's comments, Administrator Tucker recommended that the Chief meet with Director Kerr; he probably needed to communicate with these businesses to reiterate the rules under which they are allowed to operate.

Chief Graham was pleased to report that Fire Department personnel had rescued two (2) swimmers in distress at 2nd Avenue on Saturday; the pregnant female was rescued by a good Samaritan, and the Department located the husband and got him back to shore.

Next Meeting Date: 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, July 9, 2013 in the Conference Room.

8. Adjourn

MOTION: Mayor Cronin move to adjourn at 6:03 p.m.; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland, City Clerk