

Public Safety Committee
5:00 p.m., Tuesday, July 9, 2013

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 9, 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, 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 5, 2013 as submitted; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Citizens' Comment

Mary Thomas asked if the issue of residents keeping chickens as pets had ended; Chair Bettelli stated that the topic was to be on the agenda for the next Public Works Committee meeting. Mayor Cronin stated that she could attend that meeting in person or send the members an email with her comments.

Mrs. Thomas said that she has an allergy called histoplasmosis that means she is allergic to bird droppings; she said that if she lived around them all the time, she would be in the hospital and could suffer lung damage.

4. Old Business

Recap of July 4th Activities

Chief Buckhannon reported that the Police Department was fully staffed for the day which started off with traffic direction for the golf cart parade about 11:00 a.m.; the parade of eighty to one hundred (80-100) golf carts ended about 11:40 a.m. This year a couple of security guards were hired for the Sea Cabins to protect the entrance and exit from being overwhelmed with non-resident traffic per their request; the Chief expressed the opinion that the results were positive and that the practice should be continued in the future. In addition to City personnel, a Highway Patrolman on motorcycle assisted with golf cart parade; six (6) Charleston County deputies were on the island helping with traffic and crowd control. Following the fireworks display, cars were off the island by 11:15 p.m., and traffic lights were functioning without manipulation from officers. The Chief estimates that the crowd this year was smaller than in previous years, but he believes that the same number of cars were on the island. Traffic counts for vehicles accessing the island via the Connector were within a thousand (1,000) cars per day of previous years, but the counts for Breach Inlet were down considerably. The assistance from Mount Pleasant in directing traffic on the other side of the Connector has made a significant difference in traffic flow over the past five (5) weeks.

Chief Graham stated that the Fire Department also had additional personnel on hand, as well as the presence of Charleston County Rescue. Personnel were divided between the beach and the trucks. There were no reported injuries resulting from the wind carrying debris from the fireworks.

Administrator Tucker stated that good additions this year were the Highway Patrol motorcyclists, the security guards at Sea Cabins, the City's ability to be flexible with the County personnel here then moving to Mount Pleasant, and the last minute decision to station people on the roof at Sea Cabins to diminish anxiety of fire from the fireworks display. The City has received one (1) insurance claim for a damaged vehicle from fireworks debris landing on a vehicle in the County Park, which is minor considering the huge risk factors involved. One (1) challenge that occurred was a lost child in the vicinity of 3rd Avenue in the early part of the fireworks show that pulled resources that had been staged for the show. In her opinion, the City's resources were more challenged with crowd management on Friday, Saturday and Sunday than on July 4th.

Chief Buckhannon stated that on July 4th, 5th and 6th, there were issues with the light at Rifle Range; it actually went out on Friday. The outage was followed by a wreck on the Connector about twenty minutes (20 min.) later, and, within another half hour, there was a heavy rain storm.

5. New Business

A. Battery2Beach Signage

Administrator Tucker reported that the City has received correspondence from Battery2Beach relative to signage for the Battery2Beach; they are requesting that the City finalize its route and to prepare a map of the route denoting the places where signs would be placed on existing poles. The City will supply this information to Battery2Beach for their approval; after that approval is received, the information is submitted to SCDOT for an encroachment permit.

With the City's wayfinding sign endeavor, the Administrator expressed the opinion that any signage would need Stantec's involvement for sign placement design; she has waited for Committee approval before approaching Stantec for this task.

Mayor Cronin refreshed the Committee' memory about the route selected on the island for Battery2Beach, which is to enter the island from Breach Inlet, turn right onto Charleston to Ocean Boulevard, Ocean Boulevard to 14th Avenue, 14th to Palm Boulevard, a left onto 21st Avenue to Waterway Boulevard, Waterway to the marina, where a cyclist would turn around to again travel Waterway to 21st Avenue to Palm Boulevard and on to Breach Inlet. The Mayor recalled that Battery2Beach has been given one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) for signs, and it will be distributed on a first-come-first-served basis.

The Mayor noted that Battery2Beach had made a presentation to Council and Council had agreed to the route at that time. The Administrator stated that she would get pricing from Stantec for the work related to the signs.

B. Intergovernmental Agreement related to CCDD between IOP and Charleston County

The City needs to enter into this agreement with Charleston County that includes at what point the City's employees will physically relocate to the County and under what conditions they will become employees of the Director of the Charleston County Dispatch, what employee conditions carry forward, the carry forward of leave earned by these employees, what services they will provide for the City and at what price. The details in this agreement are consistent with the numbers the City has seen before and for which the City has planned. Both legal counsel for Charleston County and the Isle of Palms have reviewed the agreement; Charleston County agreed to all of the changes asked for by the City except changes in language for mediation.

MOTION: Mayor Cronin moved to recommend to City Council that the City enter into this intergovernmental agreement with Charleston County; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded.

Administrator Tucker noted that, if Sullivan's Island does not pay its portion of the fees, the City will be liable for their share because the City is the public safety answering point for Sullivan's Island; the Administrator stated that the risk of that happening is very small, especially since that would leave them without 911 emergency services.

Chair Bettelli voiced concern over the statement "Annual leave carryover payment from the former employer. . .", meaning that the City will pay to Charleston County for the transitioning employees. Administrator Tucker reported that staff had looked at that group of employees and determined that this is an immaterial amount of money.

VOTE: The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

C. Bandit Boats at the Marina

Administrator Tucker explained that these bandit boats are parking in the slips designated for restaurant customers; this subject is also being discussed by the Real Property Committee that has purview over the marina. It is being discussed in the Public Safety Committee in order for Chief Buckhannon to detail out what the City can and cannot do in terms of enforcement for these bandit vessels that belong to people who park in these slips but do not go into Morgan Creek Grill for a meal. The idea has been floated that the Police Department should be able to ticket these boats for trespassing, and the owners should be required to appear at Livability Court to pay a fine. Chief Buckhannon will explain why that cannot happen, as well the limitations under which the City must act.

Chief Buckhannon noted that the docks are included in the City's lease agreement with Morgan Creek Grill, so they are the property of Morgan Creek Grill; therefore, Morgan Creek Grill has to monitor it. If there is a boat there that does not belong, they must call the Police Department to report it. Since it is a trespass type of issue, the City cannot issue a citation and leave it on the boat as is done with a parking citation. The Police Department has to actually serve the trespass notice to the individual who owns the boat; when that is done, the party is also put on

notice – not just given a ticket. Most often, the City does not issue a ticket for a trespass charge, the person is just put on notice.

This issue has been discussed with restaurant management in the past, and they are aware that they must be an active participant – they must take the lead. Part of the problem is that they want leeway in enforcement; for instance, if a patron drives his/her boat to the restaurant for dinner, has too much to drink and chooses alternate transportation home, the restaurant encourages that action and agrees for the customer's boat to stay overnight to be removed the next day. This makes enforcement difficult.

For several boats whose owners were identified, officers did put these people on notice that they were not to park their boat in those slips again.

There was also discussion about towing these boats, but that is quite expensive and there are a limited number of businesses who do that type of work. A company named SeaTow has said that, if they are called, the charge is six hundred dollars (\$600) for them to come, two hundred dollars (\$200) an hour of their time and one hundred dollars (\$100) for storage; this nine hundred dollars (\$900) must be paid upfront and can be recovered civilly.

Councilmember Bergwerf asked if Morgan Creek Grill has complained, but Administrator Tucker replied that they have not complained recently. The issue was brought up by people who see these boats parked there for exceedingly long periods of time and call the City asking for something to be done. Typically these people are paying customers at the marina, and they see these other people cheating and want the City to act.

In the Administrator's opinion, the important things to be learned from this discussion are that the City is limited in what it can do and the restaurant must initiate any action.

Chair Bettelli recalled that originally the City had more leeway because the dock space was not included in the Morgan Creek lease as it is today.

Chief Buckhannon stated that the restaurant management was told that they could hire an off-duty officer to monitor the boat slips when traffic is heavy as a short-term fix; in his opinion, the only long-term cure is to manage the slips like they do the restaurant and put someone outside overseeing who parks in those slips.

Administrator Tucker stated that another option to consider when the lease is re-negotiated is to take those slips away from the restaurant and put them under the purview of the marina manager. Mayor Cronin thought that this was the most viable solution; the restaurant could then work out an arrangement with the marina manager for some number of slips.

D. "No Parking" Signs for Palm Boulevard between 40th and 41st Avenues

Chair Bettelli stated that he had put this on the agenda because one (1) property owner has stated that where the street widens into two (2) lanes, parking by beach-goers is very dangerous; in addition, the property owners find it very difficult to enter the traffic when cars are parked along that stretch.

Chief Buckhannon said that the City would refer the matter to SCDOT to determine whether a safety issue exists, and he will make the request.

E. Discussion of Staffing in the Fire Department

Chief Graham referred to the discussion of Quick Response Vehicles (QRVs) which dealt with personnel issues in the Department and stated that the turnover in the Department is high, which means that experienced people are leaving and inexperienced people are replacing them. The Chief explained that an Isle of Palms firefighter is not like a City of Charleston or North Charleston firefighter; in the larger departments, the personnel are specialized, but here the firefighters are also water rescuers, technicians, HazMat, EMTs, etc. When an employee with five (5) years' experience leaves, the City loses more than a firefighter. In the past, the City has attracted firefighters from other local municipalities, but the City's pay scale has fallen below other local departments that Isle of Palms cannot compete. Chief Graham stated that the new hires have great potential and the future of the department looks good – if the City can keep these people once they are trained.

In addition to the pay issue, the stations are understaffed; currently there are five (5) people at Station 1 and four (4) people at Station 2. Personnel are too frequently working beyond capacity to make sure that everyone is safe; the Department is calling for mutual aid more frequently, but there is a delay in their getting on the island. Despite national standards, the Chief knows that the Department will never staff to those levels, but to equalize the stations now would be a great help.

Chief Graham voiced her opinion that the City lost its hiring edge financially when the cost of living raises were eliminated. She stated that the firefighters being hired at the Isle of Palms have Firefighter 1 and Firefighter 2 training and some type of experience; there are other local departments that hire people off the street, send them to training, and pay them more than new hires here. Firefighters from these other departments are coming here to work part-time, and it isn't long before everyone is talking pay rates.

The Chief said that her goal is to make a presentation to the Personnel Committee to get consideration for some kind of pay adjustment.

Chief Graham reported that in 2011 the Department lost six (6) firefighters, and so far this year, six (6) people have resigned, and she is expecting to receive several more from people who have applied to and been interviewed by the City of Charleston. In addition to higher pay, the Chief reported that some of the firefighters have said that they do not feel safe on all of their calls because they are being asked to do things beyond their abilities; they felt that, if they were in a larger department, they would be safer when responding to calls.

Both Mayor Cronin and Chair Bettelli encouraged the Chief to make a presentation to the Personnel Committee; Mayor Cronin encouraged Chief Buckhannon to determine whether the Police Department was also losing experienced personnel due to differences in pay. As Mayor, he does not want the City's personnel to be underpaid for their efforts on behalf of the City.

Councilmember Bergwerf reminded the Committee that the Chief also needs another firefighter at Station 2.

F. Contracts in Excess of \$10,000

- 1. Award of a contract to Safe Industries in the amount of \$27,161.53 for 5 air packs and accessories included in the FY14 budget.**
- 2. Award of a contract to T2 Systems for 3 Casio IT-9000E Handheld Ticket Writers in the amount of \$12, 822.00 included in the FY14 budget.**

MOTION: Chair Bettelli moved to award a contract to Safe Industries and to T2 Systems as detailed above; Mayor Cronin seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

6. Highlights of Department Reports

Fire Department – Chief Graham

Chief Graham reported that on June 1, personnel responded to two (2) swimmers in distress near Breach Inlet; upon arrival, crews found a female victim that had already been pulled out of the water. A jet ski was launched to rescue a male victim still in the water; the female was turned over the Charleston County and transported. Personnel also responded to several weather related incidents involving trees and debris removal. Along with Charleston County EMS, personnel responded to Dewees Island for a patient experiencing an allergic reaction; due to radio channel issues, response took forty-five (45) minutes and is being reviewed. On July 16, personnel responded to a motor vehicle accident at the intersection of Palm Boulevard and 4th Avenue; the male victim had lost control of his motorcycle running from the police; he was transported by Charleston County EMS. The Chief gave a detailed report of the June 30th drowning and the efforts on behalf of Fire Department personnel to save the man involved; the personnel involved will receive a written commendation for their actions. In June, Fire Department personnel responded to one hundred thirty-six (136) calls (a 10-year record), and fifty-seven (57) calls were EMS calls. Two (2) fire inspections were performed in the month, and no violations were found. Vehicle maintenance was higher than usual due to replacing the main boom hydraulic cylinder for Tower 1002 at approximately forty-eight hundred dollars (\$4,800). Chief Graham and Engineers Bolen and Puckhaber were involved with the U.S. Coast Guard as they performed swimmer training off the coast of the island; this was training that IOP personnel have not had the opportunity to get in the past.

Police Department – Chief Buckhannon

The Chief reported that, on June 28th, there was a burglary in the 400 block on Carolina Boulevard; through extensive investigation, evidence was collected that led to the identification of suspects in this case. The stolen property was recovered, as well as a significant amount of property that had been reported stolen in a number of other cases in multiple jurisdictions. As a result of the work done by IOP officers, the City of North Charleston, the City of Charleston and the Dorchester County Sheriff's Office were able to clear a number of their outstanding burglary

cases. Other agencies are currently in the process of determining whether any of the recovered stolen property is related to their open cases; as of this date, fifteen (15) burglary cases have been cleared throughout the tri-county area. In June, dispatchers responded to forty-five hundred four (4,504) calls; of those calls, three thousand four hundred thirty-seven (3,437) were for the Isle of Palms Police Department. Of four hundred forty-four (444) traffic stops, one hundred thirty-three (133) tickets were issued; eleven hundred thirteen (1,113) parking tickets were issued. Officers wrote one hundred seventy-seven (177) reports in the month of June. There were fifty-four (54) arrests in the month; thirty-nine (39) of the tickets were for alcohol violations. Three (3) citations were written for noise violations. Two (2) officers completed Bicycle Officer Certification.

7. Miscellaneous Business

Next Meeting Date: 5:00 p.m., Monday, August 5th in the Conference Room.

8. Executive Session

MOTION: Chair Bettelli moved to go into Executive Session at 6:08 p.m. to discuss disciplinary action in the Police Department; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Committee returned to regular session at 6:22 p.m. having not taken a vote or any action in Executive Session.

9. Adjourn

Motion: Mayor Cronin moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:23 p.m.; Chair Bettelli seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk