

Public Safety Committee
10:00 a.m., Tuesday, May 6, 2014

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 10:00 a.m., Tuesday, May 6, 2014 in the City Hall Conference Room, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilmembers Bergwerf and Carroll, Chair Bettelli, City Administrator Tucker, Fire Chief Graham and 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 according to with the Freedom of Information Act.

2. **Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes**

MOTION: Councilmember Bergwerf moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of April 9, 2014 as submitted; Councilmember Carroll seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. **Citizens' Comments – None**

4. **Old Business**

A. **FY15 Budgets**

Administrator Tucker reported that the version of the budget in the meeting packets incorporates all changes made at the Ways and Means Committee meeting; the Administrator directed the Committee to the first page of the budget with the transfers-in from tourism funds, the reduction to fuel, the increase to the Business Licenses revenue and the proposed increase in Municipal Accommodations Taxes. The increase in Municipal Accommodations tax will be used to fund the Beach Services Officers at forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) and the City's expense for beach recycling; Charleston County is suggesting that the City use the excess funds from the increase toward the construction of the public restrooms. No substantial changes were made to Police or Fire Capital Projects.

The public hearing on the budget is scheduled before the Ways and Means Committee meeting at 5:30 p.m., May 20th; changes to the FY15 budget can be made at the Ways and Means Committee meeting or it can stand in its present form and go forward for Second Reading.

Councilmember Carroll voiced the opinion that members appreciated the level of detail that occurred in the budget workshop.

Administrator Tucker commented that there certainly was more Council participation in the decision-making relative to the transfers-in; there were also more tools created to assist in making those decisions, many of which were made by staff in the past. In the past, staff thought that those decisions were reasonable and that was proven by statistical data in this budget year. The Administrator reiterated the fact that Council must address the need for additional revenues in the future; the City cannot sustain support of the budget from tourism funds. In addition, the Administrator noted that revenues from overnight tourists are significant, but the revenues generated by the daily beach visitors are relatively minor.

Councilmember Carroll applauded all of the City employees “who took the time, headaches and efforts to create those additional tools.” The Administrator reported that “there was a lot of brain power in one room and coming at her [the City Treasurer] with a lot of ideas, much of the work” fell to Treasurer Suggs to translate those ideas to useable tools.

B. Status of Traffic Counters

Chief Buckhannon stated that, as soon as he receives the permit from SCDOT, the purchase order will be sent to the vendor; he added that he has also a vendor lined up to cut the holes and put the epoxy in.

Responding to Councilmember Bergwerf’s question, the Chief said that the permit application is under review by an engineer.

C. Discussion Related to Digital Sign

MOTION: Since Marie Langlois of Stantec is detained in traffic, Councilmember Bergwerf moved to reorder the *Agenda* to delay this discussion until she arrives; Councilmember Carroll seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. New Business

A. Consideration of 2014 Project Requests for CTC Funds

Administrator Tucker stated that, in recent years, the City has been requesting allocations toward drainage as the first priority and bike paths as the second request; she reminded the Committee that this fund does bike paths, drainage, unpaved roads that need to be paved and other forms of infrastructure related to transportation.

Councilmember Bergwerf stated that she thinks these are two (2) worthy projects.

Chair Bettelli commented on the ponding that occurs in the handicapped parking area on Palm Boulevard at 21st Avenue; he stated that, when it rains, those parking spaces cannot be used because water will get six to eight (6-8) inches deep and does not drain.

Councilmember Carroll agreed that the drainage project should stay as the first priority, but he expressed the opinion that a bike path on one (1) side of the road leaves cyclists in the roadway.

Chair Bettelli noted that cyclists cannot be stopped from riding in the roadway.

The Administrator stated that her understanding of the law was that, if there were AASHTO standard regulation bike paths on both sides of the road, municipalities could enforce the use of the bike path only.

Councilmember Bergwerf asked for a clearer understanding of the City's request for bike paths; Administrator Tucker explained the request was for bike paths the length of the island, from Breach Inlet to 57th Avenue on both sides of the road, if feasible, and an improved exodus as cyclists comes off the Connector.

The Administrator voiced doubt that the CTC Committee would get to a third choice if the handicapped parking on Palm were to be added to the list, but it would put the need before them.

In Councilmember Bergwerf's opinion, the bike path was a huge project that may or may not ever happen; on the other hand, the handicap parking is a service to the citizens of the island; therefore, she would prefer for that to be the number two (2) priority. It is also a smaller project that could be funded.

Although the 9th Avenue beach access is considered to be handicap friendly, the only regulation handicap beach access is at 21st Avenue.

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to submit the Phase 2 Drainage Project as the first priority, to submit the 21st Avenue handicap accessibility as the second priority and move the bike paths to the third priority; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

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

6. Highlights of Departmental Reports

Fire Department

Chief Graham explained that, with the meeting so early in the month, her staff had not yet received all of the information that is typically included in the monthly report. From the information gathered to-date, the Chief reported that personnel had responded to eighty-nine (89) calls in April of which thirty-four (34) were EMS calls. On April 4th, personnel responded to an automobile accident where the driver had hit a palm tree. On April 17th, personnel reported to a reported structure fire on Yacht Harbor Court; en route the crew was informed that a child had placed the call. Upon arrival, fire personnel saw no signs of smoke or fire and a family loading up their vehicle; after speaking with an adult, it turned that a child had placed the call. On April 18th, Charleston Fire Department Marine 101 and the Coast Guard assisted IOP fire personnel on jet skis from the sea and the air with the search for reported paddle boarders in distress. After several hours, the search was discontinued; the paddle boarder later reported to law enforcement that they were safe. Chief Graham reported that there will be a meeting on May 14th to get information about refurbishing the 2003 ladder trucks and the 2003 pumper; she hopes to get a legitimate estimate to do this for the FY16 budget to extend the life of these vehicles.

Administrator Tucker announced that the Disaster Expo will be from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 21st at the Public Safety Building; she urged the Committee members to spread the news to residents of the island, especially newcomers.

Chief Graham commented that flyers will be distributed to the Keenagers at their May meeting, and flyers will be distributed to the schools closer to the date of the event.

Chair Bettelli stated that the Committee would go back to the item of *Old Business* that was delayed, the digital sign. The Chair indicated that there have been some questions regarding the suitability of a digital sign; he, on the other hand, sees the digital sign as a means of saving employee time. The Chair added that the digital sign can be updated easily and quickly from another location, especially on water conditions to protect the visitors and residents of the island.

Administrator Tucker remarked that having the digital sign for the Disaster Expo would be wonderful; the sign could be updated for that day to remind people to attend and, possibly, attract their attention about the Expo before they get home from work.

The Administrator explained that the digital sign is in the FY14 budget; staff has moved forward with the design and is in possession of the encroachment permit, as well as the RFB and contract. The City is ready to go to bids for the two (2) signs, but the Administrator stated that staff was reluctant to put the project out for bid and receive those bids with the possibility that a contract would not be awarded. Administrator Tucker added that, getting bids without awarding a contract would be unfair to the vendors and an expense to the City to go through the process if it is not the will of the policy-making body to go through the change.

If the City is not going to do the digital sign, the City will need to consider what alternatives to pursue for the existing boards. Staff has not refurbished the signs in anticipation of replacing them in the wayfinding theme with a digital component. The Administrator offered the suggestion that maybe the signs were unnecessary with the ability for people to gather data electronically via the web or text messaging, and new signs should only say "Welcome" to eliminate the need for the constant changing out of letters.

Staff thought the digital sign was the best alternative since it would eliminate the risk of having personnel go to the signs changing the messages. The electronic sign allows the City to continue with the messaging and possibly increase the messaging.

Councilmember Carroll noted that the City has gotten a lot of publicity over the digital signs, and, based on that, other members of Council have been receiving calls and e-mails about the sign like he has. The primary concern was about the aesthetics of the Isle of Palms; of the fifty (50) or so calls he has received, one (1) person was in favor of the signs. The Councilmember said that he is the person who changes out the letters on the sign at his office, and he likes the laid back look. He added that he has contacted his "sign guy" who quoted twelve hundred dollars (\$1,200) annually to refurbish the City's signs. He realizes that staying with the same message boards entails personnel making regular trips to change the message, but it can be done, and the Councilmember likes the feel of a laid back community.

Councilmember Bergwerf said that she too has received some e-mails, probably less than a twelve (12); the e-mails have all been structured, and she suspects that all members of Council have received them. She repeated that money will have to be spent on the signs, one way or the another; she said the signs are in character with the island and will be basically the same

sign with the digital screen at the bottom. When people have said that they do not want another Myrtle Beach, she asks them if they have seen the signs and then explains that it will be a wooden sign with a digital component. People have responded that they think the signs will be alright. Councilmember Bergwerf stated that the City should proceed; she voiced the opinion that people on the island depend on the message boards for information.

Chair Bettelli agreed that the City should move forward with the digital sign; he expressed that the residents need up-to-date information. He noted that paying someone to change letters on the sign boards rather than doing the task for which they were hired is a waste of money.

Administrator Tucker commented that the reason Marie Langlois was in attendance was to answer any questions member of the Committee might have relative to how the system works or the components.

According to Ms. Langlois, the City has three (3) options for changing the signs; they are:

- 1) To purchase a wireless modem that will require a direct line of sight from the modem antenna to the computer on which the software has been loaded; the City will buy one software package that can be loaded on to multiple computers.
- 2) To get a cable company, like Comcast, to run a cable line to the computers and hookup that way.
- 3) To hookup a wireless modem and router to the back of the signs; access is provided through a company like Verizon or AT&T; the user will go to an internet address and type in the sign changes; there is a monthly fee associated with this option, similar to a cell phone.

Assistant Dziuban stated that with Option 3, the user does not have to be on the island; the changes can be made from anywhere on a computer with internet access.

Ms. Langlois said that she is trying to get the best price for the City. With Option 1, the user will take a laptop to the sign to make the changes at Breach Inlet, but a user will have a direct line of sight from City Hall.

Councilmember Carroll asked if the budgeted thirty-five thousand dollars (\$35,000) for the signs was for Option 1, and Ms. Langlois confirmed that to be true saying that is the way it would be quoted today.

Ms. Langlois explained that Stantec was given a budget; she expects that there may be a need for tweaking of the sign components once the bids come in. She reported that she would get pricing on all three (3) options.

The Administrator stated that the City already pays for Wi-Fi service for wireless access; this might work for Option 3 eliminating a new expense.

Assistant Dziuban added that, from her experience with the newsletter and website, not being location dependent is a very positive element.

Administrator Tucker stated that she would like support from the Committee to proceed with bidding the project; she repeated that the City can get a negative reputation if it puts projects out to bid and then not do them because it is not the will of the group.

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to authorize staff to proceed with bidding the electronic signs; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED on a vote of 2 to 1 with Councilmember Carroll casting the nay vote.

Ms. Langlois is also working with the City to get the encroachment permit for the traffic counters; she told the Committee that she had spoken with the reviewer last week to try to expedite the permit.

6. Highlights of Departmental reports

Police Department

Chief Buckhannon stated that season has begun; there have been a couple of larcenies on the beach starting April 11th. On April 27th, someone reported that a shoulder bag, cooler and towel were removed from the beach while he was swimming; the victim's car was missing from the municipal parking lot when he went to leave. The vehicle was recovered after it was found burned in Berkeley County. Another problem police are seeing is the theft of golf carts; the Chief said the carts all look alike and use the same key; people are picking up the wrong golf cart when they leave the beach.

Administrator Tucker noted that gold carts manufactured under the brand "Club Car" all use the same key she said that people need to put a distinguishing mark to identify their cart or remember to lock it.

A "Meet and Greet" is scheduled for Thursday, May 8th in front of 3504 Cameron Boulevard; the residents are hosting the event from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

During the month of May, dispatchers responded to five thousand five hundred twenty-four (5,524) calls; of the total, four thousand three hundred twenty-seven (4,327) calls were for the Police Department. There were four hundred three (403) traffic stops where one hundred fifteen (115) received tickets. Of the twenty-eight (28) arrests in May, the majority were for alcohol and/or narcotics.

Councilmember Carroll asked whether officers were seeing more marijuana or other drugs on the island. Chief Buckhannon reported that the City has oxycodone, some pills, some cocaine and heroin cases.

Officers wrote nineteen (19) warnings for noise violations and two (2) citations were written.

Administrator Tucker announced that she received notification yesterday that the Isle of Palms has been named one (1) of forty (40) Safe Cities in South Carolina.

The Administrator asked Chief Buckhannon to report on his dialogues with both Charleston County and SCDOT relative to improving signage. The Administrator wants to ask SCDOT to

put up an electronic sign on the other side of the Connector on the right side of the road indicating that both lanes provide access to Rifle Range Road and Highway 17.

The Chief related speaking with the Charleston County engineer who is in charge of road improvements about signage telling people that there is now a second lane open between the Connector and Highway 17; he said they would not do that. The timing of the traffic light at Rifle Range is part of the problem in getting people off the island; the plan is to have the timing corrected by May 21st, which is the grand opening date.

Councilmember Carroll stated that he had two (2) houses rented a couple of weekends ago that he thought could potentially be a problem; after giving the renters a stern warning, Councilmember Carroll went to the Police Department and asked that they add these houses to their drive-by. The Councilmember thought the police presence was a deterrent and suggested that the Police Department offer this service to other real estate businesses on the island.

7. Miscellaneous Business

The Chair asked the Administrator to read the Proclamation for Safe Boating Week into the minutes.

Councilmember Carroll stated that he wants to make sure that the employees and volunteers who work July 4th are provided hot dogs and hamburgers as they were last year. He said that he would do whatever was necessary to assist.

Next Meeting Date: 10:00 a.m., Monday, June 2nd in the City Hall Conference Room.

Administrator Tucker stated that, at the Recreation Committee meeting of May 5th, Councilmember Carroll indicated that he would like Council to consider holding all Committee meetings during the day and possibly all held in one or two (1-2) days. The Administrator said that she would present the idea to the Mayor; therefore, it might come forward for consideration.

Responding to Councilmember Bergwerf's question about how this would affect staff, the Administrator explained that holding meetings all in one (1) day allows her and staff more time to get the work done; it means that the Clerk will get all of the minutes to transcribe at once, which is no change as she is often up to the Friday before Council meeting before all are done. Administrator Tucker continued that anything that gives the staff fewer evening hours to have to be present would be an improvement for her and for staff; for example, there are three (3) night meetings this week.

8. Executive Session – not needed

9. Adjourn

**MOTION: Chair Bettelli moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:07 a.m.;
Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted:
Marie Copeland, City Clerk