

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

1:00 P.M., Thursday, November 5, 2015

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was called to order at 1:00 p.m., Thursday, November 5, 2015 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, Police Chief Buckhannon, Fire Chief Graham, Assistant Administrator Fragoso and 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 notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

2. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of October 8, 2015 as submitted; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Citizens' Comments

A. Request for Polar Plunge as a City-sponsored event – Deputy Chief Stan Gragg of the Mount Pleasant Police Department

Deputy Chief Gragg stated that the plunge was to take place on Saturday, February 20th with registration being at 10:00 to 10:30 a.m. and plunging into the ocean around noon, which will be about mid-tide. Last year they received nine thousand dollars (\$9,000) for Special Olympics, and the goal for this year is considerably more.

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to recommend the Polar Plunge at the Windjammer scheduled for February 20, 2016 to benefit Special Olympics as a City-sponsored event; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

B. Request for Volleyball at the Windjammer as a City-sponsored event

Bobby Ross said that he was interested in having a volleyball league again in 2016, starting April 5th and running through August 9th. He stated that he has scheduled a tournament for June 18th and 19th because the tides will be perfect then. He noted that there currently is no beach behind the Windjammer, and if there is still no beach when these events are scheduled, they will not happen.

MOTION: Councilmember Bettelli moved to recommend a volleyball league and a volleyball tournament on June 18th and 19th, based on the condition of the beach at the time, as City-sponsored events; Councilmember Carroll seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

C. Discussion of Service Provided by Charleston County EMS as it related to Development of Quick Response Vehicle

Administrator Tucker indicated that she had requested that an individual from Charleston County EMS attend the meeting, but schedules did not meld and no one was able to come.

4. Old Business

Update on golf cart path between 20th Avenue and the Island Center

The Administrator reported that the City has dialogued with SCDOT about having both pedestrian and golf cart access without having to relocate utilities. When Director Kerr spoke with SCDOT, they did not say “no;” they voiced some concerns, some opinions and some comments about it. Staff continues to work with SCDOT, and the Administrator and Mayor have a meeting with them in November on the island where this will be one (1) of the issues discussed.

5. New Business

A. Discussion of coyotes on the island

Chair Bettelli stated that he thought the other Committee members had received emails from citizens about their encounters with coyotes.

Chief Buckhannon indicated that the dispatchers had received several reports of coyote sightings on the island in the past ten (10) days and that the coyotes are much more widespread on the island than he had previously thought. The Chief reported that he has been in contact with both Sullivan’s Island and Mount Pleasant to learn how they are dealing with the coyote issue. He indicated that he had asked Deputy Chief Cragg to stay to tell the Committee what Mount Pleasant has been doing. Chief Buckhannon distributed a brochure that he modeled after from Mount Pleasant to distribute in the community; the Chief has also done a mockup of a sign that could be posted in areas known to be where coyotes gather to warn residents.

Chair Bettelli stated that he thought the Chief should order several signs to have on hand in case the City decides to deploy them.

Councilmember Carroll commented that the coyotes would not stay in any one (1) place long, and, with the additional signs to be added for parking management, he thought coyote warning signs would not be effective.

Councilmember Bergwerf said that, on Sullivan’s Island, signs have been placed at the beach accesses.

Deputy Chief Gragg told the Committee that they had started using the signs where they were experiencing the biggest problem - Patriots Point. Since this was the heart of their problem, the Police Department flooded that area with signs, especially around the playgrounds, because that area draws many tourists who would be unaware of the problem; he stated that there are no other coyote warning signs in the town. The Department did a big information campaign; the information is on the Town’s website as well as the Coyote Management Plan. Officers went to

homeowner associations to inform them of the actions being taken and what to expect of the coyotes in their area; he said that the Coyote Management Plan basically reviews the levels of

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exposure with a coyote. When they have reports of aggressive coyotes, officers go back to the homeowners and inform them that a trapper would be called, but only with the agreement of the homeowners; he noted that any citizen can call in a trapper.

City literature on coyotes is on the City's website, Twitter and Facebook.

Chief Buckhannon stated that police officers and the Animal Control Officers are not in a position to trap coyotes; the trappers listed on the DNR website can euthanize them.

For the Administrator, the most important message to residents is to understand what they might be doing to perpetuate the coyote problem. In addition, she reported that literature states that efforts to eradicate the coyotes only causes them to procreate more. The best thing people can do is to make it unfriendly for them to be on the island.

Councilmember Bergwerf suggested that the brochure be included in any type of mass mailing to residents relative to the parking management plan.

2. Consideration of out-of-budget purchase for 1 Ford interceptor sedan from Benson Ford in the amount of \$33,000 to replace vehicle totaled in accident

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to recommend the out-of-budget purchase of 1 Ford Interceptor sedan from Benson Ford in the amount of \$33,000; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded.

Councilmember Carroll asked whether the City would receive insurance proceeds for the wrecked vehicle; Chief Buckhannon responded that, considering the deductible, the City would receive about eighty-nine hundred dollars (\$8,900).

The vehicle being replaced is a 2012 Chevrolet Impala; he acknowledged that the Ford was a bit more expensive than the Impala, but the Impalas have had a lot of mechanical problems.

Administrator Tucker added that the pricing quoted includes upfitting the vehicle, and he concurred.

VOTE: The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

6. Highlights of Departmental Reports

Fire Department – Chief Graham

Highlights of activities in October included personnel responding to a residence on 55th Avenue to assist two (2) elderly residents with setting up a sump pump in the basement that was flooding due to the heavy rains. On October 4th, personnel reported to Dewees Island Marina to the reports of a sinking boat; crews found a twenty-one foot (21 ft.) boat taking on water. Using a dewatering pump, crews were able to right the boat and notified DNR since there was a small

fuel spill. Personnel also responded to a thirty-five foot (35 ft.) shrimp boat that had run aground in Price's Inlet. Since no one was in distress, the boat was anchored and awaited other assistance.

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Personnel responded to seventy-eight (78) calls; twenty-eight (28) were EMS calls. The Fire Inspector conducted twenty-six (26) inspections where he found twenty-six (26) violations. In the month of October, all personnel received training on firefighter survival, fire hose, pump operations and fire ground operations.

Vehicle maintenance has been divided between routine maintenance and maintenance required as a result of operating the vehicles through the 1,000 year flood and subsequent, unusually high tides. The lower half of the schedule lists the repairs created by the storm; insurance claims have been filed, and some will be paid and some will be denied. In addition, the elevator pit at Station 2 flooded and shorted out the pump. Total damage for the Fire Department were in excess of forty-three thousand dollars (\$43,000).

Chief Graham and Battalion Chief Maibach met with the Charleston County EMS Deputy Chief and Assistant Chief relative to medical coverage on the island and the feasibility of increasing the EMS presence on the island.

Fire personnel also assisted residents with the removal of trees and otherwise as needed after the storm and flooding.

Police Department – Chief Buckhannon

Officers assisted the Recreation Department with traffic control for persons attending Ghostly Tide Tales on the beach; in addition, they assisted with the annual Halloween Carnival at the Recreation Center. The Chief recognized all of the members of the Department during and after the flooding event at the first of the month; he stated that everyone had worked together to shut down roads, establish detours for the safety of the residents and answered numerous phone calls about the effects of the flooding. In particular, the Chief recognized Beach Services Officers Skinner and Tyson who have been working to repair direction street signs and cutting back shrubs or bushes that are obstructing the view of pedestrians and motorists. On October 7th, Pfc. Dylan Reynolds responded to a medical call on the beach near Grand Pavilion and arrived to find Captain Eagle who was beginning medical aid on a visitor who was in cardiac arrest. Pfc. Reynolds retrieved an AED unit from the hotel staff and activated it; the patient was transported to the hospital and is expected to make a full recovery. Dispatchers responded to four thousand eighty-one (4,081) calls; three thousand two hundred forty-five (3,245) were for the Police Department. One hundred twenty-one (121) reports were written during the month of October that included fourteen (14) arrests. Officers made two hundred thirty (230) traffic stops and issued fifty-three (53) traffic tickets. With the tourist season in the past, officer training has been increased; firearms training was done in September as well as training on shotguns. On the livability front, the City received sixteen (16) noise complaints that yielded six (6) citations and five (5) warnings, and five (5) were unfounded calls.

Referencing an email from a resident, Chair Bettelli commented that the Chief was making an effort to have officers on the beach at 10:00 a.m., when dogs are first allowed to be off-leash. He asked Chief Buckhannon how that was working.

The Chief reported that officers, particularly the Animal Control Officers, pay special attention at this time to dogs who might not have a license; he noted that, despite the difficulty in catching people, some warnings have been written. To have effective actions on the beach, people have to cooperate with the officers by letting them know when problems occur.

7. Miscellaneous Business

Despite being the councilmember who suggested the new outside placards reminding people of the noise ordinance, Councilmember Carroll reported that he had heard complaints from rental property owners and renters about the use of the words “absolute quiet.”

Chair Bettelli stated that he did not think those words were included in the ordinance.

Administrator Tucker reminded the Committee that they had looked at the placard before it was distributed and that she, too, had planned to bring the topic up for discussion since she and others have received emails and phone calls. Although some people did not question the wording and placed the placard on their deck or pool area, others thought that the City had made some change to the noise ordinance making it more stringent. The Administrator recalled that changes were discussed, but no change has been made to the ordinance. The placard was intended to be an additional reminder to guests of rental properties, who may not have read their rental agreement or the placard posted near the front door that a noise ordinance is in effect. She indicated that there has been no change to the ordinance, but that City Council was trying to be responsive to citizens’ complaints who have been disturbed in their homes by noises emanating from gathering areas i.e. pools, decks and porches, of rental properties to add an additional reminder. Once the intention was explained, most people understood and posted the notices.

Additionally, a couple of people feel very strongly that the wording on the placard was an over-reach and an imposition to rental property owners; the Administrator noted that the majority of her callers were owners of smaller properties. Disturbing someone in the quiet repose of their home is a violation of the noise ordinance and has been a violation for a number of years.

Administrator Tucker indicated that the Committee might want to suggest changing the language on the placard and asking everyone to re-post or relaxing the regulation altogether or take no action at all at this time. One email recommended mapping the noise complaints and have that map available; the Administrator commented that she thought that could be accomplished easily using the Raids Online program in the Police Department.

Chair Bettelli reiterated that the intent of the placard is to keep the island livable for its residents. Despite the City’s reliance on the dollars generated by its visitors, they must understand the guide-lines by which the residents live.

Councilmember Carroll said that he continues to support the use of the placards and that he was only questioning the words “absolute quiet.”

The Administrator stated that a change in the language on the notice was not going to change the behavior.

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Chief Buckhannon pointed out that every month the livability report is posted on the City's website and the list includes each address; in addition, the report states whether the person(s) is a renter or a resident or long-term renter – the information is not aimed only at renters.

A possible solution for the future would be for the square footage of the property would dictate whether the outside placard was necessary was suggested by the Administrator.

Next Meeting Date: 9:30 a.m., Wednesday, January 6, 2016 in the Conference Room.

8. Executive Session – not needed

9. Adjourn

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:03 p.m.; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk