

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

9:30 a.m., Wednesday, May 6, 2015

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 9:30 a.m., Wednesday, May 6, 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, Administrator Tucker, Fire Chief Graham, Police Chief Buckhannon, Assistant 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 in accordance 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, 2015 as submitted; Councilmember Carroll seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. **Citizens' Comments – None**

4. Old Business

A. Discussion of Quick Response Vehicle (QRV)

Chief Graham stated that the reason for the two (2) cost calculations was that she had originally used the incorrect percentage for fringe benefits. The corrected schedule includes both January 2015 and 2016 merits and COLA, total fringe benefits of approximately twenty-three point four percent (23.4%) and overtime pay rates that are one and a half (1½) times the employee's base hourly rate.

Based on research of past years, the highest call volume days have been Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday for the Fire Department with the majority of calls coming between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.; peaks tend to occur between 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. and between 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. In an effort to get the most for the taxpayers' money, the proposal was to operate a QRV-like vehicle four (4) days a week; the unit the Chief has been looking at would not be a transport vehicle, but would be a vehicle staffed by IOP personnel paid at the overtime rate driving a different vehicle and using the same equipment. Those staffing the vehicle would have the same level of training and the same level of treatment given by dedicated personnel, either a firefighter EMT or an engineer EMT on the truck. Chief Graham reported that she continues to try to work out a partnering arrangement with EMS to have one (1) paramedic and one (1) firefighter. For a vehicle, the Chief is looking at a four-wheel (4-wheel) drive pickup with an extended back to carry the same type of equipment being carried now, and the vehicle could drive on the beach. The Chief noted that, if there were multiple calls at the same time, the big trucks would roll to ensure that personnel get to where they would be needed.

If an IOP EMT was paired with a Charleston County paramedic on a relatively minor call and a more serious call came in, the IOP personnel would not leave the person they were assisting unless relieved by a co-worker.

The estimated cost was fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) for a four-wheel drive vehicle and equipment. The Chief explained that, with a pickup truck, personnel would have the ability to go to the beach and give CPR in the back of the truck as the person was driven off the beach.

Councilmember Carroll asked for an update on the possibility of pairing IOP personnel with Charleston County personnel in their vehicle.

Chief Graham stated that she has had multiple conversations with Charleston County EMS about this but she was not sure what their commitment would be. The Chief cautioned that, if partnered with Charleston County EMS and a call in Mount Pleasant was more serious than the one on the island, the EMS would leave the Isle of Palms along with the IOP EMT.

Councilmember Carroll agreed that a QRV was something Council should look at, but he did not know when the time would be right to take on the added costs. As circumstances stand today, Isle of Palms' residents were covered with any kind of call with the kind of equipment it has.

Chief Graham recalled that, in the initial round of discussion about three (3) years ago, the proposal was to bring on six (6) additional personnel, two (2) per shift, that would be assigned to the vehicle, but the personnel costs were too high for the City to absorb. This proposal to use IOP personnel on a limited basis was to keep the costs at a reasonable level.

Councilmember Bergwerf agreed that the residents were covered, but the number of calls has increased every year; as described, this vehicle and personnel configuration would give the island added capabilities when they were most needed, i.e. the weekends.

Chair Bettelli voiced his opinion that partnering one IOP EMT with a Charleston County paramedic was not a great idea; he did not want IOP personnel leaving the island.

Councilmember Carroll said that he supported having Charleston County deploy a paramedic to the Isle of Palms for the summer, and especially on weekends.

Chair Bettelli asked the Chief to continue her dialogues with Charleston County with the goal of having full coverage on the island.

Administrator Tucker summarized the discussion as she understood it:

- The Committee was not moving the QRV forward for inclusion in the FY16 budget;
- The City can do everything collectively, including elected officials, to try to exact out of Charleston County what Council wants; and
- If the City was unable to do that, over the next twelve (12) months, the Fire Department will respond to all medical calls as it responds now.

The Administrator stated that it took very little research in fire magazines and literature to learn quickly that QRVs for medical calls was the wave of the future among fire departments all over the country because buildings and homes are being built to newer codes and made more disaster resistant, to include fire. The medical responses have become the big demand on fire

departments; personnel continue to need training in rescue and fire, but many departments have gone to some iteration or different protocol on medical response.

Councilmember Carroll commented that the City might have had the money to go toward a QRV if it had not decided to purchase the type of replacement for Rescue One. Since money was tight for the City, he did not think now was the time to forward with a QRV.

Councilmember Bergwerf contended that if the City truly wanted to go forward now, Council could find the money to do so; in her opinion, the City was in a good financial position.

B. Discussion of Dogs on the Beach during the Day

Chair Bettelli remarked that Sullivan's Island does not allow dogs on the beach between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. each day, and many people from off-island have been bringing their dogs to the Isle of Palms to run on the beach. The Chair voiced his concern about the health of dogs on the beach in the middle of the day; in addition, these off-island dog-owners have also been contributing to the traffic issues on the island.

Councilmember Bergwerf recalled that a previous Animal Control Officer was adamant that having dogs on the beach in the heat of the day amounted to "cruel and unusual punishment." She reported that Sullivan's Island allowed dogs off leash on the beach outside the hours that dogs were not allowed on the beach, but the Isle of Palms has limitations when a dog can be off-leash.

Administrator Tucker said that she has learned that dogs in the wild were den animals and would never naturally go to the beach; a dog's enjoyment of the surf has been taught to them as they have been domesticated.

Chief Buckhannon commented that the Isle of Palms was one of the more liberal beach communities on the subject of dogs on the beach especially in the winter months when dogs are allowed on the beach for eighteen (18) hours of the day.

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to recommend to City Council that dogs not be allowed on the beach between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. in the summer months; the motion DIED for lack of a second.

MOTION: Councilmember Bergwerf moved to recommend to City Council that, between Memorial Day and Labor Day, dog not be allowed on the beach between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.; Councilmember Bettelli seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

C. Discussion of Managed Beach Parking Plan

Administrator Tucker announced that the new parking plan, referred to as Option C, was now in legal review and that the letter to SCDOT was being prepared indicating the alternations that have been made and requesting approval. Ironically, the day after Council endorsed Option C, the City received the signage plan and encroachment information from the consultant for Concept B. The

Administrator foreshadowed that Council would soon be presented with an ordinance for the managed beach parking plan to allow for implementation and enforcement.

In addition, the City has received the encroachment permit for golf cart parking at 28th and 31st Avenues, and, later on the *Agenda*, the Committee would discuss the possibility for additional golf cart parking on the island.

The Administrator informed the Committee that the "purple" version of the budget did include the expenses and revenue associated with the implementation of Concept C for FY16; those expenses and revenue would extend over two (2) fiscal years.

Councilmember Carroll asked whether the implementation could be moved up.

Explaining that the City still has much to do before implementing the program, Administrator Tucker advised against rushing; included in the to-do list were getting encroachment permits for all of the signs, design and fabrication of signage. The Administrator assured the Committee that it would continue to work to be ready as soon as staff can be ready; she suggested that the possibility existed that the "residential parking only" signs could be marked, but they would not be enforced. The process of credentialing all of the residents' vehicles will take considerable time, and many decisions related to credentialing have not been made.

The Administrator also informed the Committee that a meeting has been scheduled for May 13th with SCDOT and the City's traffic engineer to discuss whether a lane reversal was feasible for 14th and Ocean Boulevards to improve the ingress in those areas. If feasible, the City would do it on an experimental basis to learn whether it was a viable alternative to blocking the road and re-directing traffic.

Councilmember Carroll voiced the opinion that, by going in one (1) direction, the traffic would backup going around trying to get off the island in a rain storm.

Administrator Tucker explained that the one-way traffic was what the City has used after the July 4th fireworks display to get people off the island. To truly know how effective this might be, it would have to be tried a couple of times.

Expressing concern over the one-way traffic, Chief Graham stated that she did not know how Fire Department personnel would get to one (1) of the Front Beach businesses for someone who had fallen or worse.

5. New Business

A. Discussion of Egress from Fire Bay at Public Safety Building

Chief Graham reported that emergency vehicles were finding it more and more difficult to get out of the bay during peak traffic times of the day; she did not know whether to attribute the problem to 14th Avenue being blocked or the number of people. The Chief asked for permission to talk with SCDOT about marking the street in front of the bays as "No Parking."

Administrator Tucker remarked that the City would need an encroachment permit to do it.

Chief Buckhannon reminded the Committee that SCDOT has already opined that a local government cannot paint their roads.

The Administrator invited Chief Graham to attend the May 13th meeting with SCDOT.

Chief Buckhannon stated that this problem was a product of the number of people who come to the beach, not a product of the Police Department blocking off 14th Avenue, which was only done periodically during the day. The Chief explained that, when Front Beach becomes blocked, it is an "all hands on deck" situation. Six (6) people are sent to Front Beach to direct traffic; the entire complement of BSOs, a police officer and the Animal Control Officer are all tied up at Front Beach directing traffic.

Administrator Tucker noted that IOP police personnel are stationed at 14th Avenue and Palm Boulevard, at the entrance to the County Park, at Pavilion and Ocean Boulevard, and, at times, at the entrance to the City parking lots. The Administrator added that, if the City did nothing, gridlock would extend in all directions on the island and in Mount Pleasant; the deployment of personnel keeps traffic moving. The Committee was reminded that the City has cameras to stay abreast of traffic conditions coming onto the island and in Front Beach and to indicate when officers need to be deployed to keep the traffic moving.

Councilmember Bergwerf asked how the Police Department was coming in hiring BSOs, and Chief Buckhannon replied that five (5) have been hired and two (2) more are in the pipeline.

B. Consideration of CTC 2016 Requests

Each year the Administrator has offered input from both the Public Safety Committee and the Public Works Committee; typically the Number One priority has been the Phase II drainage project. From looking in the files for the 2015 requests, Assistant Dziuban reported that the first priority had been the Phase II drainage project, the second was handicap parking accessibility at 21st Avenue and the third was cycling improvements.

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to submit the same requests in the same priority for CTC funds detailed above; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

C. Consideration of Additional Emergency Beach Access between 25th and 42nd Avenues

Chief Graham stated that, with more and more cars coming to the island, emergency vehicles have found it difficult to get to the beach; an additional emergency access between 25th and 42nd Avenues would be very helpful to Fire Station 2. Currently the City has emergency beach accesses at 25th and 42nd Avenues; Captain Eagle has studied the beach accesses in the areas designated and has recommended the 32A access path for an additional emergency access to the beach.

Councilmember Carroll suggested 35A or 36A that have walls on either side, for an alternate emergency access. Chair Bettelli worried that, on the walled path, an individual would not have enough room to get out of the way.

Chief Graham commented that the picture of the 35A access path Councilmember Carroll had pulled up on his phone clearly showed that vehicles have been traveling that path already; Chair Bettelli stated that golf carts use that path frequently. For the Fire Department, the path would primarily be used for an ATV to pull a jet ski down to the beach because Chief Graham did not think the walled-path would be wide enough for a pickup truck to get to the beach.

Agreeing that the island needed additional emergency vehicle access, the Administrator cautioned that, every time the City makes any alteration to a beach path, the neighbors become very agitated, and the City receives a number of complaints. The Administrator was confident that the City could get an OCRM permit for the emergency access, and the improvements could be made to the path, but there will be objections from surrounding neighbors.

Chair Bettelli suggested reaching out to the neighbors to tell them that the work would be done and the reason it was being done.

Based on Captain Eagle's observations, the 32A access would need the least amount of work; the path basically needs to be re-aligned to its original location and off private property.

Chief Buckhannon commented that golf carts should not be using those paths; the Department frequently gets complaints that beach-goers have parked their golf carts in a resident's backyard. Once the improvements have been made to the access path, the golf cart traffic could increase.

Administrator Tucker stated that she understood the Committee to want further study before making any improvements to 32A.

D. Consideration of Additional Golf Cart Parking

Councilmember Bergwerf stated that she had had communications with residents who fully support golf cart parking but feel left out because they live between Breach Inlet and 9th Avenue where there is no golf cart parking.

Administrator Tucker reminded the Committee that the 5th Avenue beach access was an emergency access.

Chief Buckhannon said that there was space that would easily accommodate golf cart parking, but, by opening it up, parking would be stretched onto Ocean Boulevard because vehicles would take advantage of it as well.

Since parking has been designated on the avenues between Ocean and Carolina, Councilmember Carroll suggested golf cart parking on one of avenues. Councilmember Bergwerf questioned if it was practical to put golf cart parking on the land-side of Ocean Boulevard; it would be much safer on the ocean-side.

Chief Buckhannon also cautioned that, if golf cart parking were allowed on Ocean Boulevard, there was a group of people in that area who have been pushing for years to get Ocean Boulevard opened to vehicular parking. The Chief opined that the optimum location would be at 5th Avenue on the ocean-side.

Councilmember Carroll suggested taking a couple of spots in the curve on 4th Avenue where the empty lots were.

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to recommend to Council the placement of two (2) golf cart parking spaces at 4th Avenue; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Administrator noted that residents have also asked for golf cart parking at 45th Avenue.

Chief Buckhannon stated that roads from 43rd Avenue to 57th Avenue were very narrow at the ocean-end of the street, and, on roads like these, a vehicle must have enough space to make a three-point (3 point) turn to exit the roadway. If golf carts were to have designated parking, it must be further up on the access path. According to Chief Buckhannon, the question was whether there was room for the golf carts to get up in there; he was certain that vegetation would have to be cut back to make golf parking possible.

Councilmember Bergwerf remembered that, presently, a golf cart can park anywhere on the island that a vehicle can park legally.

The Chief recommended that golf cart parking not be designated at the end of the road, but in the path closer to the beach.

Administrator Tucker asked Chief Buckhannon to investigate the possibility of golf cart parking at 45th Avenue to report back to the Committee in June.

E. Consideration of Artwork for 1st Floor of the Public Safety Building

Chair Bettelli recalled that Council had discussed having art work in the 1st floor of the Public Safety Building after it was completed, but it had been a low priority and "fell off the radar." Administrator Tucker explained that the reason nothing was done was because the City did not have the personnel to execute the plan.

Councilmember Bergwerf stated that she had taken the idea to the Chair and that she would be willing to take it as a project. She was thinking about gallery-wrapped photographs, mounted to the wall, of pelicans, the pier, waves, turtles, etc.; although such photographs could be expensive, she has been working with a company that runs specials of as much as eighty percent (80%) off regular pricing. The Councilmember opined that the City could spend five to six hundred dollars (\$500-600) and have IOP/ocean-themed artwork for the Public Safety Building.

Councilmember Carroll thought Councilmember Bergwerf had an excellent idea, but he thought that actual photographs taken of life years ago on the island should be considered. He said that

another place to display these historical photographs would be the long hallway at the Recreation Center.

Since the Recreation Center gets a lot of traffic, Councilmember Bergwerf thought that hanging some of the old photographs at the Rec Center was a great idea, she commented that that hallway looked like a canyon because the walls were bare.

Administrator Tucker stated that the City was in the process of having many of the old photographs digitized to be placed on the City's website; a task that was much less time consuming.

Chair Bettelli asked what kind of foot-traffic there was at the Public Safety Building.

Chief Buckhannon reported that people come in for dog tags, hurricane stickers, general information, parking, etc.; he indicated that the Public Safety Building gets foot traffic all day.

Chief Graham liked Councilmember Bergwerf's idea because photographs in a frame would eventually become mildewed behind the glass.

The Administrator said that, if someone was willing to take on the project leaving her only to sign a check, she fully supported the idea for the Public Safety Building, and the Committee voiced support for putting the old City photographs at the Rec Center.

Assistant Dziuban explained that the photographs were just pieces of paper, copies of the originals, and an expense would be associated with the task because they would have to be preserved before hanging them on the wall.

Councilmember Bergwerf said that she would do further investigation and come back to the Committee in June with proposals.

F. Hungry Neck Straphangers Proposed July Event

Chair Bettelli reported that originally, this event was to be simply a one (1) day bus event, i.e. hiring a bus to bring people to the beach, but it has evolved into a march from Mount Pleasant Towne Center on a hot Saturday in the middle of July.

Councilmember Carroll indicated that the City should stop this event from happening on the grounds of safety.

Chief Buckhannon paraphrased the City ordinance as saying that the group must have a parade permit which could only be denied if the march presented a public safety hazard; the things they could do to mitigate the hazard would be shutting down one (1) lane of traffic as they come off the Connector to the island, which would also require a permit. The Chief continued that, if he denied the parade permit, the issue must go before City Council with the reason(s) for the denial.

When asked about SCDOT involvement, the Chief reported that, any time something is done on a DOT road, they must have DOT approval, but DOT would refer the issue back to the City. DOT would not stop the event without learning the City's objections to it.

Councilmember Carroll indicated that he would have no objections if the march was planned before Memorial Day or after Labor Day, but a Saturday in the heat with the already heavy traffic was not acceptable.

The Chief said that he does not imagine a large number of people walking the Connector from Towne Center on the best of days, but the march would be required to have a parade permit no matter how many people were involved, and the permit was very detailed.

Councilmember Carroll did understand the purpose of the march, the need for public transportation to the beach, but he did not think this was the right way to do it or the time of year to do it.

In addition, the Chief noted that the City also has an ordinance prohibiting the distribution of literature on the beach.

Chair Bettelli stated that he would communicate with Mr. Hamilton to inform him of the requirements and prohibitions and said that he was worried that people would fall on the Connector.

The City Administrator suggested that the event had very bad timing politically with protests going on locally and all over the country for very different reasons; she was concerned that people would get the wrong idea and join the march without knowing the true purpose.

Chair Bettelli commented that at 11:00 a.m., the march had been scheduled at the busiest time of the day for traffic on the Connector; he reiterated that he would talk with Mr. Hamilton and suggest that the event be held at another time of year.

Administrator Tucker noted that she would pdf the City's ordinances referred to by Chief Buckhannon.

The consensus of the Committee was that the event would be much safer if held at a different time of year.

6. Highlights of Departmental Reports

Fire Department – Chief Graham

Chief Graham reported that on April 4th, personnel had responded to a call about boaters in distress; the crew found two (2) persons on the beach but could not approach because the water was too shallow. The kayakers swam to the boat and were returned to the IOP marina. Personnel reported the call of a deer in distress in the surf; after trying to coax the deer back to shore using the jet ski, the animal died and was returned to shore and taken by the Animal Control Officer. In the month of April, personnel responded to a total of ninety-seven (97) calls with forty-seven (47) of them as EMS calls. The upward trend in call numbers continued in April with the highest

number since 2004. The Fire Inspector performed twenty-eight (28) inspections and found sixteen (16) violations. On the training front, all career personnel participated in the annual hazardous materials refresher and water rescue training. Fire Inspector Bruce, and firefighters Helm, Sezginalp, Stickney, Teague and Wheat completed Emergency Medical Technician course and are awaiting national testing. In the area of public relations, Chief Graham, Engineer Bolen and Firefighter Carroll provided water safety and support for a group of veterans kayaking through the Charleston area.

Police Department – Chief Buckhannon

On April 23rd, an officer attempted to conduct a traffic stop on a vehicle whose driver appeared to be driving under the influence, but the vehicle would not stop. The officer followed the vehicle onto I-526, but discontinued following at Long Point Road. The vehicle later refused to stop for a North Charleston officer and was involved in an accident near Trident Hospital. Although the driver was not apprehended, a passenger was taken in for questioning; it was discovered that the driver had thrown a handgun on the IOP Connector that was recovered. Warrants for unlawful possession of a handgun and failure to stop for blue lights have been secured and entered into NCIC. On two (2) occasions, officers assisted with the proper installation of a child safety seat. Dispatchers received a total of four thousand nine hundred thirty-seven (4,937) calls for the month, and three thousand eight hundred seventy-six (3,876) of the calls were for the IOP police Department. Forty-eight (48) traffic tickets were issued from a total of one hundred sixty-five (165) traffic stops. Thirty-three (33) persons were arrested in April, and nearly one third ($\frac{1}{3}$) of them were for underage possession of alcohol. The Animal Control Officer issued one (1) citation. The Department received twenty-one (21) calls for noise violations; two (2) were issued citations and eighteen (18) were issued warnings.

Answering Councilmember Carroll's question about body cameras, Chief Buckhannon said that a policy was now in place, officers have been trained and all officers on the road have been issued one (1). The biggest problem the Chief has encountered related to how the department would handle data storage; if an officer has an uneventful shift, the data would be held for thirty (30) days and then discarded. Turning the camera on was the officer's responsibility, and it should be on for citizen contact, when making a traffic stop, when going to a residence, etc.

Councilmember Carroll also asked how many vehicles were assigned to the BSOs; the Chief reported a small pickup, a bobcat and a low speed vehicle.

7. Miscellaneous Business

Next Meeting Date: 9:30 a.m., Tuesday, June 2, 2015 in the Conference Room.

8. Adjourn

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:24 a.m.; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:
Marie Copeland, City Clerk