

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

5:45 p.m., Tuesday, December 1, 2009

The Personnel Committee held its regular meeting at 5:45 p.m., Tuesday, December 1, 2009 in Council Chambers of City Hall, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Committee members Loftus and Taylor, Chair Piening, City Administrator Tucker and Assistant to the Administrator Dziuban.

1. Chair Piening 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 Meetings' Minutes

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of November 4, 2009 and the Special Meeting of November 16, 2009 as submitted; Councilmember Taylor seconded and the motion **PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. Citizen's Comments - None

MOTION: Councilmember Taylor moved to suspend the rules to move Agenda Item 5 ahead of Item 4; Chair Piening seconded and the motion **PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

5. New Business

Consideration of Elimination of Position of Assistant Fire Chief and Establishment of Position of Fire Inspector

Chief Graham was asked to come forward to provide the Committee with the reasoning behind this request, which was approved by Public Safety at the November meeting. The Chief explained that the City's Fire Department had a full-time Fire Inspector from 1986 to 1992; from 1992 to 1995, the City had a part-time Fire Inspector. In 1995 the responsibility for fire inspections was given to the Building Department, and the responsibility was returned to the Fire Department in 2002 when the inspections were performed by qualified fire personnel as time allowed.

Since the inspections were being done by a variety of Fire Department personnel, the Chief felt there was inconsistency from one (1) inspection to the next. Chief Graham noted that, in the Department today, there are four (4) certified fire marshals, and the Department has spent thirteen thousand dollars (\$13,000) from its One Percent (1%) Funds to purchase computer equipment to assist with the fire inspections. She informed the Committee that one hundred seventy-six (176) commercial businesses are on the island that require fire inspections, which should take place on a quarterly basis.

If the City had a dedicated, full-time Fire Inspector, the Chief believes there would be routine, scheduled fire inspections with appropriate follow-ups; more consistency; a higher level of competency; better record keeping; a reduced risk to business occupants, the public and firefighters and, occasionally, reduce overtime.

The position of Assistant Chief is included in the budget, but the salary has stayed in-line with that of Captain. Chief Graham stated that the Fire Inspector would not be paid at that level; therefore, there would be a reduction in that line of the budget. She assured the Committee that the position would not be provided with a take-home vehicle and that the Department already possessed the supplies and equipment needed for the position other than uniforms and a badge, which are included in the approved budget along with salary.

Chief Graham distributed a draft job description for the position to the members of the Committee.

Councilmember Loftus asked how long the Assistant Chief's position had been vacant; Administrator Tucker said the position had been vacant for seven (7) years. Chief Graham noted that, if the position of Assistant Chief had been filled, the primary job responsibility would have been fire inspections.

Councilmember Loftus asked what happened when fire inspections at a business indicated that the owner was not taking the necessary steps to correct deficiencies found in earlier inspections. Chief Graham stated that the goal of the Fire Department was to work the island businesses to fix problems rather than write tickets, but there have been times that businesses had to be informed that they could be shutdown if the problems were not corrected immediately.

Chair Piening inquired about the entity that recommended that fire inspections occur quarterly; Chief Graham responded that the recommendation was made by the South Carolina Firemen's Association. He was told that, at one time, Mount Pleasant had three (3) full-time Fire Inspectors. Chair Piening asked if there was enough work for a full-time Fire Inspector at the Isle of Palms; Chief Graham stated that there were other tasks for the Fire Inspector, such as pre-incident surveys, following up with hydrant inspections and monitoring general conditions on the island.

When asked if there would be a way to measure the Fire Inspector's work, Chief Graham stated that there would be comparisons from year-to-year of the number of inspections performed and other job tasks could be included.

Chief Graham added that she viewed the Fire Inspector position as part of the livability emphasis that the City has adopted because the Inspector would be working to make life on the island as safe as possible and to prevent issues from becoming safety problems for residents.

Councilmember Taylor defined the computer tablets purchased by the Department as capable of maintaining the design or specifications of a business, as well as results and notes from each inspection. He asked if there were other capabilities of the tablets that would enhance the safety of the island's residents and firefighters; Chief Graham explained that pre-incident surveys could be maintained there. The software on the tablets contains the most up-to-date fire codes on which the inspections are based and is specific to fire inspections, pre-plans and, eventually, should be able to share information with adjoining municipalities with whom the City has mutual aid agreements.

In response to Councilmember Loftus' question, Chief Graham indicated that a thorough inspection of a building like City Hall would take an hour and a half. Depending on the type of structure to be inspected, one (1) full-time inspector could perform three to eight (3-8) fire inspections in one (1) day. She added that it was rare when a follow-up to an inspection was not necessary.

Chief Graham stated that there had been one (1) firefighter who had been interested in the Fire Inspector's position and that there are several qualified individuals in the area who are seeking employment.

When asked by Councilmember Taylor about whether the island's businesses were appropriately inspected, she stated, "I know they are not." She attributed her answer to the inconsistencies that are occurring with multiple persons performing the inspections and the levels of experience and training absent in the Fire Department because the codes are constantly changing.

Councilmember Loftus noted that filling the Fire Inspector position would not be a staff or budget addition, but a re-allocation of personnel.

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to approve reclassifying the position of Assistant Chief with that of Fire Inspector and to approve the proposed job description; Councilmember Taylor seconded.

Councilman Loftus questioned the additional cost of uniforms and bunker gear since funds had been budgeted for this use; Chief Graham agreed that the cost is included in the present fiscal budget and would not represent additional expenses to the City.

Call for the Question: The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. Old Business

Recommendations for 2010 Boards and Commissions

Chair Piening stated that there were seven (7) openings for boards and commissions' positions for 2010 and suggested addressing the openings by Committee.

Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee

Margaret Miller's term expires at the end of the year; she has served one term on the Committee and has stated her interest in serving another.

MOTION: Councilmember Taylor moved to re-appoint all sitting applicants who stated interest in serving again and to appoint Tim Ahmuty to the Planning Commission to complete the term vacated by Sandy Stone. The motion DIED for lack of a second.

Penny Lewis has also expressed an interest in serving on the ATAX Committee.

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to re-appoint Margaret Miller to the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee; Chair Piening seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Board of Zoning Appeals

Chair Piening indicated that the terms of Arnold Karig and Tom Miller will expire at the end of the year, and both had stated a desire to continue to serve on the Committee.

MOTION: Councilmember Taylor moved to re-appoint Arnold Karig and Tom Miller to the Board of Zoning Appeals; Councilmember Loftus seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Code Board of Appeals

According to Chair Piening, the term of Ann Sherrill expires at December 31, 2009.

MOTION: Councilmember Taylor moved to re-appoint Ann Sherrill to the Code Board of Appeals; Councilmember Loftus seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Planning Commission

With the election of Sandy Stone to City Council, Chair Piening stated that there would be four (4) vacancies on the Planning Commission; Ron Denton, Lisa Safford and Dave Stevens expressed a desire to continue on the Commission.

MOTION: Councilmember Taylor moved to re-appoint Ron Denton, Lisa Safford and Dave Stevens to the Planning Commission. The motion DIED due to the lack of a second.

MOTION: Councilmember Taylor moved to re-appoint Ron Denton to the Planning Commission; Councilmember Loftus seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

MOTION: Councilmember Taylor moved to re-appoint Lisa Safford to the Planning Commission; the motion DIED due to the lack of a second.

MOTION: Councilmember Taylor moved to appoint Tim Ahmuty to the Planning Commission; the motion DIED due to the lack of a second.

Chair Piening noted that, in his years on Council, there have been no changes to the Planning Commission, and he thought there should be.

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to appoint Diane Oltorik to the Planning Commission; Chair Piening seconded and the motion PASSED on a vote of 2 to 1 with Councilmember Taylor casting the "nay" vote.

MOTION: Councilmember Taylor moved to re-appoint Dave Stevens to the Planning Commission; the motion DIED for lack of a second.

Chair Piening stated that Mr. Stevens' attendance record at Planning Commission meetings had been "spotty," and his business now has a contract with the City. The Chair expressed his opinion that Committee members should not also do business with the City.

MOTION: Chair Piening moved to appoint Noel Scott to the Planning Commission; Councilmember Loftus seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chair Piening stated that the Committee needed to appoint someone to fill Sandy Stone's unexpired term.

MOTION: Councilmember Taylor moved to appoint Jimmy Carroll to fill Mr. Stone's unexpired term; the motion DIED for lack of a second.

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to appoint Bev Ballow to fill Mr. Stone's unexpired term; Chair Piening seconded and the motion PASSED on a vote of 2 to 1 with Councilmember Taylor casting the "nay" vote.

6. Miscellaneous Business

On the subject of the Administrator's evaluation, Chair Piening stated that the Council had agreed on the outline and that he had filled in the details, such as dates, to whom it is to be presented, etc. He distributed the policy for a final review by the Committee.

Next Meeting Date: 5:45 p.m., Tuesday, January 12, 2010.

7. Adjourn

Councilmember Taylor expressed pleasure at serving with Chair Piening and Councilmember Loftus on the Committee and wished them success in the future.

MOTION: Councilmember Taylor moved to adjourn at 6:35 p.m.; Councilmember Loftus seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk