

**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**  
5:30 p.m., Tuesday, October 7, 2008

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 7, 2008 in Council Chambers of City Hall, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Chairman Buckhannon, Councilman Bettelli, Mayor Sottile, City Administrator Tucker, Fire Chief Graham, Police Chief Buckhannon, Assistant to the Administrator Dziuban and City Clerk Copeland.

1. Chairman Buckhannon called the meeting to order and acknowledged that the press and the public had been duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

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

**MOTION: Councilman Bettelli moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of September 8, 2008 as submitted; Mayor Sottile seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. **Citizens' Comments**

Noel Scott, 6809 Back Bay Drive, reported that he had been monitoring the SCDOT demonstration project at 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Palm Boulevard and that he had spoken with a number of people about it. Mr. Scott reported that all of the people with whom he had spoken liked the changes that had been made to the intersection; in addition, these people thought the intersection was working well and that the changes should become permanent. There was one repeated concern which was that drivers were generally confused in the area of the intersection where the YIELD sign was posted. The YIELD and STOP signs were placed close together, and drivers are unsure which is applicable to their lane of traffic. He referenced the study of the 41<sup>st</sup> and Palm intersection by Wilbur Smith and Associates, in which both Alternate 1 and Alternate 3 describe lane delineators to eliminate such confusion. Mr. Scott had spoken with Dave Kynoski of the Wild Dunes Community Association about the intersection changes; Mr. Kynoski also expressed his concern for the YIELD, his approval of the changes and disappointment if it were removed. Mr. Kynoski did make one suggestion assuming that the changes were made permanent; he suggested a built-up, triangular shaped, cement median possibly with some low plants for beauty along with a sign telling drivers to keep moving.

Dee Taylor, 7 Forty-third Avenue, explained that, despite having been a City Councilman for many years, tonight he was attending this meeting as a citizen representing the residents of his neighborhood. In contrast to Mr. Scott, Mr. Taylor reported that his neighbors were very concerned about the safety of all drivers through the 41<sup>st</sup> and Palm intersection. He stated that they were asking why the intersection was changed and that he has tried to explain that it was designed to increase the traffic

flow through the intersection in peak season. Mr. Taylor stated that he did not know if that would happen because drivers were stopping as they tried to make decisions on where they were supposed to go. His neighbors had agreed that they could be trained to properly maneuver the intersection, but that, each week in the summer, there would be a new set of drivers who would be unfamiliar with the intersection trying to maneuver their way through it thereby slowing traffic. He explained that he was very concerned about the exchange of potential speed of traffic moving through the interchange in exchange for the chaos and safety in the summer time.

#### **4. Old Business**

##### **A. Status of Public Safety Building – Request for Change Orders**

1. Emergency Repairs to deteriorated manhole - \$4,639.79
2. Change Order #3 – Balcony alternate adjustment - \$1,290.20
3. Change Order #3A – Electrical conduit to accept bi-directional amplifier

Chairman Buckhannon asked Administrator Tucker to review the change orders for the Committee. On the repairs to the manhole, the Administrator explained that she had to authorize at the time because it was an emergency; this manhole is a part of the drainage improvements to support the Public Safety Building. Had the manhole not been shored up, it would have failed once there was substantial flow through it. As for Change Order #3, the balcony alternate adjustment, she reminded the Committee that, when the contract had been awarded to Mashburn Construction, the balcony off the dispatch area was deleted. This change order goes back to finish the building where the balcony would have been. Change Order 3A, the electrical conduit to accommodate the bi-directional amplifier – an item that was included in the budget – represents the appropriate changes to the contract and subsequent contract award.

**MOTION: Mayor Sottile moved to recommend approval of the three (3) change orders to Ways and Means; Councilman Bettelli seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Chief Graham reported on the progress in the actual building construction with the following information:

- Foundations should be poured on Wednesday, October 10;
- The building foundations should be completed on Thursday, October 11;
- Prep work should be for slab on grade next week;
- Installation of 30 inch pipe from Hamlin Creek to the building side of Palm Boulevard was completed; and

- Fire and police personnel continue work on the furnishings.

Chief Graham noted that the plates would remain on Palm Boulevard for approximately two (2) more weeks and that night work would resume on Palm to mill the intersection and repave.

**B. Status of SCDOT demonstration project at 41<sup>st</sup> and Palm intersection**

Chairman Buckhannon asked Chief Buckhannon to give an update on the intersection because the Chief has been in contact with SCDOT on the demonstration project. The Chief noted that the project has been in place for approximately two (2) weeks and that, in that time, all of the signage was in place. He reported that he has spoken to SCDOT about the placement of some of the signs in that certain ones block the view of other signs and about the fact that they have not completed the painting on the road leading into the intersection. Chief Buckhannon stated that he had related to SCDOT the problems with the YIELD lanes; he reported that he had suggested an arrow pointing down to indicate exactly where the stop is – a white arrow on a red sign. SCDOT said they would take the Chief's suggestions under advisement. He also reported that the calls he has received about the project have been evenly divided between for and against.

Mayor Sottile indicated that he had received only one (1) positive comment about the changes at the intersection, but had received several negative ones. He agreed that the demonstration project should continue into the spring for the City to make a full evaluation. He did remark that the STOP sign on 41<sup>st</sup> coming from the marina was so high that he had found it difficult to see and had nearly run through it; he hoped that, if the project were to become permanent, this sign could possibly be made larger. Chief Buckhannon stated he would communicate the Mayor's concern to SCDOT.

Councilman Bettelli reported that he, too, had received mainly positive remarks about the changes to the 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Palm Boulevard intersection.

Mayor Sottile asked Chief Buckhannon how long he thought the City should continue with this demonstration project. Mayor Sottile voiced his opinion that he did not think that the City would see the full effect of it until there was real traffic traveling through it, and the traffic would not return until the spring. Chief Buckhannon agreed; he hoped that, after the modifications that he has requested were in place, there would be visible improvements; otherwise, the real impact would not be realized until the traffic returned.

Chief Graham voiced the Fire Department's point of view and noted that they were not encountering any problems when entering the intersection from Palm or from Wild Dunes. On the other hand, she agreed that when traveling up 41<sup>st</sup>, the STOP sign was

blocked from view; from her perspective, one of the biggest issues was that vehicles coming off Palm nose ahead of the line in the road at the STOP sign so the fire equipment cannot make the left turn.

**C. Discussion of Bike Path on Palm Boulevard between 21<sup>st</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup>**

Chairman Buckhannon reminded the Committee that this topic had first come up at the September meeting and was on the agenda tonight for the Committee to more narrowly define what it wants in the end product. Administrator Tucker pointed out that, if regulation bike paths were installed along both side of Palm Boulevard, it would be a radical change, and she did not want to move forward until there had been more dialogue ensuring that this was what the community and City Council wanted.

Mayor Sottile stated that he had broached the subject because he thought the cyclists on Palm Boulevard were in danger; he noted that the area between 21<sup>st</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> was heavily congested, that cars parked all along that stretch and that there were driveways with cars entering and exiting throughout the day and night. Ultimately he wanted to get the bicycles off of Palm Boulevard before there was a serious accident; with the change in SC laws regarding bicycles and the high price of gasoline, the number of cyclists will only increase. He did voice agreement with the City Administrator that more discussion was warranted. The Mayor recounted that SCDOT had recommended against bike paths along that stretch of road when the subject was discussed several years ago because there were too many driveways in that area. He did have one other suggestion for the Committee – to ask SCDOT if the City could divert bicycles off Palm Boulevard onto Waterway, Hartnett and/or Cameron.

Chairman Buckhannon expressed the idea that bike paths could facilitate adherence to the law that requires vehicles to be parked four (4) feet from the edge of the road. He also noted that, with cars parked all along Palm Boulevard, vehicles on the road have no way to get off the road to allow emergency vehicles to pass; bike paths could provide the space to pull over for emergency vehicles.

Changing the subject, Mayor Sottile asked Chief Buckhannon the status of the crosswalk at 45<sup>th</sup> Avenue. He was told that Wild Dunes has put up a new sign indicating that drivers should watch for pedestrians, and both Chief Buckhannon and Councilman Bettelli stated that there are going to be changes to the entrance to Wild Dunes in connection with Sundial Circle. If the exit from Wild Dunes were to be a ninety degree (90°) turn, there was the possibility of a crosswalk.

A second question from the Mayor was about the conflicting speed limit signs in the area of Citadel Beach Club; a sign reads 35 mph going in one direction and 30 mph

going in the opposite direction. Chief Buckhannon reported that he anticipates getting that resolved while SCDOT is on the island with the 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue project.

**5. New Business**

**A. Consideration of Award of Contracts in Excess of \$10,000**

- 1. Mobile Communications of Charleston - \$41,518.26 – Bi-directional amplifier, programming, labor and installation at Public Safety Building. Funded from Public Safety Bond Issue.**
- 2. Mobile Communication of Charleston - \$119,973.29 – console. Funded through Capital Projects Fund, Radio Reserve.**
- 3. Zambelli Fireworks - \$25,000.00 – 2009 July 4<sup>th</sup> Fireworks Display. Funded through State Accommodations Taxes.**

Chairman Buckhannon explained that these three (3) items are included in the FY 2008-2009 budget, but the award of the contracts in excess of \$10,000 must get another set of approvals according to the City's procurement code. Administrator Tucker stated that a recommendation to Ways and Means to award the contracts to these vendors was needed. She did note for the record that purchases from Mobile Communications of Charleston were included in state contract purchasing.

By way of explanation, the Administrator stated that the bi-directional amplifier had been approved for the Public Safety Building; the console was the final piece of the radio reserve. Of course, Zambelli has supplied the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks for many years, and the contract was entered into in November in order to take advantage of the early payment discount of ten percent (10%).

**MOTION: Mayor Sottile moved to recommend approval of the bi-directional amplifier, the console and the July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks to Ways and Means; Councilman Bettelli seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**B. Employee Suggestion – Informational Signage at Key Beach Accesses**

Administrator Tucker reported that this was an employee suggestion that had gone before the Personnel Committee, and the Personnel Committee had forwarded it to the Public Safety Committee for its consideration. She introduced Michael Hommel of the Fire Department to present his suggestion, which he read to the Committee as follows:

“Put informational signs on Front Beach area advising beachgoers of local Atlantic Ocean hazards and info, re: marine life (jellyfish, stingrays, etc.), What is a rip current?, sea turtles and so forth.”

Mr. Hommel remarked that the City got a lot of visitors who know nothing about the ocean and its habitat. He noted that he usually was asked a lot of questions when he responded to calls for jellyfish or stingray stings as to why the City had not provided more information about these naturally occurring hazards. He commented that he has responded to water rescue calls when the person being rescued did not know the difference between a rip current and an undertow. He suggested a space near the public restroom as a possible location for this information kiosk.

Mayor Sottile said he thought this type of kiosk could be placed on the side of the public restrooms; placed there, it would not add to the cluster of signs at the beach accesses. The Mayor added that he thought Mr. Hommel had a good idea; he agreed that the City got visitors who have never seen the ocean and have no idea what to expect.

Chairman Buckhannon agreed that the idea was a good one, and he thought the concept of a large framed kiosk on the side of the Public Restroom was also a good one and would provide the needed visitor information without being obtrusive. He asked Mr. Hommel if he would make himself available to help out with maintaining the kiosk; Mr. Hommel stated that he would be happy to assist.

Mayor Sottile stated that Mr. Hommel should shop to find the kiosk that would be both serviceable and attractive, then come back to this Committee for its recommendation to Ways and Means.

**MOTION: Councilman Bettelli moved to accept Michael Hommel’s suggestions for an informational kiosk for the Front Beach area; Mayor Sottile seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **6. September Departmental Reports**

**Fire Department** – Chief Graham reported that the Fire Department had responded to fifty-seven (57) calls in the month; of those calls thirty-six (36) were for residents and twenty-five (25) were EMS calls. There had been nineteen (19) businesses inspected and one hundred twelve (112) violations identified. She commented that the Fire Department was also subject to the water restrictions resulting from the waterline break under the harbor. In relation to the hurricane threat, the members of the Department had assisted several “special needs” residents with their preparations.

**Police Department** – Chief Buckhannon reported that the City was experiencing another rash of burglaries and thefts that started on September 23, 2008. He said that investigators have determined that, between midnight and 6 a.m., entry was being made into occupied residences through unlocked patio doors; with the cooler nights, residents have been leaving windows and doors open. The perpetrators were taking anything of value that is in plain sight, as well as vehicles; Lieutenant Wright appeared on Channel 5 informing the public of the situation and advising residents to keep their residences locked. Chief Buckhannon stated that Isle of Palms was not the only area being targeted; similar crimes have been taking place in Hanahan and Goose Creek. The Police Department performed 1,095 Special Patrol Requests during the month; Chief Buckhannon reported that more and more residents were taking advantage of the on-line request. He announced that the part-time Animal Control Officer John Keelan has been made the full-time Animal Control Officer replacing Vicki Cooke.

From the information provided on the Livability Report, Chairman Buckhannon asked if any of the noise violations reported were repeat offenders. The Chief responded that they were not.

Mayor Sottile asked Chief Buckhannon what progress had been made in replacing the Livability Officer. Chief Buckhannon informed the Mayor that no headway had been made on that yet and the job would have to be advertised internally before advertising it publicly. The Chief explained that an internal evaluation of the position was in progress to determine its strengths and weaknesses; such an evaluation is a CALEA standard regarding new positions. The evaluation asked questions like were there any problems, what caused the problems, how to solve the problems, etc.

Mayor Sottile expressed his opinion that having a dedicated officer to handle the livability type issues had been well worth the effort because of the diligence of the previous Livability Officer.

## **7. Miscellaneous**

Administrator Tucker was pleased to deliver what she referred to as “wonderful news” – that Chief Graham had been notified that Fire Station 2 was to receive the Silver Award for Station Design by “Fire Chief Magazine.” Chief Graham stated that there would be a two (2) page spread in the November issue picturing Fire Station 2 with a write-up describing some of the innovations incorporated into the structure; she reported that the magazine has a subscription base of fifty-two thousand. Factors that were considered for the award were design, functionality, low maintenance and cost per square foot.

On a related subject, Chief Graham noted that the magazine generated a calendar each year featuring fire stations across the country, and she and the Administrator were

hoping that the Committee would authorize one thousand dollars (\$1,000) of the five thousand dollars (\$5,000) cost for a page guaranteeing that Fire Station 2 would be in the calendar. Cole+Russell has contacted several of the vendors involved in the construction to contribute toward the cost; Chief Graham suggested that advertising on the page could well increase tourism on the island.

Mayor Sottile commented that, with the state of the economy and the fact that Fire Station 2 was to be in the magazine as an award winner, he did not think this was a good time for the City to spend one thousand dollars (\$1,000) of unbudgeted funds.

Both Chairman Buckhannon and Councilman Bettelli agreed with the Mayor.

**Next Meeting Date:** 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, November 11, 2008

**8. Adjourn**

**MOTION: Councilman Bettelli moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 p.m.; Mayor Sottile seconded, and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland  
City Clerk