

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
5:30 p.m., Wednesday, June 11, 2008

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 11, 2008 in Council Chambers of City Hall, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Present were Chairman Bettelli, Mayor Sottile, Councilman Buckhannon, City Administrator Tucker, Fire Chief Graham, Police Chief Buckhannon, Assistant to the Administrator Dziuban and City Clerk Copeland.

1. Chairman Bettelli 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. **MOTION: Mayor Sottile moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of May 14, 2008 as submitted; Councilman Buckhannon seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**
3. **Citizens' Comments**

Bev Ballow, 3009 Waterway Boulevard, informed the Committee that the Turtle Team observed a large number of tents and chairs being left on the beach every evening. She stated that the Turtle Team hoped that Ordinance 2008-03 would pass before the situation worsens on the beach.

Bobby Simmons of the Acme Cantina spoke against the City legislating smoking on the island; he stated that "adults can make their own decisions." He brought with him a great deal of information he had found on the internet supporting his position, and he read many of them aloud and left them to be added to these minutes. The common theme of the articles was one of businesses that have lost business or gone out of business after smoking bans were imposed by local governments.

Bobby Ross of the Windjammer voiced his objections to a smoking ban; he stated that he thought it was a business decision, not a government decision.

Harold Fallis, Cross Country Coach at Wando High School, asked that the City allow a race on the beach between 28th and 30th Avenues on Wednesday, September 3 beginning at 5 p.m. with fifteen (15) schools participating. He related that, when the event was first held, he had gotten a permit from the City to hold the event; in recent years he had been told a permit was not necessary, but last year the police had informed him that he needed a permit again. Coach Fallis stated that he had come to City Hall last week to get a permit and was told he should attend this meeting to get City approval. He reported that parking has always been a problem, but that he had gone to the Recreation Center each year to give them the date and times of the event.

Councilman Bettelli asked how many people would be expected; Coach Fallis answered that he expected to have three hundred fifty (350) participants and their parents. Councilman Buckhannon wanted to know where the staging area would be, and the Coach said it would be on the beach. When Councilman Buckhannon encouraged the Coach to go to the County Park, the Coach said that were problems, such as

- there was a charge for the parking;
- the lot filled pretty quickly forcing parking on side streets; and
- the park closed at 6:45 or 7 pm and wanted everyone out.

Councilman Buckhannon recalled that last year there had been parking in the roadway that had created a public safety hazard; he thought many of the parents must have received citations. Councilman Buckhannon added that the City had a list of approved events that did not include this one, so a recommendation must come from this Committee to go to City Council for approval.

Mayor Sottile agreed with Councilman Buckhannon that this event had a huge impact on the City both in providing parking and having that number of people in that space of beach.

MOTION: Mayor Sottile moved to deny the High School 5K Race event; Councilman Buckhannon seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. Old Business

A. Status of Public Safety Building

Chief Graham reported that the lot had been cleared and that she had been told to expect the pilings to be started on Monday, but that had not happened. Administrator Tucker noted that a pit had been located on the property which has proven not to be the problem that was originally anticipated. The pit was used as an oil and water separator for Fire Station 1; with the help of the architects, a vendor has been located to clean it up.

On a related subject, Administrator Tucker stated that, associated with the construction of the building, the City has the opportunity, using the non-standard service clause of the SCE&G agreement, to drop the lines underground that run from that site across the street and drop the City Hall's power lines as well. Included in the construction of the Public Safety Building are approximately ninety thousand dollars (\$90,000) of work to do the lighting on the site and to run the lines underground for the building itself. If the Administrator were to be successful in getting the cost and the paperwork together and

if the Committee were to support the idea, a recommendation could possibly be put before Ways and Means on June 17, assuming that the costs were within the budget of the money in the non-standard service clause fund. The non-standard service clause funds are matching funds with the City, but the City has been setting aside money in the budget for matching projects. The Administrator was charged with getting the figures from SCE&G.

B. Discussion of Additional Golf Cart Parking

Councilman Buckhannon had a presentation, attached to these minutes, that included color photographs of various beach path accesses on the island; the cover page was the emergency access at 25th Avenue that illustrated the problem of golf carts parked and blocking the path for emergency vehicles. He suggested “appropriate signage at the end of the path to designate a specific number of carts that would be allowed in that area and/or language that the area was for ‘Drop off and Pick up Only’ and direct carts to park at the beginning of the 25th access path out of the way of emergency vehicles” as possible solutions to the problem at 25th Avenue. Councilman Buckhannon remarked that the only other identifiable access path that could accommodate golf cart parking between 21st and 41st Avenues was at the end of 23rd Avenue, which is not an emergency access path. In addition, a path between Breach Inlet and the Commercial District and one between 41st Avenue and Wild Dunes needed to be identified. Chief Buckhannon commented that there has been golf cart parking at every beach access this season, and there have been more carts traveling up and down Palm Boulevard; Mayor Sottile noted that golf cart drivers have created their own road along Beachside. Councilman Bettelli asked Chief Buckhannon if the Police Department had the capability to tow golf carts; Chief Buckhannon answered that they did. Chief Graham commented that the 25th Avenue Beach Access was so busy that she believed that golf cart parking should be prohibited there.

MOTION: Councilman Buckhannon moved to proceed with the appropriate signage at the 25th Avenue emergency beach access to eliminate the parking at the beach end of the path making it a “drop off/pick up only” and to have parking at the entrance area and to provide appropriate signage for golf cart parking at 23rd Avenue beach access; Mayor Sottile seconded.

Chief Buckhannon informed the Committee that he was constantly getting complaints about golf carts using the beach access paths from the property owners adjacent to the paths. The Committee agreed that there would be signage that defined the rules for golf cart parking and that officers possibly could provide a copy of those rules with citations they issued to golf carts.

Call for the Question: The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

C. Ordinance 2008-03 – Beach holes and debris

Councilman Bettelli informed the Public Safety Committee members that the Public Works Committee had met the day before and had suggested that Section 7-3-14(d) be deleted in order to get the ordinance passed as quickly as possible. He commented that a hole twenty-four inches (24") deep was a sizable hole, and the issue of holes could be addressed again in the future since they are being addressed presently by the party hired to fill them. Mayor Sottile asked Chief Buckhannon if the ordinance as presented was enforceable; Chief Buckhannon responded that the consistency of enforcement was always a problem and that the person must be caught in the act. Councilman Bettelli reported that signs had been ordered that would provide the information to beach goers that would provide the educational factor that Council wanted to see; the passage of the ordinance would put force behind the signs and protect the Public Works Department as they remove abandoned items from the beach.

MOTION: Councilman Buckhannon moved to recommend Ordinance 2008-03 as revised and without Section 7-3-14(d) to City Council for second reading; Councilman Bettelli seconded.

Chief Buckhannon related that he and Attorney Sottile had discussed the depth of the hole to include in the definition; after reading other ordinances with depths ranging from twelve (12) to twenty-four (24) inches, they decided to go with the maximum.

Call for the Question: The motion PASSED on a vote of 2 to 1 with Mayor Sottile voting against.

D. Status of Questionnaire on Smoke-free Workplace

Councilman Bettelli reported that the Committee members had been provided a copy of the survey, copies of several ordinances, a summary spreadsheet generally showing the responses to the survey and other comments that were made with the survey. He commented that all of the ordinances were basically similar, but each had nuances that separated it from others; the Greenville ordinance was the most restrictive. Administrator Tucker stated that the Committee had two (2) decisions before it and they were (1) did the City want to regulate smoking and, (2) if they chose to regulate smoking, to what degree did they want to regulate it. Mayor Sottile stated his opinion that both Folly Beach and North Charleston had done the right thing when they voted against regulating smoking; he agreed that the decision should be left to the individual business owner. Following the discussion, the Committee agreed to study the materials they had been given in order to make an informed decision at the next meeting.

E. Update on 25th Avenue

On the parking issue, Chief Buckhannon reported that he had spoken with SC DOT, but that they had not responded; Councilman Bettelli asked the Chief to report on this at the next meeting. Councilman Bettelli reported that an access had been widened to the left of the barricade that SC DOT had placed at the end of the street.

F. SC DOT Demonstration Project for 41st Avenue and Palm Boulevard

Councilman Bettelli reported that he and Administrator Tucker had met with representatives of SC DOT about a demonstration project they were proposing for 41st Avenue and Palm Boulevard to improve the traffic flow; the project includes the following:

- The end of Cameron Boulevard would be closed via barricade;
- A STOP sign would be placed at the crosswalk on 41st Avenue as drivers headed toward Palm Boulevard from the marina;
- There is an existing STOP sign on Palm Boulevard, coming from Wild Dunes, at 41st Avenue; and
- A new STOP sign would be placed on 41st Avenue along with a painted island for drivers coming from 41st toward Wild Dunes making the 41st Avenue corner and proceeding straight to the marina; the right lane that continues onto Palm would be a flow-through lane.

Councilman Bettelli stated that an inviting feature of this program was that it was temporary; if it created more problems than it cured, it could be dismantled and removed relatively quickly. He reported that, pursuant to deliberations, the Committee had decided not to rush into project, but to follow the normal course by presenting it to City Council for their approval and to take the time to notify and request input from the residents who would be directly impacted by the project. The letter of notification has been prepared and residents were asked to respond by June 25, 2008.

G. Status of "Weddings on the Beach" flyer

Chief Buckhannon presented a copy of the flyer entitled "Beach and City Rules and Regulations" that details what is allowed or disallowed for a wedding on the beach at the Isle of Palms.

5. New Business

A. Annual 4th of July Golf Cart Parade

MOTION: Mayor Sottile moved to approve the 4th of July Golf Cart Parade; Councilman Buckhannon seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

B. Discussion of Crosswalk at 21st Avenue Curve

The Planning Commission has sent a letter to the Committee stating their concerns relative to the 21st Avenue curve; they were as follows:

“there is limited time for a driver to react to pedestrians and pedestrians, aware that cars must yield, may be less attentive, which could lead to an accident.

The Planning Commission . . . believes that it would improve the safety of the area to shift the crosswalk about 50 feet farther away from the curve and add an additional sign with flashing light adjacent to the crosswalk.”

Chief Buckhannon voiced his objection to a move as described stating, that the highway department was satisfied with the current placement; he reminded the Committee that the temporary crosswalk signs were placed in the roadway each weekend.

Administrator Tucker will send a letter reporting that the Public Safety Committee has chosen to take no action on their request.

6. Highlights of Department Reports

Chief Graham began her report with a citizen’s report on May 8, 2008 of a surfer in distress in Breach Inlet; after working for nearly an hour, the search was call off and it was determined that the surfer must have been a pelican. Councilman Bettelli was concerned that the Coast Guard had been called and had refused to respond; the Chief told him that the Coast Guard made the determination that it was not a legitimate call. The May inspections showed that there had been forty-four (44) fire code violations when the inspection was done at the Red and White; she stated that many were small, but there had also been several significant violations. She related that there had been marked changes since the last inspection approximately one year ago.

Chief Buckhannon reported that there hade been quite a few incidents of alcohol and DUI during the month; the most serious case of DUI had been one person who was clocked at 123 miles per hour coming over the Connector and, when stopped, the driver blew a .27%. During the month, three hundred five (305) Victim of Crime forms were issued trying to impress upon citizens their vulnerability to crimes; he reported that the island is again experiencing a rash of burglaries. The Livability Report showed thirty-eight (38) calls made during the month; thirty-four (34) of the calls were for noise violations.

Mayor Sottile asked that Chief Buckhannon share as much information as he could about the recent burglaries. The Chief stated that there had been ten to fifteen (10-15)

burglaries and that, again, flat panel televisions have been taken. The detectives have gotten fingerprints from some of the homes and have gotten consistent foot prints from others. In addition to the televisions, a vehicle and a motorcycle have been stolen; the vehicle was recovered in North Charleston. In a couple of instances, the detectives had been able to get the serial numbers of the stolen items and those has been entered into the NCIC system; Chief Buckhannon stated that they are checking the pawn systems daily. The Chief informed the Committee that the burglaries have been occurring both at night and in the daytime and that they have identified some types of vehicles for which they are looking. The most recent occurrences were two (2) burglaries on Tuesday, June 10.

7. Miscellaneous

Councilman Bettelli stated that the City had received a communication from Andy Benke of Sullivan's Island requesting that the City participate in the Hurricane Expo that will be held on Sullivan's Island this year during the third week of July. Despite the fact that the MASC Annual Meeting will be held in Charleston the same week, the Committee agreed that the City wanted to take part in the Expo.

Councilman Bettelli related that he had seen Lt. Wright on television earlier in the week reporting on the City's efforts to reduce fuel consumption. Councilman Bettelli stated that anything, like more foot and bicycle patrols, that can be done to keep fuel costs down is a help to the City.

Chief Buckhannon recounted that he had done a speed survey on Cameron Boulevard last year; the SC DOT had placed the requested 25 mph signs last week.

Administrator Tucker related that Mayor Sottile had received a letter of appreciation for the work of Sgt. Dawn Caldwell and Detective Diane Tarr on a break-in investigation.

Chief Graham explained that the digital repeaters for Wild Dunes would not be ordered until closer to the cutover to digital that is planned for November. In the meantime, the officers and firefighters will do the best they can to maintain communication in The Villages.

Next meeting date: 5:30 p.m., Wednesday, July 9, 2008.

8. MOTION: Having concluded the meeting's business, Councilman Buckhannon moved to adjourn at 7:12 p.m.; Mayor Sottile seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.