

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

9:30 a.m., Tuesday, June 2, 2015

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was called to order at 9:00 a.m., Tuesday, June 2, 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, Fire Chief Graham, Police Captain Usry 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 had been duly 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 regular meeting of May 6, 2015 as submitted; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded.

Chair Bettelli referred to line two (2) on page 6 and stated that the word "not" should be inserted.

VOTE: The motion to approve the corrected minutes PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Citizens Comments

Administrator Tucker stated that Jim Owens wanted to attend this meeting, but was unable to do so; he, therefore, emailed his comments to the Administrator for her to read to the Committee. (The email communication is attached to the historical record of the meeting.) The issues he set forth are as follows:

- Property owners should maintain overgrowth/overhang from their property that covers the sidewalk;
- Better enforcement for people who are parked on or block the sidewalk;
- Better enforcement for golf carts illegally driven on the sidewalks; and
- Better enforcement of speeding on Palm Boulevard between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m.

Captain Usry confirmed that state law prohibits driving golf carts on the sidewalk and stated that officers write citation for vehicles parked on the sidewalk when they encounter them if they get no response by knocking on the door of the nearest residence.

William O'Hanahan, 2308 Palm, asked for assistance from the Committee for beach visitors who park too close to a driveway, therefore, blocking the view as someone tries to exit a driveway; he noted that trucks, vans and large SUVs were the worst. He opined that this situation is a safety hazard and leaves the City open for liability in case of an accident. If needed, he proposed an ordinance prohibiting large vehicles from parking too close to driveways.

He was also interested in hearing what the Committee would be discussing relevant to the shooting in the County Park the previous Sunday.

Administrator Tucker responded that the Committee would not be discussing the shooting as such, but it would be covered in the monthly Police Department report. She suggested that Mr. O'Hanahan stay for the report toward the end of the meeting.

4. Old Business

A. Consideration of Proposal from Stantec for Parking Sign Plan, Traffic Management

Administrator Tucker recognized Rick Rieff from Stantec who was present to address any questions generated by the proposal under consideration.

The Administrator commented that the proposal was generated at the City's request. The Residential Parking District Parking Plan, Task 2, is a plan for beach access parking management Concept C; Stantec will generate a plan and submit that plan to SCDOT for an encroachment permit. Once the permit is in-hand, the City would move forward with getting signs made and installed in the rights-of-way.

The first task was new to the Committee but was a subject that has been discussed at staff level under the topic of public safety; it is a new concept for the City. No one knows whether it will be successful or not, but staff agrees that it is worth testing. The idea is to make 14th Avenue one-way as visitors enter the island and go toward Front Beach. According to SCDOT, to execute the program on an experimental basis will require development of a plan that shows the necessary signage and whether it will be workable to improve the stacking and holdup at 14th Avenue, the primary ingress to and egress from the island. Task 1 is for Stantec to study that plan, to look at whether or not it would be feasible to improve traffic movement and, if so, to develop a plan to submit to SCDOT for their approval.

The third component is to design, bid and install a permanent sign in the wayfinding theme for Mayor Carmen R. Bunch Park.

Councilmember Carroll asked Chief Graham and Captain Usry to voice their opinions on the one-way traffic proposal, noting that he could not support it if they were not supportive, as well.

Captain Usry stated that, based on the way the traffic is flowing now, it stacks up both sides of the traffic, and there are times, when officers coming up the northbound side simply cannot get through because there is no place for the vehicles to go to get out of their path. If this idea were to be put into action on 14th Avenue, the road is wide enough to give vehicles room to pull over and allow the emergency vehicles to get through. The Captain added the SCDOT is looking at having two (2) lanes come straight across on 14th Avenue to help ease the congestion that makes the intersection so unsafe.

Chief Graham said that, in order for that concept to work better, parking on one (1) side of the street on Ocean Boulevard, preferably the traffic heading north, be eliminated creating a place for cars to pull over when an emergency vehicles needs to get through.

Councilmember Carroll asked if staff could perform this task saving the City in excess of thirteen thousand dollars (\$13,000).

Responding, Administrator Tucker repeated that a written plan must be submitted to SCDOT to do the experimental program at all. She remarked that this concept was not something that the City had to do; it was an idea from a citizen, who was a traffic engineer and had sat in the island traffic. Since the City has to close the road at times now, the idea was thought to be worth trying.

Captain Usry explained that, when traffic begins to back up on 14th Avenue into the intersection, officers shut down 14th Avenue and direct drivers right or left.

Councilmember Bergwerf voiced her understanding that the City actually had two (2) distinct problems; the first was the backup at the County Park and the second was people waiting for a parking space on Ocean Boulevard. In her opinion, making the area one-way was rather drastic. She was also concerned that the 14th Avenue would be one (1) way on the weekends and another during the week.

Administrator Tucker suggested that, since City Council has fully adopted parking Concept C and the sign plan is a vital part of its implementation, the Committee amend the agreement to include Task 2 and Task 3.

The Administrator confirmed with Mr. Rieff that Task 3 did not included the sign itself, for the Mayor Carmen R. Bunch Park and he verified that she was correct.

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to approve Tasks 2 and 3 of the Stantec proposal of May 27, 2015; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Rieff approached the Committee and spread out a map of the area included in Task 1, which represents what was presented to SCDOT recently. The one-way traffic on 14th Avenue and Ocean would begin at the County Park; families leaving the County Park would continue to turn right to get to the traffic signal. Mr. Rieff explained that, as vehicles are waiting for the vertical spaces on the land-side of Ocean, the ocean-side lane, with parallel parking would allow for more traffic movement through Front Beach. If a vehicle does not find a spot, IT could take JC Long back to Palm to circle around again. Mr. Rieff clarified that Ocean Boulevard would be one-way to 10th Avenue, allowing for a right turn onto JC Long.

Councilmember Bergwerf voiced concern that parking was going to be eliminated in front of the businesses; Captain Usry commented that twenty-two (22) parking spaces would be lost with this plan, not including the loading zones at the Seaside Inn, at the Palms Hotel and at the Banana Cabana.

Captain Usry noted that this plan would not eliminate traffic, but it would keep traffic moving.

Councilmember Carroll indicated that he would support moving forward with this experimental plan if both Chiefs agreed that, for public safety reasons, it should be tried.

According to Captain Usry, Chief Buckhannon would not have pushed the discussion if he had not thought it was worthwhile to test.

Administrator Tucker remarked that there was no reason to rush on this idea; it could be discussed at the next meeting and, if the decision is to go forward with the experiment, the City would need to reach out to local businesses. She added that this is one (1) thing the City has not tried and that staff wanted Mr. Rieff to work through the costs factors and develop a plan for SCDOT.

The consensus of the Committee was to follow the Administrator's advice to reach out to the businesses and to consider the experiment again at the next meeting.

B. Discussion of Quick Response Vehicle (QRV)

When the City originally discussed a QRV, the projected cost to the City was three hundred twelve thousand two hundred sixty-one dollars (\$312,261); that number did not reflect the use of overtime personnel but did include the cost of the vehicle.

Chief Graham recalled that the original discussion considered hiring six (6) more full-time employees to staff the vehicle appropriately. Historical data supports that the busiest days of the week for EMS are Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday; the overtime calculations are based on the overtime rate for a firefighter EMT and an engineer EMT who would work on a QRV Friday through Monday for nine to twelve hours (9-12 hrs.) a day.

The Chief reported talking to Charleston County EMS to partner with the City using an IOP EMT working with one (1) of the County's paramedics who are allowed to dispense medications. The way they are currently deploying their delta units, staffed EMS vehicles, has one (1) unit driving back and forth between the Isle of Palms and Sullivan's Island. Although a QRV would have many benefits, in the end, it would be staffed with the same people, doing the same job with the same equipment with a different mode of transportation.

Chief Graham stated that she would not support taking someone off a truck since the Department has only two (2) people per truck; to do that would only reduce the capabilities of the staff on the truck.

Chair Bettelli expressed his opinion that getting Charleston County involved would be a good thing, but, in the meantime, he suggested shelving any thought of proceeding with the purchase of a QRV until the FY17 budget.

Chief Graham said that she would like to see the City partnering with Charleston County the way it did years ago when one of IOP's EMTs worked with a County paramedic; the EMTs got a lot of hands-on training from the paramedics. The Chief did not think the City was charged a fee from the County to provide this service.

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

As noted last month, this subject is the product of a Battalion Chief at Station 2 expressing the need for more emergency beach accesses for the Department's equipment, and, due to traffic

during the peak season, the hope is for the access to line-up as much as possible with one of the streets perpendicular to Palm Boulevard. Then Fire personnel and equipment could go down Waterway Boulevard, take the perpendicular street and cross Palm to the emergency beach access.

Chief Graham reported that Captain Eagle has done some surveying of some of the beach access paths, and the access at 3202 Palm is almost directly across from 32nd Avenue. Although it is narrow, there is space to drive an ATV with a jet ski to the beach; the least amount of work needs to be done to that access to accomplish the goal and it could be done relatively quickly.

The Administrator commented that it would be designated as an emergency vehicular access and signed in that way so it would not be blocked.

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to designate the beach access path at 3202 Palm Boulevard as an emergency vehicular access path and authorize the appropriate trimming; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

D. Consideration of Additional Golf Cart Parking

The Administrator commented that she gets an email about the need for additional golf cart parking almost daily which is why it continues to be on the *Agenda*.

The Chair reported that someone has suggested a couple of spaces at 42nd Avenue.

Captain Usry noted that she and Chief Buckhannon had gone to 45th Avenue where a lot of construction is happening; if golf cart parking were to be designated at this access path, a lot of bushes and shrubbery would need to be trimmed back. She added that the Department is moving forward with the two (2) spaces at 4th Avenue that have been approved. She had photographs of the new "golf cart parking only" signage at 28th Avenue; signage will also be placed at the beginning of the beach access path indicating "no golf carts beyond this point." Work has begun to install the same type of signage at 31st Avenue.

Administrator Tucker reminded the Committee that to have dedicated golf cart parking with the appropriate signage, the City must get an encroachment permit from SCDOT.

Based on the amount of work to be done, Chief Buckhannon has decided not to go forward with dedicated golf cart parking at 45th Avenue at this time.

5. New Business

A. Consideration of Public Access to Traffic Camera on the Connector

Captain Usry reported that she and Chief Buckhannon had met with Joe Shivers of Technology Solutions; Mr. Shivers will be communicating with Comcast to set up a business network to allow public access to the traffic cameras on the Connector. The network would include the existing camera on the Connector facing outbound traffic and the cameras on Front Beach.

Administrator Tucker stated that she has heard that the City is now working with VC3 to get the link on the City's website.

The problem has been giving public access while not jeopardizing the City's secure computer network; she explained that Comcast will be the access point, Technology Solutions manages the cameras and VC3 assists the City with the website.

The Administrator noted that one thing the cameras could highlight is the need for more cameras which could be considered in a future budget.

B. Request for Additional County Medical Assets

The Administrator reported that she and Andy Benke, Sullivan's Island's Town Manager, are going to compose a letter to Charleston County for both Mayor's signatures requesting that a delta unit and a transport unit be assigned to each of the islands during the peak season. She is getting the Memorial Day weekend call volume for both islands to include in the letter. While the Isle of Palms may not have the number of calls as other locations in the County, typically, the calls are more severe here on the island; currently Charleston County is positioning one (1) delta unit at Breach Inlet to serve the two (2) islands.

C. Discussion of Loan Closet Coordinator

Chair Bettelli reported that Diane Oltorik's health has declined causing her to resign as the loan closet coordinator; she initiated the program and has done a great job.

Chief Graham has suggested that Lynn Golden, the secretary for the Fire Department, take over as coordinator; she is already involved with the program, knows where the equipment is, knows the forms and is familiar with the equipment that is available.

Administrator Tucker suggested giving Ms. Oltorik a Signal 30 award rather than sending a letter of appreciation and thanks. She added that frequently citizens come forward with good ideas, but rarely does that person offer to put in the "sweat equity" to make the idea a reality which Ms. Oltorik has done.

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to recommend to City Council that a Signal 30 Award be presented to Ms. Oltorik honoring her work with the loan closet: Chair Bettelli seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

D. Consideration of Additional Crosswalk at 38th Avenue and Palm Boulevard and Additional Portable Crosswalks

Captain Usry reported that the Police Department has five (5) portable crosswalk signs that are deployed on the weekends at 21st, 25th, 28th, 34th and 41st Avenues; the Captain noted that the City had to get encroachments permits for them. In addition, the Captain cautioned about having too many crosswalks; she reported that the island is already having safety issues from cars stopping for parking.

Chair Bettelli noted that there are no cross streets between 34th and 37th Avenues, but there is a pathway at 3800 that goes straight through; Captain Usry assured the Chair that she and the Chief would study that location for a crosswalk.

MOTION: Chair Bettelli moved to have a new pedestrian crosswalk at 38th Avenue; Councilmember Carroll seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

E. Discussion of Enforcement of Ordinances on the Beach

Captain Usry reviewed the state and local laws regarding the beach as follows:

- City ordinance prohibits alcohol and glass on the beach;
- Both the City and the State prohibit littering on the beach;
- City ordinance prohibits tents, chairs, umbrellas, holes, etc. to be left on the beach overnight; and
- City ordinance prohibits lighting being cast on the beach at night.

Administrator Tucker reminded the Committee that “the eyes of justice are totally blind.” If the Police Department puts a “full-court press” on the beach to enforce all of the ordinances in an intense fashion, would it help the City to get better control of some of the very negative things that she and City Council are hearing complaints about? The response was yes, it would because it would give the officers reasons to approach people on the beach from whom the officers might learn something else. Maybe the person is in possession of something that he should not have. Such enforcement on the beach will also affect the island’s residents because there is no distinction in the violation of the law between those who live here and those who do not. Currently IOP officers use discretion in issuing tickets – when people are acting ridiculously, they are likely to get a ticket. The good side to a “full-court press” would be that the City would get rid of and maybe arrest some of the people about whom the City is receiving complaints, but there could also be citations issued to some of those same people who might be complaining.

The Administrator noted that she and Captain Usry have discussed mechanisms to try to control some of the same concerns that were brought forth in Citizens’ Comments and have heard from other citizens about the unruly nature of the crowds and the need to make them behave. In addition, they discussed additional County officers to attack the problem, but County officers cannot enforce City ordinances. It appears that some of the island’s visitors are aware of that fact and, while they see the County’s presence, they do not necessarily mitigate their behavior.

The Administrator indicated that she and the Captain wanted to bring these issues before the Committee; the Administrator added that the City will enforce the law regardless, but the officers do have a lot of discretion in their enforcement.

Captain Usry looked at the numbers after talking with the Administrator and found that officers wrote sixty-nine (69) citations for alcohol on the beach in the month of May, without exerting any additional energy toward enforcement. The Captain noted that some of these citations did lead to arrests, for instance, two (2) very intoxicated females decided to expose themselves and went

to jail, and some people were so intoxicated that they instantly became belligerent when an officer approached and they went to jail. Captain Usry stated that Isle of Palms' police officers strive to promote a family-friendly beach with a safe environment.

Chair Bettelli said that he thought the City's officers use their discretion well.

The Captain reported that for the Memorial Day weekend, officers issued only twenty-four (24) citations; the number might appear to be low because the officers were so busy all over the island. She explained that County officers can only assist with traffic, which allows the Captain to take IOP officers away from 14th Avenue and to deploy them elsewhere on the island. Since the County is short-handed as well and their officers are already working mandatory overtime, the City is having a difficult time getting off-duty officers to assist with traffic issues. The Captain reported that the island's officers are doing an outstanding job and doing everything that is being asked of them.

Although the officers are doing a good job, the City must gain control of the unruly crowds; Captain Usry added that crowds are continuing to grow.

6. Highlights of Departmental Reports

Police Department – Captain Usry

In reviewing the highlights of May, Captain Usry reported that, on May 2, a theft from a motor vehicle took place at Palm and 21st; the visitor returned from the beach to find the passenger side window had been broken and someone had stolen her credit and debit cards. The perpetrators went to the Kangaroo, used one (1) while being caught on the surveillance tape; with the assistance of the Mount Pleasant Police Department, the male and female have been arrested. The Department has also had issues with a person identifying himself as "Travis" who was calling rooms in the Wild Dunes, saying that the system has gone down, and the occupant's credit card number was needed immediately. Several people gave "Travis" their credit card numbers, resulting in several open cases; the Department did get search warrants on the phone numbers it had and traced them to a jail in Georgia; the case, therefore, has been turned over to the Secret Service. Officers responded to the 100 block of Palm Boulevard for an assault on a firefighter by the intoxicated resident; he continued to be belligerent after police officers arrived, even kicked an officer in the leg. He was taken to jail, and the bond has been set at seventeen thousand dollars (\$17,000). At the County Park, a weapons law violation occurred on Memorial Day; a man stated that he had been shot, but eventually stated that he had accidentally shot himself, but officers could not find the gun. One (1) witness was able to video the man exiting the car and limping without the gun in his possession, and the man did not remember who he was with or the vehicle. This incident is still open and under investigation.

As noted earlier, officers conducted beach enforcement and, in the month of May, wrote sixty-nine (69) citations for alcohol on the beach; in addition, the Department had four (4) DUI arrests.

Officers cited for recognition were Sgt. Baldrick and Officer Taylor who assisted a young lady who had locked her keys in her car; they stayed with her until AAA arrived. She indicated that she felt very safe and that the officers had allowed her to charge her phone while waiting.

Officers Couche and Hardy have also been recognized for their professionalism and assistance at the marina; someone was having trouble backing their trailer and struck another trailer. They helped them to get everything organized and did a good job.

In May, one thousand two hundred nineteen (1,219) parking citations were issued; during the Memorial Day weekend, officers issued three hundred forty-three (343) parking citations from Friday through Monday.

Using the traffic counters for the first time, Captain Usry reported that the total average daily count for May in-coming on the Connector was eleven thousand one hundred nine (11,109) vehicles and exiting via the Connector were ten thousand one hundred ten (10,110) vehicle. Average traffic crossing the Connector daily in May was twenty-one thousand two hundred nineteen (21,219) vehicles. For Breach Inlet, the in-coming and out-going vehicle counts were four thousand three hundred seventy-three (4,373); the total at Breach Inlet was eight thousand seven hundred forty-six (8,746). The average number of vehicles on and off the island on a daily basis in May was twenty-nine thousand nine hundred sixty-five (29,965).

Concluding, the Captain reported that the signs have been installed at Mayor Carmen R. Bunch Park and the cones are gone.

Fire Department – Chief Graham

On May 3, personnel responded to a small brush fire at the County Park; upon extinguishing a mulch fire, personnel overhauled the area to ensure nothing else was burning. On May 5, personnel responded to a report of a possible structure fire in Grand Pavilion; a small fire was found in the air conditioning unit, and power to the unit was secured and the fire was extinguished. Personnel responded to a construction worker who had fallen from a ladder and broken his leg on May 21st; the patient was transferred to Charleston County EMS for transport. On May 25th, personnel responded to a man who said he had been shot; after notifying the Police Department, the crew stabilized the victim and he was transported by Charleston County EMS. In the month of May, personnel responded to one hundred nineteen (119) total calls; fifty-seven (57) of which were EMS calls. Thirty (30) fire inspections were performed, and seventy-four (74) violations were found. On the subject of vehicle maintenance, the Chief reported that some major repairs are needed, and having them done may result in going over-budget for that line item. The sixty-six hundred dollar (\$6,600) repair to the ladder truck was to have both hydraulic life cylinders were remanufactured, tested and re-installed.

7. Miscellaneous Business

Administrator Tucker announced that the ALS Hope Race Run, a pre-approved City event, has been scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 17.

The Chair reminded members of the Committee that the East Cooper Straphangers will hold their march across the Connector on Saturday, July 18th.

Next Meeting Date: 9:30 a.m., Tuesday, July 7, 2015 in the Conference Room.

8. Executive Session – not necessary

9. Adjourn

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 a.m.; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk