

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
5:30 p.m., Tuesday, January 14, 2014

The regular meeting of the Public Works Committee was held at 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, January 14, 2014 in Council Chambers of City Hall, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilmember Ferencz, Loftus and Ward, Administrator Tucker, Director Pitts, Assistant to the Administrator Dziuban and City Clerk Copeland; a quorum was present to conduct business.

1. Administrator Tucker 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. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Administrator Tucker opened the floor to nominations for Committee Chair, and Councilmember Loftus nominated Councilmember Ward as Chair. Councilmember Ferencz seconded the nomination, and Councilmember Ward was unanimously elected Chair.

Chair Ward then called for nominations for Vice Chair, and Councilmember Loftus nominated Councilmember Ferencz as Vice Chair. Chair Ward seconded and Councilmember Ferencz was unanimously elected Vice Chair.

3. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of November 6, 2013 as submitted; Chair Ward seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. Citizens' Comments

Jim Raih, 3904 Hartnett, approached the Committee about the discussion at the November meeting about the City's need to replace the underground fuel tank by 2017. He suggested that the City should look at resources available on the island and possibly team-up with the marina or the Kangaroo gas station across the street, rather than own fuel tanks as a separate entity.

5. Departmental Reports for December 2013 – Director Pitts

Maintenance and Trash Collection Tracking Reports

Due to a complaint about limbs overhanging the Palm Boulevard sidewalk between 21st and 40th Avenues, personnel trimmed back those limbs. Director Pitts stated that the Public Works' crew is getting "cranked back up after the holidays."

The vehicular expense of note for December was the replacement of the regeneration unit on one (1) of the newer vehicles; there were no extraordinary expenses in November.

For the month of November, household garbage was down slightly from the same period last year, but upon averaging November and December, there is only a thirty-three ton (33 T.)

difference between 2013 and 2012. On the other hand, yard debris continues to run higher in 2013 than 2012.

Councilmember Loftus voiced his opinion that, when the hours were changed for dogs to be off leash on the beach, a strain was put on the demand for the pooper-scooper bags, especially at 42nd Avenue. He questioned that a bigger container or a second container might be needed at that beach access due to the traffic. Director Pitts said that the problem was one of servicing the pooper-scooper stations on a more frequent basis in the off-season, but he assured the Councilmember that he would have the station serviced more often.

6. Old Business

A. Update on Seahorse Court Sinkhole Repair

Director Pitts stated that he has nothing to report. Administrator Tucker repeated that Charleston County has investigated and a work order for the repairs has been issued.

B. Consideration of Amendment to the Code to Require Contractors to Remove Yard Debris

The Administrator recalled that this issue is a carryover from 2013, and, for the sake of the new member, the Administrator explained that, if a resident contracts for landscaping work, that contractor is not required to haul the yard debris generated off the island; it is, therefore, left for the Public Works Department to remove. In neighboring communities, landscape contractors are required by ordinance to haul off the yard debris they generate. If the City had such an ordinance, contractors would receive a warning if they were caught leaving debris, and, if they chose to leave it, a ticket would be issued. The previous Committee decided to leave it on the agenda for the new Committee to discuss.

Chair Ward asked whether the Administrator was prepared to offer an amendment, and the Administrator stated that the Committee was not inclined to incur the legal expense unless it was confident that Committee wanted to proceed. She recalled that she had offered ordinances from Mount Pleasant, Sullivan's Island, Goose Creek and others to the Committee to consider.

Councilmember Ferencz stated that she had looked at contracts that she had in the past with landscape contractors, and each contract stated that the contractor would remove their debris, so she thought similar statements would likely appear in all contract language.

Councilmember Loftus stated his opinion that an ordinance requiring this would be burdensome to law enforcement, and he then asked how many tickets had been issued for landscapers illegally leaving debris on the island. Administrator Tucker said there have been instances of violations to the dumping ordinance, where a vacant lot with an absentee owner is used by contractors or neighbors to illegally dump debris. The City has been successful in monitoring those areas to catch people and in posting signage on those properties; the Administrator was unsure whether a ticket had ever been issued for this problem.

Councilmember Loftus stated that he does not see a difference in leaving debris that he generates from maintaining his yard for the City to remove and debris left behind when he hires a contractor.

Administrator Tucker explained that the ordinance is typically enforced when the business license is issued to the contractor, he is provided with the City's ordinances that govern his business and is told that one (1) ordinance is that debris must be hauled off.

The benefit to such an ordinance is that it reduces the wear and tear on the City's personnel and equipment, and it would also mean that the debris is roadside for a shorter period of time.

Chair Ward asked Director Pitts if he thought this was a big problem on the island; the Director responded that sixty to seventy percent (60-70%) of the island's residents use contractors. In order to enforce the ordinance, a party must be caught in the act; if the party is guilty of illegal dumping, the business license can be revoked.

Another concern voiced by Councilmember Loftus is that contractors would increase the amount they charge Isle of Palms' residents for their services if they are required to haul off their debris.

The consensus of the Committee was to take no action at this time and to remove the item from future agendas.

C. Consideration of Accepting Maintenance on Drainage

Administrator Tucker stated that the City does not need to take any action on this item.

7. New Business

A. Discussion of FY15 Budget Process

Administrator Tucker explained that, over the course of the budget process in prior years, staff has gotten the impression that Council would like to approach the budget in a different manner; the Administrator then reviewed the process as follows:

- Updating the ten-year capital plan by determining what items on the list need to be replaced, which can be deferred and what needs to be added to create the Capital Projects Budget;
- Reviewing the operating budgets while refining projections for revenues; and
- Matching up projected revenues with the Capital Projects and operating budgets.

One approach considered by staff has been to allow Council and the committees to determine what sources of funds should be allocated to the various elements of the budget. Historically, staff has made this determination.

Staff wants to make the process one that everyone is comfortable with and is easier for everyone.

Councilmember Loftus reiterated the discussion at the Real Property Committee that Council would like to have revenues earlier in the process to massage along with expenditures; Councilmember Ferencz stated that the Personnel Committee had expressed the same opinion.

Chair Ward stated that he had always heard that, if a business does not start with revenues, it will not be in business very long.

B. Consideration of Keeping Lights on Palm Trees Year-round

Chair Ward stated that a resident had called him about keeping the lights on the palm trees on Front Beach year-round because it is quite dark there and people often remark that they would like to have more lighting for safety reasons and for visibility.

Administrator Tucker mentioned that Victor Lawrence had been asked to attend the meeting because he is the “holiday light guru” – the Fire Department employee who is responsible for putting up and taking down the lights. Once staff was aware that discussion would occur on this matter, work on taking down the lights was stopped. The Administrator added that, if this is a lighting issue at Front Beach, the City might need to come up with a more workable plan that is less maintenance than leaving these lights in place. She passed one of the lights currently being used at Front Beach to the Committee for them to see that the glue that holds the metal cap that screws into the socket does not hold up, especially in the heat; this bulb only shows a yellow discoloration where the glue originally attached the metal cap.

During the holiday season, the Police Department is responsible for turning the Front Beach lights on and off each day, which is not a problem in the off-season but would be in peak season; the lights cannot be put on a timer due to the configuration.

Mr. Lawrence stated that heat is his “biggest enemy”; he indicated that he loses many of the metal caps when he is removing the lights from the trees. The wire strands are also heat sensitive and become pliable and soft when heated, and temperatures have only been in the sixties (60s) the last few days. He predicted that, in eighty to ninety degree (80°-90°) heat, the trees would be “raining” light bulbs.

Director Pitts expressed concern that, once the season begins, beach visitors may damage the lights; to leave the lights up year-round would definitely be less work for the City, but this is not the right product for that application.

Mr. Lawrence stated that he had arranged to buy thousand foot (1,000 ft.) rolls of strand, so that each tree now has its own customized length of strand. In addition, Mr. Lawrence explained that he has a lighting map on which each tree has been assigned a number and that number will mark each strand as it is removed from the palm trees to streamline the process.

Councilmember Loftus thanked Mr. Lawrence for his efforts on behalf of the City; he always thinks “they look fabulous.” He indicated that he thinks more lighting at Front Beach is a wonderful idea and suggested that the City use the type of lighting that has been placed in the area of the Boulevard on Coleman Boulevard in Mount Pleasant as a joint venture with the Front Beach businesses. Those lights are up high and give a festive mood to the area.

Based on the conversation, Administrator Tucker commented that the City could proceed with the removal of the lights from the palm trees and ask ATAX to look into the project.

C. Contracts in Excess of \$10,000 – None

8. Miscellaneous Business

Acknowledgement of Exemplary Work

Chair Ward acknowledged reading the letter from Carol Bourque and thanked Director Pitts for the job his staff did on the island. The Director stated that the driver mentioned was Russell Roper.

Next Meeting Date: 5:30 p.m., Wednesday, February 5, 2014 in Council Chambers.

9. Adjourn

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:12 p.m.; Councilmember Ferencz seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk