

**CITY COUNCIL and PLANNING COMMISSION  
ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**

5:30 p.m., Thursday, August 21, 2014

City Council and the Planning Commission held a roundtable discussion to receive an update from Stantec relative to the beach access parking and a parking management plan at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, August 21, 2014 in Council Chambers of City Hall, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the discussion were Councilmembers Bergwerf, Bettelli, Buckhannon, Carroll, S. Ferencz, Harrington, Loftus and Ward and Mayor Cronin; Planning Commission members included Ballow, Denton, R. Ferencz, Mills and Scott; as well as Administrator Tucker, Director Kerr, Assistant Dziuban and Clerk Copeland. Representatives from Stantec in attendance were Rick Day, Rick Reiff and Matt Kelly.

1. Mayor Cronin 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. Update and Discussion of Stantec Work Tasks**

Mayor Cronin stated that this meeting was set several months ago, and since then Stantec personnel have been gathering and processing data related to traffic flow, parking and traffic counting gathered from their field work on the island over Memorial Day weekend. The Mayor turned the meeting to Rick Day and Rick Reiff.

The presentation prepared by Stantec for this meeting is attached to the historical record of the meeting. The following will be highlights of that presentation and/or topics that generated discussion.

Mr. Day stated that the agenda he planned to follow was:

- 1) A review of the scope of work assigned to Stantec;
- 2) On-street parking review, in terms of the widths of rights-of-way and impact on parking;
- 3) On-street parking verification, dealing with obstructions in the rights-of-way;
- 4) Traffic/Parking data collection and study;
- 5) Managed parking program implementation; and
- 6) Next steps.

According to Stantec, the optimum right-of-way parking space on the island has a vehicle parked four feet (4 ft.) from the property line, allows eight feet (8 ft.) for the width of the vehicle and a distance of four feet (4 ft.) from the edge of the roadway. Using this methodology, a vehicle can be safely parked, and passengers can safely exit. Councilmember Bergwerf stated that, if this criteria was to be used for safe parking, many residents could not park in front of their homes.

Mr. Day explained the color-coding used on a map of the island showing the widths of the rights-of-way on the island, i.e. where safe parking could be provided and which streets should be closed to parking based on this methodology.

Included in the presentation were photographs of several properties on the island with obstructions in the rights-of-way; based on field verification, Stantec found that six hundred

twenty-five (625) properties, or thirty-two percent (32%), have obstructions that result in an overall reduction to parking by fifty-nine percent (59%).

Councilmember Carroll remarked that the City has tried to stay in compliance with the Beach Management Act to ensure that the City can receive state funds to rebuild beaches in case of an emergency. Recently, the state legislature enacted the Beach Preservation Act which allows coastal communities to charge an additional one percent (1%) accommodations tax on rental properties for use strictly for beach preservation, ultimately making these communities self-sufficient for maintaining beaches. With these facts taken into consideration, the Councilmember stated that the City was interested in providing the minimum acceptable beach access parking, not the maximum.

Based on traffic counts provided by IOP and SCDOT count stations and Stantec counts on Memorial Day weekend, Stantec calculated that the average monthly traffic coming onto the island ranges from a low of twelve thousand eight hundred (12,800) vehicles in January to a high of twenty-three thousand five hundred (23,500) in July. Mayor Cronin stated that the traffic increases by approximately eighty percent to one hundred percent (80%-100%) in the summer months [(April 1 to Labor Day) versus the winter months (December 1 to February 28)].

On another chart, Stantec shows the number of cars coming onto the island by time of day; that number reaches a high of approximately eight thousand five hundred sixty-six (8,566) vehicles between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. and these are the cars looking for parking. An interesting section of the presentation was aerial photographs taken every half hour between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. that show the parking at Front Beach, including the County Park, for one (1) day over the Memorial Day weekend.

Comparing on-street parking to parking in the lots, vehicles parked on-street number one thousand forty-four (1,044) and vehicles in the parking lots total one thousand two hundred forty-seven (1,247) at the peak hour of 2:00 p.m. For this particular day, twenty-two hundred ninety-one (2,291) vehicles are on the island for a day at the beach; this number represents about twenty-seven percent (27%) of the total vehicles (8,566) coming onto the island and looking for parking. Another interpretation of the numbers would be that seventy-three percent (73%) of the vehicles are coming to the island for other reasons, i.e. to work, to visit friends or family, to go to the marina, to go to Wild Dunes for a round of golf, etc. The City experiences about forty-five to fifty (45-50) days a year when the congestion is at its worst.

Mr. Day noted that Stantec has taken conservative estimates on costs and revenue for a parking program. On the issue of a SCDOT requirement that any parking program be cost neutral, Mr. Day stated that this was a misconception and that a parking management program could be revenue-producing for the City. Attorney Halversen added that this concept comes from case law, and SCDOT has advised in the past that they will follow the Attorney General's opinion and case law. The City Attorney commented that she thought this was an old ruling, but the City should keep it in mind as it moves forward with a parking management program.

According to Stantec, the advantages of a parking management plan are that the City could cap the number of parking permits sold and permit prices could vary based on the island's congestion. From earlier dialogue with the City, Stantec understood that the parking program

should run from May 15<sup>th</sup> through September 15<sup>th</sup>; stating that the visitor traffic truly begins around Easter, Councilmember Bergwerf thought that the program should run from April 1<sup>st</sup> through September 15<sup>th</sup>.

Councilmember Carroll voiced his understanding that, if the City embarked on a parking management program, all of the rights-of-way had to be opened up to parking and that visitors had to be treated the same as residents and vice versa; therefore, if a resident wanted to park a vehicle in the right-of-way in front of his home, the resident would need to purchase a parking permit for that vehicle. Mr. Day indicated that his understanding was that the rights-of-way are public; therefore, persons parking in the public rights-of-way must be treated the same whether from an IOP resident, a local visitor or a visitor from out of state.

On the topic of encroachments in the rights-of-way, SCDOT, in discussions with Stantec, indicated that they did not permit the landscaping in the rights-of-way, and they would prefer that it not be there, but they were not going to go to residents and demand that these encroachments be removed without City support. Mr. Day added that proceeding with a parking management program is not predicated upon the removal of encroachments from the rights-of-way.

Mayor Cronin asked whether the City could allow parking on some streets and not on others, and he was told that the City could do that. According to Mr. Day, the City should provide parking in the future where parking is allowed today with a permit.

Although Stantec was recommending that the hours of enforcement be between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Council agreed to enforcement from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. In addition, permits would be sold for the period of a year, a week or a day.

Councilmember Buckhannon hypothesized that, if the City sold five hundred (500) permits, vehicles five hundred one and five hundred two (501-502) would still come across the Connector looking for parking to spend a day at the beach. He asked whether these vehicles without permits would receive a higher fine than others who illegally park in some other fashion. Mr. Day agreed that such a situation would occur primarily in the first year, but, once visitors realize that they cannot park without a permit and a fine, these beach-goers will get with the program.

Mr. Day explained that Stantec was recommending that parking permits should be purchased on-line; the City would hire a vendor who will develop a website or an app where people would purchase the permits using a credit card. For those individuals who are not plugged in electronically, the City would sell permits from the Public Safety Building during normal business hours.

Responding to Mayor Cronin's question, Mr. Day explained that eventually the permits will be tied to a particular license plate.

In some instances, municipalities have completely outsourced the enforcement end of the program; the parking attendant would be equipped with either a camera or a handheld device with license plate recognition software that will marry the license plate to a permit. They could



- **August, 2014**                                   **Meet with vendors**
- **September, 2014**                           **Finalize Managed Parking Program Plan**
- **October, 2014**                               **Release RFP/bid for vendor(s) and equipment**
- **November, 2014**                           **Select vendor(s)**
- **December, 2014/  
  January, 2015**                           **Vendor develops program (websites, app, etc.) and  
  tests functionality**
- **January, 2015**                               **City initiates public education campaign**
- **February, 2015**                           **Open permit sales**
- **March/April, 2015**                       **Staffing hires, purchase new equipment and new  
  signing installation**
- **April 1, 2015**                               **Program begins**
- **February thru May, 2015**               **City continues public education**

Councilmember Carroll recalled that Mr. Day had stated that the cost to the City to assume the responsibility for the maintenance of IOP's roads was approximately nine hundred ninety-five thousand dollars (\$995,000) per year. He then asked Mr. Day if the City could take over all roads except Highway 703; to which Mr. Day responded that he thought SCDOT would be happy to give the roads to the City.

Mayor Cronin commented that the City has not reached a conclusion about what benefit was to be gained in taking over the roads since the rights-of-way would remain public. Attorney Halversen agreed that the City would have more autonomy to decide what kind of parking plan it wanted to implement or to close roads to parking, but the City would continue to deal with public roads that are dedicated to the public for parking as well as ingress and egress. Taking over the roads will not give the City the freedom to have a plan that will make a big difference between residents and non-residents relative to parking. The Attorney reminded the group that, although the City might take over the roads, it will not own them and will be bound by equal protection arguments.

Councilmember Ferencz asked Mr. Day to explain the pros and cons to the residents of the parking plan. He began his explanation with what he considered the primary con to the program:

- A resident with public right-of-way in front of his home can either park in his driveway or purchase a parking permit to park in front of his home in the right-of-way.

Administrator Tucker added a con that she thought should have been at the top of Mr. Day's list; the Administrator emphasized that implementing a parking plan is not necessarily going to relieve the congestion on the ingress and egress to the island during the peak season.

When asked the pros, Mr. Reiff stated that Stantec has shown that the program would pay for itself, i.e. no expense to the City.

Mr. Day expressed the opinion that the City could successfully argue that the parking program can be cost neutral and provide funding for the numbers of public safety and public works personnel needed in the summer months to ensure the safety of visitors to the island.

Another con that Mr. Day thought would be an issue for the City was public relations, so the City must be fair, thoughtful and reasonable about the parking plan and stress that this program is an effort to enhance the enjoyment and safety of beach-goers.

Mr. Day acknowledged that he had given the Planning Commission and City Council an abundance of information and that he did not expect anyone to absorb it immediately; he added that he welcomed comments and/or questions about the parking program.

Mayor Cronin asked that Councilmembers to study the information provided and to be prepared to make a decision to proceed or to stop at Tuesday's Council meeting.

There being no further questions, the Mayor concluded the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland  
City Clerk