

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

5:30 p.m., Tuesday, May 3, 2011

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 3, 2011 in Council Chambers of City Hall, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilmembers Bergwerf and Loftus, Chair Bettelli, Assistant to the Administrator Dziuban, Fire Chief Graham, Police Chief Buckhannon 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 have been duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

2. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of April 4, 2011 as submitted; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Citizens' Comments

Crips McDonald of Setup Events addressed the Committee about holding an event called IOP Splash and Dash on Saturday, August 6th at 7 a.m. to benefit the South Carolina Aquarium's Sea Turtle Hospital, and a like-event will be held at Folly Beach on July 16th. He explained that the event would be a seven hundred fifty (750) meter swim followed by a 5K run; he stated that he had spoken to the Recreation Committee earlier who had deferred a decision to the Public Safety Committee. Mr. McDonald stated that he expected to have one hundred (100) participants and an equal number of spectators; the event would be sanctioned by the USA Triathlon Association who would also provide the liability insurance. He anticipated hiring the lifeguards who are employed at the County Park to assist with the event and that the event would have no less than seven (7) life-guards. With a 7 a.m. start time, everything associated with the event would be off the beach by 10 a.m.

Chair Bettelli asked if Setup Events was a for-profit business; Mr. McDonald responded that it is a for-profit business. Mr. McDonald added that the percentage that would go the Aquarium has not yet been established.

Councilmember Loftus asked Mr. McDonald what support would be needed from the City, and Mr. McDonald responded that he expected to hire lifeguards from the County Park, that Setup Events could arranged to have both an EMT and ambulance available and that the parking fee could be added to the registration fee for the event. Councilmember Bergwerf remarked that all of the groups he had mentioned would be arranged through Charleston County; she asked whether he had contacted Charleston County. Mr. McDonald stated that he had gotten preliminary approval from Charleston County for the Folly Beach event and that the County had been told of the company's intention to pursue events at the Isle of Palms and Kiawah.

Councilmember Bergwerf recalled from the Recreation Committee meeting that Mr. McDonald had stated that he expected one hundred (100) participants and intended to cap the event at two hundred fifty (250). Mr. McDonald offered to reduce the cap to a number more suitable to the Committee.

From Setup Events' past experience, Councilmember Bergwerf asked what percentage typically went to the entity in whose name the event would be held, and Mr. McDonald stated twenty-five percent (25%) of the net proceeds.

Councilmember Bergwerf stated that early August was a very busy time on the island; it is typically filled with tourists. In addition, she informed him that the event might conflict with the contractor who is on the beach early in the morning to remove trash. Assistant Dziuban added that guests on the island have been digging holes on the beach in the past couple of years which could create a hazard to the participants.

The discussion continued as members of the Committee commented on the City's efforts to restrict the number of events held on the island, the poor choice of time at the peak of the season, the volume of traffic the event would generate and the strain on public safety agencies. Mr. McDonald offered to make any number of concessions to make the event attractive to the Committee, but the Committee agreed that the City would not support this event.

4. Old Business

Review of FY12 Capital and Operating Budgets for Fire and Police Departments

Councilmember Bergwerf stated that the purchase of a replacement boat for the Fire Department at a cost of forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) remained a topic of discussion for her. Chief Graham stated that she had contacted both state and federal surplus agencies and found a 1994 boat in Columbia that had belonged to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). She expressed concern that this boat had the same tank that was on the City's boat and was worried that it would have the same contamination from ethanol fuel. Responding to Councilmember Bergwerf, Chief Graham said she expected the state to be looking for sixty-five hundred dollars (\$6,500) for the used boat and motor; she stated that she thought to buy it would be a huge gamble for the City to take.

The Chief distributed pictures of the City's boat that show the wear and tear that the boat has received over the years of use; a set is attached to the historical record of the meeting. The pictures clearly show the cracks in the deck and hull and a crack in the transom, as well as other problems with the boat. Chief Graham stated that the motor was purchased in 2005.

Councilmember Bergwerf agreed that the City should be leery of buying the used DNR boat; she is aware of how hard they are used.

Chief Graham stated that she was looking for a sturdy boat seventeen to eighteen (17-18) feet long that would hold a back board for an injured person. She commented that this is the only boat the City owns that can be used at night; it is equipped with GPS to allow it to be ocean-going. Due to problems with the fuel or damage from fuel, the boat will only run at half throttle.

The Chief noted that the state contract had expired on March 17, and she did not know the results of its being re-bid. Key West, a manufacturer on the expired contract, has agreed to honor state contract pricing; Chief Graham was confident that she can purchase a boat, motor and trailer for the forty-thousand dollars (\$40,000) in the budget.

Councilmember Loftus persisted that the Chief could locate a good quality, less expensive used boat that will meet the City's needs, but he agreed to leave the line item as it is to give the Chief some flexibility.

5. New Business

A. Discussion of Command Positions in Police Department

Chief Buckhannon restated that the changes being contemplated come as a result of Lieutenant Wright's retirement April 1. He stated that, as he reviewed the work the Lieutenant was doing and considered what the next step should be, he recognized certain inefficiencies in the ways that work was being accomplished in the department with the staffing arrangement in place. The current organizational chart was distributed to the Committee without a heading to make it distinguishable from the proposal being made; copies of the organizational chart and job descriptions are attached to the historical record of the meeting.

The Chief explained that he looked at the span of control – a military term referring to the optimum number of persons for a supervisor to manage – as a way to re-organize the department. The structure with Lieutenant Wright had the Livability Sergeant, four (4) Patrol Sergeants, the Detective Sergeant and Administrative Sergeant reporting to him, a total of seven (7) positions; ideally, in a small organization, the span of control should be four to six (4-6) people.

In the Chief's opinion, to more effectively manage the Department, he should split off the patrol function from the support services as shown in the new organizational chart.; one (1) supervisor is over the four (4) patrol sergeants and one (1) supervisor over communications, Livability, and the Detectives division. The proposed changes to the Police Department maintain the staffing level of thirty (30) full-time and one (1) permanent part-time positions, reduce the impact on the General Fund by fourteen thousand dollars (\$14,000) and contains the same number of command layers.

Chief Buckhannon explained that he had changed the job titles from lieutenant to captain because the positions will be command staff and this will put them on the same level as staff in other organizations they will work with in the area.

Councilmember Bergwerf queried that a captain would have a higher pay scale than a lieutenant; the chief responded that pay scale has not changed, only the title.

Councilmember Loftus expressed concern that the City would reduce the number of officers on the street; Chief Buckhannon assured him that the number would not change.

MOTION: Chair Bettelli moved to approve the organizational chart, job descriptions and associated salary ranges, as presented, and to recommend them to the Personnel Committee and to City Council; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

B. Consideration of Award of Contracts in Excess of \$10,000 – None

6. Highlights of Departmental Reports

Police Department

Chief Buckhannon related a loud-noise call that was received on April 29th for a residence on Ocean Boulevard; when the officers arrived, the noise was emanating from the backyard, and the officers had difficulty getting someone to open the door. Due to exigent circumstances, the officers were able to gain entry into the house and located fifteen (15) young people in the house; only one (1) of the people was of age; all others were between the ages of eighteen and twenty (18-20). The officers found beer, alcohol and a small amount of marijuana; citations for noise and underage drinking were issued.

The house was rented by the owner, but an agency handles the logistics.

Councilmember Bergwerf stated that she had spoken with the agent/manager who said she could not take any action against the renters when she only learned of the incident on Monday. Chief Buckhannon explained that the reason the officers did not have accurate information about whom to contact is that a problem exists in the software that does not update information about short-term rentals in the Police Department when changes are made in the Building Department.

In addition, Councilmember Bergwerf suggested that, once the officers make contact with the perpetrators of the problems, they should move into the residence rather than continuing the process outside. In carrying out their responsibilities, they can become as disruptive to the neighbors as the renters were.

According to the Chief, the Department received five thousand ninety-two (5,092) calls in April 2011, as opposed to twenty-four hundred (2,400) for the same period in 2010.

Fire Department

On April 6th, the Fire Department responded to an electrical short in a residence that could have been much more serious; the firefighters found charring in the wall. On April 20th, an autistic child was reported lost; he was later located at 35th Avenue in the water. Someone was stranded in an elevator for an extended time on April 30th.

For the month of April, the Department responded to seventy-one (71) calls; thirty-eight (38) were EMS.

Complete reports for both the Fire and Police Departments will be provided to the Committee next week.

Chief Graham announced that the City has received a grant for eight thousand dollars (\$8,000) for the mobile data terminals, thereby reducing the FY12 Capital Budget by eight thousand dollars (\$8,000).

7. **Executive Session** – Not needed

8. **Miscellaneous Business**

Proclamation on Boating Safety

Chair Bettelli stated that the Mayor would offer this proclamation at the May Council meeting in support of National Safe Boating Week and he had thought it appropriate for this Committee to see it in advance.

Next Meeting Date: 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, June 7, 2011 in Council Chambers.

9. **Adjourn**

MOTION: Councilmember Loftus moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:58 p.m.; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk