

**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**  
Council Chambers of City Hall

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 7, 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 and Police Chief Buckhannon. 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 May 3, 2011 as submitted; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. **Citizens' Comments – none**

4. **Old Business**

**A. Consideration of Revisions to Ordinance 2011-04**

City Attorney Halversen reviewed her suggestions for ordinance revisions to create more awareness among the alarm installers, perhaps by a notice sent by the Fire Department. During citizens' comments at a Council meeting, Dr. Arnold Karig expressed concern about the requirement that home owners acquire a permit from the Police Department because some owners may not be aware. He suggested that installers acquire the permit and more education be provided for homeowners. The City's ordinance already requires the alarm installers to register the names, address and phone numbers of the new alarm subscribers, as well as transfers of ownership of alarm systems. Attorney Halversen queried whether the Police Department could use that provision to put homeowners on notice. However, to reduce the Police Department's administrative workload, the requirement to notify owners of the ordinance requirements could be placed on the installers. This would put some emphasis on the installers to take a proactive approach to avoid penalties. Attorney Halversen is seeking feedback before the draft ordinance returns to City Council for consideration.

Chief Buckhannon says that, in its present form, these ordinance changes will become much more labor-intensive. Administratively, the Police Department would need to notify the alarm business that they are required to inform homeowners of the permit requirement. Under the ordinance change, the Police Department has to track the installer's notification to the homeowner. If, at the end of thirty (30) days a permit has not been acquired, a second notice is required. If a permit is still not acquired, the Police Department has to go back and charge the homeowner. Currently, the Police Department mails a ticket, and, if the homeowner refuses the mailed ticket, the Department goes through a warrant process. Chief Buckhannon expressed discomfort with issuing a ticket (30) thirty days after notification of an offense because this might create problems in court cases. Currently, when an officer goes out for an alarm and the owner does not have a permit in place, the Police Department mails a ticket with an explanation that

the ticket will be dismissed if the homeowner acquires an alarm permit. If a homeowner refuses to take the ticket, the warrant process is initiated. Chief Buckhannon estimates that most of the time, owners are not at home when an alarm goes off. In the Chief's perception, owners usually accept a ticket, and the Department has a mechanism for tracking it prior to it going to court. The process outlined in the proposed ordinance changes requires the Department to issue to a letter and track the status for the next thirty (30) days; if an owner has not taken action to become compliant, the Department must review the ticket process in relation to the court date. The proposed ordinance also stipulates that owners must have a permit before the alarm is actually installed. The entire process will require close tracking by the Police Department to ensure that it is appropriately finalized.

Referring to frequent mailings regarding permits, Councilmember Loftus commented that the process seems awkward and wondered what the Police Department could do to enforce this in a more functional way. He questioned if information could be shared with the Building Department. If an alarm installer has contact with the Building Department to indicate upcoming installations, the Building Department could mail the permit information to the owner, which would reduce the administrative responsibilities of the Police Department. Councilmember Loftus expressed discomfort in having a third party, such as an alarm installer, delivering critical City information to homeowners.

Councilmember Bettelli suggested that Attorney Halversen and Building Department Director Kerr should review the current process to determine if there is a better way to communicate this information.

Councilmember Loftus stated that a new owner of a home with an existing alarm should have to come to the Building Department to register the alarm. Use a shared database, the Building and Police Departments could work together.

Councilmember Bettelli questioned whether a connection can be made when someone buys an existing house and she or he only has to deal with tax records. How will the new owner know an alarm permit is required?

Councilmember Loftus remarked that the process could work if the City treats an alarm install like a building upgrade so that it comes under the Building Department umbrella. Installers would need to make initial contact with the Building Department.

Chief Buckhannon remarked that the problem arises primarily when a house changes hands. He stated that, because the Police Department already administers this process, requiring installers to work through the Building Department creates another step in the process. An educational process could improve awareness among the small number of alarm companies working on the island.

Assistant to the Administrator Dziuban remarked that, for the Committee's purposes at this meeting, the important decision is whether the City wants this process codified via ordinance or whether this should be part of an educational initiative.

Councilmember Bettelli articulated his preference that would focus on an additional process that also includes more information on false alarms.

Assistant to the Administrator Dziuban remarked that Dr. Karig's goal seemed to be placing the burden on the alarm companies as opposed to the property owners.

Chief Graham suggested including information about alarm permits in "Welcome to the Neighborhood" mailings. Councilmember Loftus remarked that the Isle of Palms Water and Sewer Commission may be able to inform the City of changes in ownership.

Chief Buckhannon stated that some owners received proper notification and still do not comply. Councilmember Bettelli said, if home owners are properly notified, then the City has done its due diligence.

The Committee determined that staff should meet and discuss further options to produce another draft of this ordinance.

#### **B. Update on IOP Connector Road Project**

According to Assistant to the Administrator Dziuban, the IOP Connector Road project is under the Town of Mount Pleasant's jurisdiction so they set the timeline. At the last City Council meeting, Administrator Tucker reported that the only monies allocated at this point are for design and engineering. Wetlands are in the area so the permitting process will be six (6) months or more. The earliest construction could begin would be June 2013.

### **5. New Business**

#### **A. Consideration of Title Changes in the Fire Department**

Chief Graham explained that the move toward consolidated dispatch is part of the motivation for the proposed changes. One goal is to minimize radio chatter, so each municipality has been assigned an numerical designator to facilitate the dispatching of apparatus which may have similar names, i.e. "engine one," in each jurisdiction. The Isle of Palms was assigned the number ten (10), so dispatcher would call for engine ten-oh-one (1001) on the radio rather than "Isle of Palms Engine One."

Changes such as these are happening concurrently with upgrades to Fire House software. The Isle of Palms is getting into line with the rest of the stations in the county to minimize the impact of consolidation. To ensure that the ranks and responsibilities of the staff are properly understood by other municipalities, Chief Graham proposes changing the title of "Captain" to "Battalion Chief" and changing the title of "Lieutenant" to "Captain." These titles are consistent with the use of titles throughout other departments in the County. No pay increases would be associated with this change; it is merely a shift in titles.

Councilmember Loftus requested a current and proposed organizational chart at the next Public Safety meeting which would help put the proposal into perspective.

In response to Councilmember Bettelli's query, Chief Graham stated that the only expense associated with the change would be the ordering of new badges.

## **B. Discussion of ISO Visit Results**

Chief Graham reported that as a result of the recent ISO visit, the City is moving from a rating of "four" (4) to a rating of "three" (3), which is an improvement. A copy of the official ISO visit report is attached to the historical record of this meeting. In preparation for the visit, the Fire Department compiles extensive materials, and ISO officials review and grade the City. Subjects examined include how often the City opens and cleans the hydrants, what level of training staff receives, what equipment is on the trucks, how many staff members are on the trucks, and how many telecommunicators staff dispatch. ISO officials also consulted with the Isle of Palms Water and Sewer Commission regarding water levels and maps. The Chief indicated that the department lost a few minor points for the ladder trucks and for personnel numbers. Insurance rates are partially based on ISO ratings, and now that the City has a higher rating, insurance rates could be positively affected.

On a different topic, Councilmember Loftus reported a resident's concern regarding littering on the island. He quoted an anti-littering slogan: "You get a fine if you leave it behind." Chief Buckhannon reported that littering enforcement can be a challenge because an officer must actually witness the act of littering, but both uniform and undercover officers enforce when it is seen.

## **C. Consideration of Award of Contracts in Excess of \$10,000 - none**

## **6. Highlights of Departmental Reports**

### Fire Department – Chief Graham

On May 2<sup>nd</sup> the Department responded to a brush fire across the street from the County Park, and on May 9<sup>th</sup>, the Department responded to Morgan Place Drive regarding smoke from wood on the grill. On May 29<sup>th</sup>, the Department responded to a person with chest pain on Goat Island; staff used a jet ski and small boat; the person in question was transferred by DNR then EMS to the hospital. Chief Graham reminded the Committee that Charleston County responds to Goat Island, but the Isle of Palms staff can often get on scene more quickly if not engaged on a call on the island.

The Department responded to sixty-nine (69) calls last month, twenty-six (26) resident, forty-three (43) non-resident, and forty-three (43) EMS calls. Of the ten (10) calls in Wild Dunes, two (2) were resident and eight (8), non-resident. The Chief reported that EMS presence on the island on the weekends is improving response times. Fire Inspector Anderson completed four (4) fire inspections last month and is helping with other projects. Three hundred twenty-three (323) hydrants were inspected, and twenty (20) required maintenance. The Department completed four (4) pre-incident surveys.

Police Department – Chief Buckhannon

The Police Department experience a busy month of May. Chief Buckhannon reviewed an incident on May 2<sup>nd</sup> during which an officer stopped a pick-up truck late at night. The vehicle's driver threw his wallet out of the vehicle. The officer determined that the occupants were drinking and were charged accordingly. The driver was charged with not having a license. When the discarded wallet was located the following day and the driver's identity was corrected, the Department learned that he had a suspended license and an arrest warrant from North Carolina. The charges were revised accordingly.

On May 14<sup>th</sup> a vehicle stolen from the island ended up in a chase and was wrecked in Charleston County. The driver was charged with burglary and grand larceny.

A total of fifty-seven (57) Victim of Crime notifications were made, and the Department discovered forty-one (41) business and sixteen (16) residences with unsecured doors. According to Chief Buckhannon, the Police Department is seeing more residents taking advantage to the Special Patrol Requests (SPR). In May, the Department did one thousand two hundred fifty-five (1255) checks, including eight (8) to ten (10) houses a day; the program seems well-received by the community. There were a total of four thousand five hundred sixty-six (4,566) calls this month, a seven percent (7%) increase from last year. The Department did fourteen hundred (1,400) building checks and three hundred twenty (320) traffic stops. One thousand eight hundred thirty-eight (1,838) total service calls were received and one (1) D.U.I. ticket was issued. There were thirty (30) speeding tickets and one thousand ninety-five (1,095) parking tickets. Sixty-three (63) arrests were made for the month, with one (1) narcotic arrest. Weekend patrols for drinking violations are in place. There is an increase in beach activity so uniformed patrols are asking more visitors for identification. Animal patrol officers wrote three (3) citations, and one (1) dog was returned to its owner. The Department served four (4) warrants and participated with the Sheriff's office on narcotics investigations. Forty (40) noise complaints were responded to with seven (7) citations issued.

Councilmember Loftus commented about a resident who had questioned that an officer did not follow up with her on a call she made for a livability noise complaint; Chief Buckhannon stated that he would check on what happened because all calls should get a follow-up.

**7. Executive Session**, not needed

**8. Miscellaneous Business**

Chair Bettelli reminded the Committee that the IOP Beach Run will be Saturday, July 23, 2011.

Next Meeting Date: 5:30 p.m., Wednesday, July 13, 2011.

**9. Adjourn**

**MOTION: Chair Bettelli moved to adjourn at 6:55 p.m.; Councilmember Loftus seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**