

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
10:00 a.m., Thursday, September 11, 2014

The regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held at 10:00 a.m., Thursday, September 11, 2014 in Council Chambers of City Hall, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilmembers Bergwerf and Carroll, Chair Bettelli, Administrator Tucker and Assistant to the Administrator Dziuban; 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.

The Chair recognized today as the anniversary of the attack on the United States and remembered those who lost their lives in the Twin Towers, in a plane in Pennsylvania and at the Pentagon as well as Charleston County Officer Matuskovic who recently died in the line of duty.

2. **Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes**

MOTION: Councilmember Bergwerf moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of August 7, 2014 as submitted; Councilmember Carroll seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. **Citizens' Comments**

Emery Brown of 408 Merritt Boulevard related his unpleasant experience with the Isle of Palms Police Department on June 17, 2014. He reported that, on that date, he was summoned to the front door of his residence where he was handcuffed and placed in the back seat of one (1) of two (2) police cars. He stated that he was informed of a bench warrant for his arrest issued by the City of North Charleston and that he was to be held at the IOP police station until such time as North Charleston police arrived to transport him to North Charleston. Mr. Brown stated that, when he tried to explain that he had paid the fine earlier in the day, the IOP police officers told him that they were to hand him over to North Charleston police and that he could explain to them when they arrived.

Based on his experience, Mr. Brown posed the following questions to Council:

- What is the system that identifies him as a criminal worthy of pickup by two (2) Isle of Palms police officers for transport to North Charleston?
- Is every identified villain reported to a shift supervisor or is an automatic arrest initiated?
- What information about the infraction is provided on the arrest screen? This particular violation stemmed from overgrown grass and debris in the yard of an investment property Mr. Brown owns in North Charleston.
- Could a shift supervisor look up his previous criminal record and determine that he was not a flight risk, call him and explain that he has some specific period of time in which to correct any North Charleston grievance or IOP police would have to arrest him?
- Why did he have to be picked up in his neighborhood by two (2) police cars, handcuffed, put into the back of the car and remain handcuffed at the IOP police holding room waiting on North Charleston Police? Was it really necessary for Mr. Brown to be arrested, handcuffed and embarrassed in front of neighbors and friends?

- He asked whether an LAPD mentality was needed on the Isle of Palms?
- Does the City need twenty (20) police officers on the island?

Mr. Brown added that the Isle of Palms is “not a metropolitan area that requires a disassociation with the populace;” he noted that he perceived an “us-versus-them mentality.”

Chair Bettelli stated that he was confident that the officers acted according to protocol for this type of situation. The Chair commented that he sympathized with Mr. Brown, but the officers must act according to guidelines and procedures.

Mr. Brown asked who formulated those procedures and protocols. Chair Bettelli suggested that, since the incident was initiated by the North Charleston Police Department, he should contact them for advice.

Councilmember Bergwerf advised Mr. Brown that she, too, sympathized with him and noted that his feelings were “perfectly valid,” but *Citizens’ Comments* is not meant to be a “give and take.”

Administrator Tucker stated that she thought Mr. Brown had met with Chief Buckhannon about this matter and she would expect the Chief to review the procedures with him at that time. She, too, thought that what Mr. Brown described must have been a terrible experience. The City’s difficulty in the administration of the law is that the City is expected to act as if it is “blind.” The Administrator commented that Mr. Brown’s real quarrel is with North Charleston for not updating their information upon his rectifying the situation, therefore, not issuing the pickup order.

Administrator Tucker explained that the IOP Police Department follows nationally accredited procedures.

When Mr. Brown asked how he had been identified and how many people on the island have been picked up, handcuffed and taken to the holding room because of a violation of a municipal court, the Administrator suggested that he submit his questions in writing and give the City sufficient time to respond.

Tim Brady of 1467 Harbor Gate Shores Boulevard in Mount Pleasant, who is a local location manager and producer for movies, commercials and photo-shoots, was before the Committee seeking permission for a photo-shoot on the beach.

Before he could proceed, Administrator Tucker interrupted him to say that his request was included in the *Agenda* and asked that he be patient for a few moments.

4. Old Business

Update on 4-Way STOP at 25th Avenue and Waterway Boulevard

Chief Buckhannon reported that he sent a letter to SCDOT on behalf of the City asking for a sign that would indicate that the other lane does not stop; the Chief reminded the Committee that, since it is a SCDOT-maintained road, the decision is totally up to SCDOT.

MOTION: Chair Bettelli moved to re-order the *Agenda* to discuss a City-sponsored event listed under Miscellaneous Business; Councilmember Carroll seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. Miscellaneous Business

Consideration of a City-sponsored Event for a Photo-shoot on the Beach in October

Mr. Grady said that he has a client coming to Charleston for a photo-shoot in October who wants a beautiful house, lovely yard and the beach as the backdrop. Knowing that the City has an ordinance allowing a photographer with an IOP business license to take photographs for one (1) hour on the beach, he thought his legally shooting on the beach would be covered, but learned that is not the case. He, therefore, has come to the Committee to get permission to be on the beach longer than one (1) hour; his client would likely want to shoot on the beach off-and-on for two (2) days. And, before sending his client photos of houses on the island, he was here to find out if that was possible.

According to Mr. Grady, the group will consist of twelve to fourteen (12-14) people on the beach. He stated that he has done photo-shoots in and around Charleston, including Folly Beach, Kiawah and Seabrook.

Administrator Tucker explained that this item is on the *Agenda* because Mr. Grady wants to shoot on the beach for more than one (1) hour; therefore, it must be a City-sponsored event.

The largest vehicle the group might have would be a motorhome, which they would park in the driveway.

Responding to Councilmember Bergwerf's question of location, Mr. Grady indicated that he had sent his client pictures of a couple of homes when he thought he could photograph for an hour, but, at this point, no specific location has been selected.

Mr. Grady ensured Councilmember Carroll that the client would be properly licensed and bonded and would clean up after themselves; in addition, the City would be insured for one million dollars (\$1,000,000) for liability and the City would be named "additional insured."

Chair Bettelli asked how long the group would be on the beach. Mr. Grady stated that his client wanted a beach house for two (2) days to be able to use the beach as needed.

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to recommend to City Council the approval of the photo-shoot as a City-sponsored event; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chair Bettelli reminded Mr. Brady to coordinate his activities with the City.

Assistant Dziuban informed Mr. Brady that the final approval would come from City Council at their meeting of Tuesday, September 30th on the first floor of this building.

5. New Business

Contracts in Excess of \$10,000 – None

6. Highlights of Departmental Reports

Fire Department – Chief Graham

Chief Graham related that, on August 8th, personnel responded to the smell of electrical burning which turned out to be an air conditioner problem. On August 12th, personnel responded to a report of a boater in distress in the Intracoastal Waterway which was a boater stranded in an area of shallow water; IOP personnel called for the Charleston County Rescue air boat to get the boat back into the water. A mentally-disabled female in her twenties (20s) was reported missing from the County Park on August 17th; she was located in the water near 45th Avenue. Personnel responded to a call of a drowning behind the Windjammer; despite the efforts of personnel, the person did not survive. For the month, the Department responded to one hundred seventy-two (172) calls, and personnel performed twenty-five (25) fire inspections that revealed eighty (80) violations. The Chief explained that the two (2) calls to EMS with longer response times were at Ocean Point at the tip of the northern end of the island behind a security gate. Personnel have responded to three hundred seventy-eight (378) total calls in 2014, and thirteen (13) station tours were given in August. Six (6) pre-incident surveys were done.

Administrator Tucker urged Committee members to report the locations of any fire hydrants they see that are covered with vegetation; members of the Department try to keep the vegetation down around the hydrants.

All Fire Department personnel participated in Darkness to Light training and the City's wellness program.

On vehicle maintenance, repairs were quite expensive for the 2003 pumper, but they were necessary.

Councilmember Carroll asked if Station 2 was getting more tours than Station 1, and the Chief responded that she thought Station 2 did a better job of reporting the tours.

Councilmember Carroll asked whether the number of non-residents who received EMS services were broken down between vacationers and day-visitors, and the Chief answered that they were not. He added that, with all that is happening on the island, to have that information would be useful. Chief Graham said that they might try getting that information in 2015.

When queried about the legality of the City's ability to get that information, Administrator Tucker stated that the information can be gathered by the Fire Department, but not by the Police Department.

Police Department – Chief Buckhannon

Chief Buckhannon reported that the island was hit with a rash of golf cart thefts; the golf carts have frequently been returned to the place where they were taken, but with serious damage. Officers have been trying to inform people that they must secure their golf carts with something other than the key since one (1) particular brand of cart has a universal key; the theory is that a young person has obtained a key and is going around the island, taking the carts for a joy ride and returning them damaged.

Administrator Tucker added that, if juveniles are taking these golf carts and are in an accident, the owner of the cart may be liable.

The problem of thefts on the beach continued as well; in this situation, people are leaving their valuables unsecured while they go for a swim or walk on the beach. When they return they find their valuables missing; often the perpetrator takes car keys, locates the car, takes anything of value and leaves the keys in the car. The dispatchers received six thousand one hundred fifty-one (6,151) calls in the month of August, and four thousand nine hundred twenty-five (4,925) were for the Police Department. Of the four hundred sixty-five (465) traffic stops, one hundred seventy-three (173) received tickets, and nine (9) accidents occurred. Tickets written by the Charleston County officers assisting the Department on the weekends have not included in the previous number, but will be included in the future. Officers wrote a total of one hundred sixty (160) reports in August and have written a total of twelve hundred four (1,204) year-to-date. Of the fifty-two (52) arrests in the month, the majority were for liquor violations. The Livability Report showed nineteen (19) noise violations; two (2) received citations, fourteen (14) received warnings and the remaining three (3) were found to be unwarranted.

Chair Bettelli asked Chief Buckhannon where the Department was related to receiving training on the new scanners; the Chief stated that the training is close and that he has asked the state for a block of ticket numbers to start it.

Councilmember Carroll asked for an explanation about why thirty-seven percent (37%) of persons who are stopped for a traffic violation receive tickets and sixty-three percent (63%) do not; the Chief said the primary difference is the seriousness of the violation.

Councilmember Carroll asked the status of hiring a new Animal Control Officer. The Chief reported that he has received several applications and is ready to begin interviews.

7. Miscellaneous Business

Consideration of City-sponsored Event for a Photo-Shoot on the Beach in October –
discussed earlier in the meeting

Barrier Island ECOthon, Sunday, October 19th – Since the event is one (1) of the approved island events, this serves as a notice only.

Next Meeting Date: 10:00 a.m., Thursday, October 9, 2014 in the Conference Room

8. **Executive Session** – not needed

9. **Adjourn**

MOTION: Councilmember Carroll moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:50 a.m.; Councilmember Bergwerf seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk