



SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING -- WORKSHOP

5:00pm, Tuesday, June 18, 2024

1207 Palm Boulevard and

broadcasted live on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/cityofisleofpalms>

MINUTES

1. Call to order

Present: Council members Bogosian, Anderson, Ward, Miars, Pierce, Carroll (via Zoom), Campsen, and Mayor Pounds

Absent: Council Member Bogosian

Staff Present: Administrator Fragoso, Director Kerr, various department heads

2. Citizens' Comments

Julie Nestler said City Council remains “reckless with the safety of our community” and “accepted the fact that it’s okay to operate at a resource deficit.” She said that due to the auto aid agreement the Isle of Palms Fire Department is “the busiest Mt. Pleasant Fire Department station.” She also expressed concern about the paramedic program not being operational. She also said that City Council ignored the Police and Fire chiefs about the configuration of the Isle of Palms Connector. She voiced worry about the lack of life-saving devices, like the life ring she donated to the City last year, at the Isle of Palms Marina. She would like the life ring she donated put up at the Marina.

3. Special Presentations

A. Presentation from Thomas & Hutton regarding increasing level of protection for Waterway Boulevard Path Elevation Project

Rick Karkowski of Thomas & Hutton came before the Council to discuss the Waterway Boulevard path and increasing the level of protection from 6’ to 7’. Mr. Karkowski shared maps detailing the additional areas protected by raising the level of protection to 7’. He shared that Thomas & Hutton is also working with the Wild Dunes Resort on their golf course in the same area and believes that working on both projects simultaneously will benefit the City. He said, “By going to the golf course, you get to get that protection a lot cheaper and a lot more feasible.”

He added that some of the project requires the participation and agreement of several property owners who would need to grant easements to the City. He said that securing those easements will take much longer than the project timeline but added that doing the project without them will still increase protections for a much larger area. He said, “What we have recommended and we have worked with staff, is going ahead and doing that; working with the golf course, getting

it on there, getting all the other protections in there, but we would leave several ‘bricks’ in the wall would still be missing, that we would have to get done over the years.”

The cost of the project to increase protections to 7’ without the immediate cooperation of the homeowners from which easements are needed would be approximately \$2.1 million. Director Kerr said the City will work with each homeowner on a case-by-case basis to determine if they would like a berm or seawall on their property.

Administrator Fragoso said the City can only get the protections of 7’ “if we leverage Wild Dunes and their golf course and their renovation because most of the elevated areas in that plan are either on the golf course path or the golf course landscape.”

Mr. Karkowski said grants are being pursued for the \$1.2 million, adding that going to the 7’ protections will allow them to pursue additional grant funding as they add in the missing properties over time.

The City is in discussions with the resort about the maintenance of the improvements. Administrator Fragoso added, “The other thing is their agreement to us utilizing or them elevating their golf course to help us achieve that maximum level of protection only benefits the City. This does not benefit the golf course in any way.”

Mr. Karkowski pointed out that most of the work is on golf cart paths and not in playable areas of the course. He has spoken to the golf course maintenance staff and to Lowe’s and they are supportive of the City’s project. Wild Dunes is looking to start their project next May.

Council Member Miars would like to know how many more homes are going to be protected at the 7’ level. Mr. Karkowski will “analyze the holes to be sure that we are not actually lowering protection behind the hole.”

Administrator Fragoso said that analysis will be run and brought to next week’s City Council meeting. She said, “We need to have buy-in from Council about the path that we need to move forward because that means whatever path we select they will finish their specifications and the design of that chosen path. Then it will take a few weeks to finalize those. We need to submit all that for permits, and as you all know, permits, we are looking at 9-12 months before we secure a permit, before we can even think about construction.”

B. Presentation of proposed FY25 budget for the 30% State ATAX to be used for advertising and promotion of tourism per Section 6-4-10

Catherine Dority, Laurie Smith, and Chris Campbell came before Council to present the proposed FY25 budget for the 30% State ATAX funds to be used for advertising and promotion of tourism. Ms. Dority shared the breakdown of expenses as required by TERC and provided details of current IOP-specific campaigns and initiatives.

4. Dashboard of City Operations and Short-Term Rental Report

Administrator Fragoso reported that tourism funds are lagging to the budget, but those funds are just delayed in being received. There are two Police officer vacancies, one Animal Control Officer vacancy, one BSO vacancies, and three paramedic vacancies. Interviews are being held.

Police Department charges reflect the officers' responses to addressing traffic-related concerns as well as DUI, drugs, and livability concerns. Calls for service in the Fire Department are steadily increasing. Automatic aid provided assistance to the island 23 times, and the Fire Department responded to 27 automatic aid calls.

1,610 short-term rental licenses have been issued since 5/1/24. There are approximately the same number of 6% licenses and slightly less 4% licenses to date. Director Kerr reported that one of the hotels on the Front Beach would like to return to having one short-term rental license instead of one for each unit.

5. Departmental Reports – in the meeting packet

6. Strategic Plan Policy Initiatives and Priorities

A. Livability

Discussion of Ordinance 2024-03 to prohibit placement of political signs in the public right of way

Administrator Fragoso explained the discrepancy in Ordinance 2024-03 caught by the Planning Commission. This ordinance will have Second Reading in July as there needs to be a Public Hearing prior to the vote.

B. Environmental

Discussion of shoal management project permit

Administrator Fragoso explained, "We held a public meeting at the Recreation Center on May 22 to provide a lot of detail and background on the City's proposed shoal management project. The meeting is available online. We also shared information via our new newsletter, encouraging people to look at the permit and provide comments. The application that we had submitted to the regulatory agencies included the potential harvesting of sand from two different harvest areas. One, which is our harvest area along the incoming shoal, that is off the Grand Pavilion area, and then a second harvest area along the avenues between 44th and 57th. The permit is very specific as to the amount of cubic yards of sand that would be harvested from both locations. Our plan has always been to give the City as many options in the future as we know these permits last five years. Whenever between now and the time when we are ready to execute a larger scale dredging project that we have options to address hotspot erosions like we are seeing today. Our goal and our plan has always been to leverage all the same that is coming through that incoming shoal but also have the option of harvesting and recycling some sand as part of our sediment plan for the avenues, which is an area that has a significant surplus of sand.

“Due to all of the public comment that we have been seeking and engaging the community in this whole conversation, we anticipate some challenges and concerns from the community over the harvest area along the avenues. What we would like to do is separate the permit that we have submitted already and have a permit application for the shoal, which is not controversial. It is new sand that is coming and separate from the permit for harvesting and recycling sand from the avenues. What we don’t want to do is stop progress on the permit application for the shoal by tying it to an area that may have some challenges and concerns and a lot of public comment that the regulatory agencies would need to respond to. Therefore, that is our proposed path. It doesn’t change anything other than it may take the City longer to secure a permit for the avenues or may be denied. We don’t know, but we think that by separating the two we don’t hinder our ability to do progress within the shoal later this year and the next coming winter when we would be able to execute a project.”

C. **Public Services**

Discussion of commercial bulk container dumpster service

Administrator Fragoso explained that the commercial service responsible for emptying the dumpsters across the island has quadrupled in price. The City put out a request for bid and the lowest of the four bids is still three times what the City has paid for several years. This has been a cost that the City has paid for, and she is unaware of any other municipalities that cover such a cost for commercial dumpsters for its businesses. She added that the City pays for the service fee on the municipal compactor in Lot A but the businesses pay for a user fee. The current commercial dumpster service is also responsible for emptying the dumpsters at the condominiums and will continue to do so as those were added in to create efficiencies for the Public Works Department.

Administrator Fragoso pointed out that should the City phase out of paying this cost then businesses will be responsible for securing their own dumpster service. Council Member Hahn expressed concern that if this transition is not handled properly, it could become a sanitation issue. The Public Services & Facilities Committee will discuss the matter further, and the City will continue to pay for the service on a month-to-month basis until a longer-term solution is agreed upon.

D. **Personnel**

Discussion of proposal for 48/96-hour shift for Fire Department

Chief Oliverius said department personnel voted overwhelmingly in favor of changing to 48/96 hour shift rotations. He said this change will enhance work/life balance, shorten commute times, and add money into the pockets of the personnel since they are not spending as much time on gasoline. He said there should be no budgetary effects as a result of this change. He would like this change to be effective 1/1/25 and run as a pilot program for one year. Fire Department personnel will have to have a super majority agreement for it to continue beyond 12/31/25. He also shared that several of their interviewees have asked if the department is considering 48/96 shift rotations.

Administrator Fragoso said she supports this change, believing it is good for recruitment and retention. She stressed the need for it to remain budget neutral.

E. Other items for discussion

Update on paramedic program

Chief Oliverius said that while the anticipated June 1 start date for the program was not achieved, “DHEC came for their second inspection today and we passed.” They are now waiting on two medications and one piece of equipment to be delivered. He anticipates the program going live by mid-July.

Administrator Fragoso added, “So we are a few weeks delayed from our original target from last year due to all the requirements we have to go through in order to secure all the licenses that we need to have.”

Chief Oliverius said he knows some paramedic candidates are waiting for the program to go live before they apply.

7. Financial Review

A. Financial Statements and Project Worksheets

Director Hamilton reviewed the missing payments still due to several of the tourism funds. The General Fund is also missing some licensing fees from insurance licenses and public utilities such as Dominion Energy. Expenses are on target for this time in the budget year. She noted that payroll will come in over budget due to increased wages, increased health insurance costs as well as workers' compensation costs. Public Works' vehicle maintenance costs and legal fees are also higher than anticipated.

The City has \$44 million in cash and earned \$197,000 in interest income last month at a rate of 5.5%.

8. Procurement

A. Discussion of proposal from Trident Construction to develop conceptual design and costs of options for relocation of City Hall

Mayor Pounds said the Public Services & Facilities Committee reviewed the options for City Hall with the architects and would like them to further investigate the options of moving City Hall to Municipal Lot B or connect to the Public Safety Building. Administrator Fragoso acknowledged that using Municipal Lot B will require conversations with SCPRT as there is a deed restriction on the use of the lot.

B. Discussion of approval of allocation of \$25,000 for purchase and installation of holiday decorations

Administrator Fragoso said she would like to use these funds to purchase light displays for the light posts across the island.

9. Capital Projects Update

Administrator Fragoso said the drainage project at 41st Avenue is mostly complete. They are awaiting the installation of handrails, trash racks, and gates. Parking stops have been installed along the newly covered ditch and PCI has ordered the pay-to-park signs for that area. A fence along the lease line of the employee parking lot under lease by the restaurant will be installed next week.

There is no update on the FEMA mitigation grant submitted by the City for the Waterway Boulevard path.

Staff had a meeting with Thomas & Hutton about the next phase of drainage projects on Palm Boulevard between 38th and 41st avenues. She said, “There are potential challenges with all of the utilities that are already underground on the right of way, both the land side and the ocean side. They think they can squeeze it in. Ideally, we move out of the road, so that there is no need to open up and have to repave the road. The only potential challenge with that is the line or the area that would be available is right under where the line of palm trees are,” so some palm trees may have to be relocated.

Seamon & Whiteside continues to meet with stakeholders regarding their plan. They have also prepared a community engagement survey they plan to release in July.

Framing and decking is in progress at the greenspace. She anticipates most of the work being completed there by July. The plan is “once the pier and the handrails and the covered areas are finished to potentially open the public dock for pedestrian use and then phase in the installation of the gangway, floating dock, and the swings” when they arrive in August or September.

The City is planning on improving four beach paths with ADA-compliant boardwalks or foot bridges using the \$500,000 from the State budget. The City will go out for bid for ADA-compliant boardwalks at 46th and 52nd avenues. Improvements to the beach access paths at 26a and 36a will be made and the City will seek funding from the Greenbelt program for those improvements.

Some emergency beach restoration work was done at Breach Inlet and they are waiting on the delivery of 10 extra sandbags for Beachwood East.

Staff met with the contractor for the USACE beneficial use project. They have indicated it will be 60 days “between the time where they start clearing the vegetation along the intercoastal side of where the sand is being borrowed from or used to the time that we see sand on the beach.”

Administrator Fragoso said the City is still waiting on the permit for the supplemental work they would like to do to restore some of the dunes and the dry sand beach. She said they will be going out for bid to secure that contractor and intend to present a recommendation to Council in July for approval. The City must wait until the USACE has completed its work before the supplemental work can begin.

The next undergrounding power lines project will be at 14th Avenue. Dominion Energy has secured the easements and construction should begin after Labor Day. Mayor Pounds requests

that the Public Services & Facilities Committee revisit the list of potential undergrounding projects to evaluate the prioritization that was done a few years ago.

10. **Legislative Report**

11. **Adjournment**

Mayor Pounds suggested not having a Workshop in July unless something came up that needed Council discussion.

Council Member Ward made a motion to adjourn, and Council Member Hahn seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 7:36pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk