

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

5:00 p.m., Wednesday, September 9, 2009

The Public Safety Committee held its regular meeting at 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, September 9, 2009 in the Public Safety Building, 30 J.C. Long Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Council members Bettelli and Loftus, Chairman Buckhannon, City Administrator Tucker, Police Chief Buckhannon, Fire Chief Graham, Assistant to the Administrator Dziuban and City Clerk Copeland.

1. Chairman Buckhannon called the meeting to order and acknowledged that the press and the public had been duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

2. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

MOTION: Councilman Loftus moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of August 11, 2009 as submitted; Councilman Bettelli seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Citizen's Comments

Councilman Loftus asked that, if necessary, *Citizens' Comments* be re-opened because the meeting had been announced on the information board at the Connector as beginning at 5:30 p.m.; there was no objection from the Chair.

4. Old Business

A. Update on Public Safety Building

Chairman Buckhannon commented that the Change Order on the agenda covers two (2) Change Directives previously approved by this Committee, the Ways and Means Committee and City Council, plus a third (3rd) item that includes new expenditures. Change Directive #4 involved the motorized dampers and the need to move the volume of air around the elevator; Change directive #7 was for changes related to the 911 system. Both of these items came in under the amount previously approved. The third item on the Change Order represents requirements from the elevator inspector for six thousand seven hundred seventy-eight dollars (\$6,778); these requirements were smoke and heat detectors and relays for the elevator controls. The total for Change Order #13 is forty-three thousand sixteen dollars (\$43,016).

Chairman Buckhannon questioned Chief Graham about the expenses in the third item and why they had not been included in the original proposal; the Chief responded that her understanding was that there had been a change in the South Carolina code. The Committee members were in agreement that these costs should have been factored in the cost of the building.

MOTION: Councilman Bettelli moved to recommend to Ways and Means the approval of Change Order #13 for \$43,016; Councilman Loftus seconded.

Chairman Buckhannon asked the Administrator to confer with the Cole+Russell Project Manager Dave Johnson about why the smoke and heat detectors and relays had not been in the original building contract. Councilman Loftus wanted to know when the code had been changed requiring these additions.

Call for the Question: The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

B. Update on 41st Avenue and Palm Boulevard Intersection

Chairman Buckhannon introduced Mark Nesbitt of the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SC DOT) and thanked him for his contribution to the project at that intersection that had improved the flow of traffic based on the input from residents who frequently travel through it.

Administrator Tucker repeated the City's thanks to Mr. Nesbitt for his work on the project; to-date the City has not been billed for any of the work, but she has been informed that work from this point forward would be billable. She introduced two drawings to the Committee: 1) a drawing of the proposed signage for the existing configuration of the intersection for 41st Avenue and Palm Boulevard, and 2) a drawing of a possible roundabout for the same intersection.

Mr. Nesbitt recounted that, in the fall of 2008, a demonstration project was offered to the City as a means of improving the flow of traffic through the 41st Avenue and Palm Boulevard intersection; it was designed to be a test, and the question of pass or fail was the City's to make. This type of intersection is referred to as an "all-way stop;" it had originally been one (1) of several proposals by a consulting firm the City had hired. Being in place through the City's heaviest traffic periods has been a test of the effectiveness of the changes to the intersection, and City Council has voted to make the demonstration project permanent.

Details included in the drawing of the all-way stop include the following:

- A raised, concrete island for the STOP sign on 41st Avenue going to the marina to protect the sign and to be a refuge point for pedestrians;
- Additional signs, i.e. STOP AHEAD on Palm Boulevard approaching the intersection;
- Permanent closure of Cameron Boulevard with a permanent barricade by removing some pavement, grassing it over and placing some type of barricade that alert drivers to the fact that Cameron is not a through-street, as well as a ROAD CLOSED sign on Cameron; and
- The pavement markings need to be redone and new ones added where needed.

When Councilman Loftus asked who would bear the expense of the changes described, Mr. Nesbitt stated that SC DOT's initial intent had been to assist the City; they had provided the conceptual drawings to go to all-way stop and the signs. From this point forward, SCDOT planned to transfer the expense to the City.

Chairman Buckhannon expressed concern about the raised, concrete island and any problems it could create for emergency equipment traversing the intersection; Chief Graham said that

problems would depend on the height of the island and the width of the road. It was noted that the island would be angled so the emergency vehicles could drive over it without worrying about damaging tires.

Councilman Bettelli expressed the desire for space for a bicycle to get through the Cameron Boulevard barricade. Mr. Nesbitt agreed that was a good idea and noted that was one (1) reason for the City to take the lead at this point in the project.

Chairman Buckhannon wanted to know if it would be possible to plant trees at the end of Cameron to serve as the barricade and whether encroachment permits would be needed; Mr. Nesbitt responded that the barrier could be a hedge of some sort as long as it was enough off the pavement so as not to be an obstruction to a vehicle that needed to pull off the road. The plantings there would need to follow SC DOT Landscaping Guidelines, and it must be something that would let a vehicle through which a tree with a large trunk would not do.

Administrator Tucker summarized her understanding of how to proceed as one where the City was to execute the changes presented at its expense, with a degree of latitude regarding shrubbery; the City would need to acquire necessary permits from DOT; and the City would not need more detailed plans than Mr. Nesbitt had presented to send to contractors for pricing, i.e. the City would not need to hire a civil engineer. Mr. Nesbitt stated again that the drawings were a conceptual plan and not to be used for construction; they are to be a starting point.

Mr. Nesbitt stated that appropriate court action needed to be done to permanently close Cameron before going forward with the project, and DOT requires plans stamped by an engineer to provide a permit.

The Administrator commented that the conceptual plan could be used to work with the residents of Cameron Boulevard who would be impacted by the closure and, at the same time, the City would engage the services of a civil engineer to finalize a plan to get the DOT permit.

The second set of drawings was for a roundabout at the 41st Avenue and Palm Boulevard; Mr. Nesbitt stated that this, too, was conceptual and that no survey has been done. The drawing depicts a roundabout with a ninety-foot (90-foot) diameter, to give Committee members a perspective, Mr. Nesbitt noted that the roundabouts at Rifle Range Road and Venning and at Bowman Road have a diameter of one hundred twenty feet (120'). The proposed roundabout is ninety feet (90') in an attempt to stay within the existing right-of-way. He noted that, a survey might determine that additional right-of-way is needed, and there might be utilities that would need to be relocated.

Councilman Loftus expressed concern that, with one (1) lane in the roundabout where now there are two (2) lanes that segregate those parties going to the marina and those continuing on the street, the roundabout would create a traffic backup. Mr. Nesbitt stated that roundabouts could have more delay, but tend to be safer because speeds are lower and drivers have time to react; he added that roundabouts, with heavy right turn activity, typically have a separate turn lane from the roundabout traffic. At the 41st and Palm intersection, there is not room to have a turn lane without acquiring land.

Chairman Buckhannon stated that the present configuration appeared to be the best alternative especially since the City would be required to finance either one, and the roundabout would be substantially more expensive.

Councilman Bettelli asked about deer warning signs; Chief Buckhannon explained that he did not perceive the need for them on Palm Boulevard and expressed the opinion that additional signs would only serve to add to sign confusion.

5. New Business - None

6. Highlights of Department Reports for August 2009

Fire Department – Chief Graham

Chief Graham reported that the Department had responded to a call for a structure fire on Ocean Boulevard that turned out to be pine straw; despite some speculation about cigarettes, the cause was not determined. On the same day, there was a call from Sullivan's Island about swimmers in distress in Breach Inlet; the current had been dragged them into the inlet. In total, the Fire Department responded to one hundred eight (108) calls in the month of August; of that total, sixty (60) were EMS calls. Six (6) inspections were completed and seventeen (17) violations were found. On the subject of equipment maintenance expense, Chief Graham brought to the Committee's attention the replacement of ladder slide bushings on Truck 1 and the replacement of a rear main seal on Rescue 1.

Councilman Loftus asked if the Fire Department was fully staffed at this time, and the Chief said that it was.

Chief Graham reported that the Digital Radio User Group Advisory Board had met; they learned that three (3) additional towers are to be constructed in two (2) phases. There are three (3) towers planned for east of the Cooper, James Island and Folly Beach in Phase 1 - two (2) in Mount Pleasant and one (1) of James Island or Folly Beach. Planned for Phase 2 are six (6) additional towers to be constructed across the county.

Councilman Loftus reminded Administrator Tucker of his question about the sale of the jet ski; she deferred to Chief Graham who stated that both the FY 09 and FY10 budgets contained jet ski purchases. She had waited until June 2009 make the FY 09 purchase, but had made the FY 10 in July 2009. On the sale, she stated that one (1) had been sold through the Internet, and the second one (1) has been advertised with bids to be opened on September 15.

Chairman Buckhannon was interested in the fire inspection for the Public Safety Building that found five (5) violations; Chief Graham recalled that the Department was preparing for the annual Safety Audit; the type of violations were fire extinguishers that were out of date, an exit sign was in the wrong place – minor infractions.

Police Department – Chief Buckhannon

Chief Buckhannon reported that on August 17, an officer had come upon a vehicle that was stopped between the turn lane and the inside lane at the intersection of Palm Boulevard and 14th Avenue, the driver was slumped over the wheel asleep and the vehicle was in DRIVE. The driver was determined to be unfit to drive; he was intoxicated and in possession of marijuana. The officer in question was Chief Buckhannon.

The next day a traffic stop was made at Gate 2 of Wild Dunes; the driver's license was suspended, and he was taken into custody when it was discovered that the driver had a quantity of marijuana on his person. An investigation of the vehicle, subsequent to the arrest, found thirty-six (36) bags of marijuana totaling 3.15 pounds with a street value of \$7,875.

On August 27, Sgt. Ambas, PFC Thompson and Ptl. McElroy were recognized by the Department of Natural Resources and the Isle of Palms Turtle Team for their recent assistance in rescuing twenty (20) hatchling loggerhead turtles that had become disoriented in the dunes.

In August, dispatchers responded to four thousand twenty-three (4,023) calls. There were two hundred fifteen (215) traffic stops that produced seventy-one (71) citations. Twenty-seven (27) arrests were made, and the majority were for traffic offenses.

Chief Buckhannon reviewed the revised Livability Report that contained much more detail than the previous report; the report was divided by the type of offense, addresses were identified as well as the type of residence where the offense occurred.

7. Miscellaneous Business

Consideration of Donation of Evidence Lockers to the Town of Sullivan's Island

Administrator Tucker indicated that the blue, temporary evidence lockers in City Hall were no longer being used since the Police Department has moved into the Public Safety Building and that there is no planned use for them in the future. Chief Buckhannon commented that possession of the lockers would add a degree of professionalism to the Police Department of Sullivan's Island.

MOTION: Councilman Bettelli moved to recommend to Ways and Means to approve the donation of the temporary evidence lockers to the Sullivan's Island Police Department; Councilman Loftus seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Buckhannon commented on a letter the City has received from the Department of Public Safety that the City would not receive a grant for in-car cameras and mobile data terminals.

Administrator Tucker reminded the Committee members of the ribbon cutting for the Public Safety Building at 5:30 p.m., Friday, September 25, the Plant-a-Palm marker unveiling at 9 a.m. on Monday, September 21 at the 21st Avenue curve.

Next Meeting Date: 5 p.m., Monday, October 5, 2009

The Fire Prevention Parade will be on at 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, October 7.

8. Adjourn

**MOTION: Councilman Bettelli moved to adjourn the meeting at 6 p.m.;
Chairman Buckhannon seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk