

November 23, 2015

A Special Meeting of Town Council was held on the above date at 5:00 pm at Town Hall, all requirements of the Freedom of Information Act having been satisfied.

Present were: Patrick M. O'Neil, Mayor  
Chauncey Clark, Mayor Pro-Tem  
Sarah Church, Councilmember  
Mark Howard, Councilmember  
Rita Langley, Councilmember  
Susan Middaugh, Councilmember

Mayor O'Neil stated the purpose of the Special Meeting was to receive information from Mr. Drake Carroll of the S.C. Forestry Commission. Mr. Carroll is the Firewise Program Field Coordinator for coastal South Carolina. He examined parts of the accreted land today with Fire Chief Stith and Administrator Benke. The S.C. Forestry Commission is available to perform a full site assessment for the Town, if desired.

Mr. Carroll stated that Firewise is a nationally recognized program. Its focus is to protect home communities and structures from damage due to wildfire. Firewise principles start at the home with landscaping and construction.

Today the main item observed were the wax myrtles, which are prevalent on the island, as well as South Carolina. From a Firewise standpoint, wax myrtles are the leading cause of volatile fire behavior in the wildland setting.

One point of Firewise is defensible space. Defensible space is the space between your home and the wildland, where fire can be introduced to that area and not generate enough heat to cause a problem or damage to the home. The recommended defensible space for a home is 30 feet. This defensible space can be manicured lawn or it can also be forested land, but only for the overstory. The low to mid-story such as wax myrtles generates the extreme fire behavior. The Firewise program was kick-started by the Horry County wildfire of 2009. Homes were burnt due to ignition from embers in the flower beds around those homes over a mile ahead of the flame front.

Sullivan's Island has similar fuels, but different. There are wax myrtles, but not pine trees for fuel. Even without the pine trees and straw, the oak leaf litter can act as the starting agent just like pine straw. There is good defensible space along the beach front in most parts. From a fuel mitigation standpoint, it is recommended that the low and intermediate fuels which generate the extreme fire behavior, such as wax myrtles, be removed as much as possible, or trimmed from the ground up at least three or four feet. The area of thick wax myrtles could be cut and thinned. Also, vegetation walls should be removed or trimmed from the ground. The Town should reduce or eliminate grasses and low

growth on beach paths and away from wooden boardwalks; and prune all trees along beach paths so that lowest branches are 6 to 10 feet in height. Many trees on private property and all trees in the accreted land could be pruned so that the lowest branches are 6 to 10 feet in height.

**Motion was made by Councilmember Clark, seconded by Councilmember Church, to adjourn at 5:56 p.m., carried unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,



Ellen Miller