

TOWN OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, June 26, 2017

A meeting of the Public Safety Committee of Council was held at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, June 26, 2017 at Town Hall, 2056 Middle Street, all requirements of the Freedom of Information Act having been satisfied. Present were Committee members, Chauncey Clark, Chair, Council members Mayor Pat O'Neil and Sarah Church; staff included Administrator Benke, Fire Chief Stith, Acting Police Chief Griffin and Asst. to Administrator Darrow.

I. Call to Order. Chair Clark called the meeting to order, stated the press and public were duly notified pursuant to state law and noted that all Committee members were present. Approximately twenty-six residents and no media in attendance.

Chair Clark noted that this Committee is meeting to encourage open dialogue between residents and the Town. The Committee is most interested in hearing residents' concerns and suggestions on the agenda topics at this meeting.

II. Coyote Management

Chair Clark noted residents attended the recent Council meeting expressing concerns about coyote sightings and missing domestic animals. This Committee is interested in continuing the dialogue with residents, reviewing the Town's coyote management policy and discussing options.

Current Town Policy

Staff Report, Administrator Benke

- Town Council approved a coyote management plan in 2015 with the policy of co-existing with coyotes. This policy is modeled after the SC policy.
- Resident sightings of all coyotes to the Town non-emergency number (843-743-7200) is requested for data collection and tracking.
- If residents feel a coyote is aggressive or threatening, they are asked to call 9-1-1
- Management plan allows the Town discretion to engage in more aggressive practices, such as soft and hard leg trappings.
- SC Department of Natural Resources does not allow for catch and release to other areas
- Residents may take more aggressive action against a coyote in his/her yard; however, Town has an ordinance prohibiting discharge of a firearm on the Island.
- Staff noted that traditionally November-March is the period for most active coyote sightings. It is not typical for people to spot coyotes in June.
- If a resident reported aggressive coyote behavior, the Town would deploy 2-3 cameras in the property owner's yard.
- It was noted that coyotes are ubiquitous throughout SC and the nation as a whole. Full eradication of the species in SC is impossible.

Chair Clark commented the Town is trying to address residents' concerns while working with nature, noting all municipalities are grappling with the presence of coyotes in SC.

Mayor O'Neil stressed that co-existence with coyotes does not mean the Town is ignoring the presence of coyotes.

Councilmember Church noted the SC Department of Natural Resources expert on coyotes attended a previous Planning Commission meeting to discuss coyotes. She suggested it would be beneficial for the SCDNR expert to return for another public meeting.

Public Comments

Tom Waring (2424 Atlantic Avenue, SI)

- Noted he was at the recent Council meeting and discussed the current disappearance of his cat, noting other residents have reported to him that their pets have gone missing in the past couple of weeks.
- Loss of his deceased daughter's cat served as a catalyst for him to bring forward concerns he has maintained but not voiced to the Town in the past:
- Resident anecdotes of coyotes becoming more familiar and comfortable with humans – loitering in yards, driveways, roads, etc.
- Coyotes are a known aggressive, dangerous breed and he expressed concerns with the safety of pets and humans, as well as concern about liability exposure to the Town
- Town has a duty to proactively deal with coyotes

Laurie Arthur (2850 Middle Street, SI)

- Recommended the Town provide increased public disclosure of gathered coyote information.
- Suggested Town post sighting locations and summary of encounters on the Town's website.
- Noted she has witnessed coyotes walking up the street along Station 18 at 11PM.

Keith Blandford (1742 Central Avenue, SI)

- Noted that if he witnessed a coyote in the daytime, that would be a sign the normally nocturnal animal might be rabid.
- Noted he would not call 9-1-1 if his daughter was being threatened by a coyote. He would eliminate the threat. He asked if he would be charged in that case.

Acting Chief Griffin noted the Police Department would consider extenuating circumstances before determining whether to charge someone for discharging a firearm at a coyote.

Allen Chestnut (2820 Brook Street, SI)

- Questioned what happens when the Town captures a coyote

Administrator Benke noted the Town captured no coyotes with the box traps and 4 with the leg traps. The Town is not allowed to relocate coyotes, so they were transported off the Island and eliminated.

Chair Clark thanked those residents in attendance at this meeting, and the recent Council meeting, for sharing their concerns and suggestions on the matter of coyote management.

III. Traffic

Chair Clark noted traffic is an ongoing issue for the Town. While the Town has a static population, adjacent municipalities and the tri-county area has seen a population explosion. Mt. Pleasant has been identified as one of the fastest growing cities in the nation as well as the growing tourist draw to the greater Charleston area. Sullivan's Island is one of three public beaches available to the area's population and tourists.

Funding traffic and visitor impact:

Chair Clark noted funding services for these Island visitors is an ongoing and growing challenge. The Town pays for traffic support, increased trash collection, parking concerns and rescue services for our visitors. While the Town pays for County off-duty officers to assist with traffic flow, manpower continues to be a concern.

Public Comments

Patrick Rutledge (1764 Atlantic Avenue, SI)

Expressed concern with beach visitors walking along the street to get to/from cars and beach, blocking ongoing traffic, instead of using the sidewalk or open right-of-way.

Guy White (1751 Atlantic Avenue, SI)

- Noted his daughter recently fell at the Sullivan's Island Farmers Market with his grandson in her arms. While the child was not injured, his daughter suffered scrapes and bruises.
- Expressed appreciation for the residents, vendors, market staff and Town first responders for their concern and swift care of his daughter and grandson.
- Last week, he and his wife visited the Market and witnessed the extra safety precautions taken to avoid future falls, namely a number of safety cones/barricades near concrete pillars
- Thanked the Town for its quick and proper safety precautions in the wake of this accident.

Callie Shell (2002 Middle Street/Station 20, SI)

- Expressed concern with the speed of drivers on Middle Street, particularly once they clear the Community Commercial District at Station 20 ½, an area where cars begin to speed up
- Noted drivers appear to be in hurry because of heavy traffic in the commercial area and seek parking spaces, holding up traffic.
- Submitted the Town cannot wait until a tragedy to deal with the traffic and speed problem. Asked what options can the Town proactively pursue.
- Suggested speed humps to slow down traffic.

Tim Reese (305 Station 20, SI)

- Noted he lives next to Ms. Shell and has witnessed vehicles speed up significantly just past Sullivan's Restaurant.

- Submitted that Community Commercial District traffic has grown over the past few years. Isle of Palms and Folly Beach are at 15mph along their congested front beach
- Submitted Town should strive to aggressively ticket speeders along Middle Street like Mount Pleasant police ticket speeders along Center Street and McCants. He stated that everyone knows not to drive over 25mph on those roads or you will almost always get a ticket.

Mike Walsh (2530 I'On Avenue, SI)

- Commented chronic speeding problems exist on Middle Street;
- He has witnessed vehicles backing up onto I'On Avenue near his residence due to traffic congestion, further aggravated by cars backing up onto Middle Street
- Suggested that if officers have radar guns they should use them
- Asked for the quantity of speeding citations written on this issue.

Acting Police Chief Griffin:

- All police vehicles have radars
- Speeding citations have reduced this season – estimates 30 tickets/month issued for speeding
- Suggested drivers have less opportunity to speed due to traffic volume

Marianne Cartrette (2519 I'On Avenue, SI)

- Inquired why parking was oddly designated along her street, specifically parking is allowed on the front and back of her property.
- Some residents do not have driveways and rely upon on-street parking; suggested the Town allow residents to purchase stickers like City of Charleston for on-street parking. The Town could limit the time non-residents could park on the road right-of-way.

Administrator Benke state he would review the parking designation for the 2402, 2406 and 2412 area of I'On Avenue.

Lady in audience asked about fences in the front yard: Administrator Benke noted that shrubs cannot be placed in the right-of-way (utility easements and lines are in the ROW). Fencing a front yard is allowed.

Tom Waring (2424 Atlantic Avenue, SI)

- Noted he has parking on both sides of his street as well
- Asked if residents can install a driveway with a curb cut on the property should none currently exist

Administrator Benke noted that a new driveway can be an option and recommended interested residents consult with our Building Staff.

Elizabeth Siegling (2824 Brook Street, SI)

- Recalls much discussion about split zone lots in the Community Commercial District

- Suggested owners of open lots should be allowed to make those lots available for public parking, at least for restaurant owners with a sticker/decal on the car.
- Noted she works in a building along the commercial corridor and cannot find parking for herself.

Rick Graham (2102 I'On Avenue, SI)

- Echoed Ms. Siegling's suggestion to use residential vacant lots for some parking in CCD.
- Recommended low-intensity lights on crosswalks/side streets to help drivers see crosswalk areas.
- Noted it is hard for a driver to discern whether someone is in a crosswalk at the corners around Stations 21/22.

Cheryl Clark (2119 Pettigrew, SI)

- Stressed the Town should fight to lower the Island speed limit

Linda Silvia (2650 Middle Street, SI)

- Relayed witnessing dangerous safety situation recently between kiteboarders and crowded beach patrons near Station 26 – 26 ½
- Noted kiteboarders were travelling approximately 35 mph, interacting with children by crashing over them and being aggressive.
- She noted that the police were called and responded approximately 10 minutes later.

Administrator Benke noted the Island hosts a variety of water crafts: kiteboarders, surfboarders, jet skis, etc. He noted that these water craft can launch east of Station 28 ½ and West of Station 12, past the last house at Pettigrew Street and SIES. He noted the watercraft Town ordinance was written for Hobie Cats back when the Island had in excess of 200 off the shore. Previously the Town saw windsurfer trending and now kiteboarding trending.

Committee deferred the concept of parking on residential split-zone lots in the CCD to the Land Use & Natural Resources Committee.

Staff Report, Administrator Benke

Pedestrian Crossing - reviewed SC state law:

- Statutes allow pedestrians to cross in the middle of the road although these pedestrians do not have right-of-way (aka jay-walking)
- Cars must yield to pedestrians in designated/marked crosswalks
- In the absence of a local Town ordinance against jay-walking, pedestrians can cross in the middle of the street

The Town does not have an ordinance against jay-walking. Enforcement and compliance with a jay-walking Town ordinance would be a challenge

Vehicular Speed

- State of SC owns over 95% of roads on Sullivan’s Island and has designated 30mph as the speed limit island-wide unless otherwise posted.
- Town would need to get SCDOT approval to change the speed limit. It would require a traffic study and evidentiary statistics to warrant SCDOT reconsideration of the speed limit. Ultimately, SCDOT would make the determination of the proper speed on the Island, using industry guidelines (i.e. ASHTO) as reference.

DUI Checkpoints

- The Town is required to follow an established procedure in order to establish a DUI checkpoint. Just setting up a random checkpoint is not allowed. Some of the Town’s requirements include:
 - Advertise DUI checkpoint with minimum 15-day notice in the newspaper
 - Minimum checkpoint staff would be required: 8 officers (Town’s full complement of uniformed officers is 11)
- Submitted pulling a driver over for a moving violation is a more efficient way to deal with a potentially intoxicated driver.
- If a concerned resident reported the incident through a 9-1-1 call, the moving violation incident would move through multiple jurisdictions, should the driver make it to Mt. Pleasant before being pulled over.

Vehicles Stopping in the Commercial District

- State law (Section 56-5, 2530) allows for cars to temporarily stop in areas, like the commercial district, to load/unload car occupants.

Crosswalk at Station 22/Jasper

- This has been suggested on social media, but the Town does not endorse this idea. The volume of traffic converging on this intersection and, more importantly the many different directions traffic is turning at this intersection, would be challenging for an effective pedestrian crosswalk. Encouraging children and other visitors to cross at this intersection, which the presence of a crosswalk would do, would create unintended safety consequences.

Council Comments

Councilmember Church on the speed limit: Does SCDOT incorporate density of pedestrian traffic and street crossings, proximity to residential areas and such in its consideration of speed limit changes? She submitted pedestrian traffic should be pointed out the SCDOT

Administrator Benke noted proximity to residential areas is incorporated in the analysis, but he did not recall if foot traffic was included.

Mayor O’Neil mentioned traffic related to the Sullivan’s Island Elementary School, noting additional safety outreach to parents and children would be helpful. The Town should ensure additional officer presence at drop-off/pick-up and recommended installing the flashing radar/speed sign for drivers.

Councilmember Church: Crosswalks in the community commercial district really need re-painting

Administrator Benke noted the Town has been awarded a CTC grant to paint the crosswalk, but it is on the County's 2017 schedule, hopefully August or September. This is an approximately \$8,000 expense the Town saves.

Golf Carts

Chair Clark

- Noted he witnesses a significant number of underage children driving on golf carts and many children riding on golf carts. He reminded residents that the driving age for golf carts is the same as an automobile, and, golf carts are not allowed to operate in the dark.
- Suggested residents use social media to raise awareness of their traffic concerns and share correct information.

IV. Parking

Chair Clark

- Noted that, after significant study and work, the Town rolled out its parking management plan in 2017, first with a "soft" roll-out in the winter and full enforcement as of May.
- At the end of Summer 2017, Staff and Committee members will meet to review the Plan and consider parking changes.
- Submitted traffic flow and emergency access has improved due to the Parking Plan.
- Noted that commercial area and beach access drop-off continue to be a concern.

V. Police in Community Commercial District

Residents have asked for an increased police presence in the CCD

Acting Chief Griffin: patrol officers are parking their cars at the gas station so people will see the vehicles upon entering the Island. Officers are asked to walk around the CCD and speak with businesses, increasing patrol of the area.

Committee Action Items

Committee general consensus on the following:

- 1. Recommend Council defer the concept of parking on residential split-zone lots in the CCD to the Land Use & Natural Resources Committee**
- 2. Town to reach out to kiteboarder community with safety concerns**
- 3. Seek means to increase public monitoring and reporting of coyote sightings**

V. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned (Mayor O'Neil motion; Councilmember Church seconded; unanimous approval) at approximately 7:41p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Chauncey Clark, Chair
Public Safety Committee