



**TOWN OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA  
ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL**

Wednesday, March 23, 2022

Committee met at 6:00 p.m., Wednesday, March 23, 2022 at Town Hall (2056 Middle St.), all requirements of the Freedom of Information Act having been met. Present were:

Committee members: Justin Novak (Chair), Kaye Smith, and Scott Millimet

Staff: Town Administrator Andy Benke, Zoning Administrator Joe Henderson, Comptroller Jason Blanton, and Committee staff member Pam Otto.

Public: Four (4) members.

1. **Call to Order.** Chair Novak called the meeting to order, stating the press and public were duly notified pursuant to state law, and all Committee members were present.

Media: None present

Public: Four (4) member present

2. **Approval of Minutes from February 3, 2022 Administration meeting.**

**Motion:** Chair Novak made a motion to adopt and approve the draft minutes from February 3, 2022, seconded by Ms. Smith, this motion passed unanimously.

**Motion:** Chair Novak made a motion to amend the February 3, 2022 minutes to reflect the change from “since” to “sense” under §3, first paragraph, seconded by Mr. Millimet, this motion passed unanimously.

3. **Public Comment**

- Ralph Byers – Suggested there be a question-and-answer section of the Council meetings so everyone feels like they can have a voice and say at the meeting.
- Karen Byko, 2862 Middle Street – Would like some clarification on how the letters and emails are included in the agenda packet and get in front of Council. She would also like to move the comment time from 90 seconds to two minutes. Also suggested emailing residents of upcoming meetings and agendas.

4. **Discussion of Improving Participation in Public Meetings**

Chair Novak spoke about the purpose of improving participation in public meetings and explained that each committee chair runs the meeting as they see fit, which is why they

sometimes vary. He reviewed the discussions had in previous meetings and the topics that have already been discussed, including requirements for the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the restraints of discussing items on the agenda.

He also stated one issue with a question-and-answer session at Council meetings is that the official Council meetings are mainly for publicly recording the motions and votes on items that have previously been discussed. There is no voting done at Council Workshops and is more loosely structured. Workshops, along with individual committee meetings are better suited for discussions and Q & A sessions. Chair Novak encourages people to attend those to become more involved in what Council is doing.

Chair Novak also mentioned the length of time it takes for official decisions to be made on Council. Most items are discussed at a minimum of three meetings before a vote is taken. He also hopes the launch of Citibot will help get information to the public earlier, so people get involved before the last discussion of a topic. He also stressed the importance of residents signing up for and participating in both Citibot and meetings. He also stated Town Council members are open to engaging in meetings, emails, calls, etc outside of meetings and encouraged residents to reach out.

Councilmember Kaye Smith stated she looked into similar municipalities in North Carolina and their Councils are run very similarly to ours. They did have longer public comment sections, but there are no back and forth sessions.

Councilmember Millimet agreed with Chair Novak in that getting to Workshops and committee meetings earlier when it is easier to influence discussions and decisions. He also encouraged residents to think about how ideas can benefit the Town as a whole.

Chair Novak again mentioned the lengthy process for ordinances to get passed and stated it was to get as much public input as possible, as well as thoroughly flesh out ideas. He also mentioned other municipalities in South Carolina had issues with allowing a public comment session at the end of Council meetings. While it seems like an easy way to give everyone their chance to speak, it can create problems for those that cannot or do not want to stay for the entire meeting, especially given that Executive Session lasts an indeterminate length of time.

It was suggested that a “Public Comment” section be put on the Administration agenda so people are aware they will be allowed to speak. Chair Novak agreed and mentioned having a clear set of rules or best practices available would also benefit residents. Knowing when and what they can speak on may encourage more people to engage.

Cheryl Clark, 2119 Pettigrew, would like to see consistency in when Q & A sessions are involved. She feels they are currently inconsistent and do not always happen during

meetings. She asked Councilmember Millimet directly if he has a suggestion to allow residents to ask questions and have discussions with Council during meetings.

Councilmember Millimet mentioned putting Councilmembers on the spot during meetings can lead to friction, depending on the question. Letting all seven members answer is not feasible. He suggested reaching out directly to members to have conversations about issues. Councilmember Kaye Smith agreed that one on one is the best way to ask questions and present issues.

Chair Novak feels it is important that people know they are being listened to and wants to make sure residents know they can engage. He also reiterated that Council is obliged to stick to the topics only listed on the agenda during meetings or they would violate FOIA regulations.

Having an occasional (quarterly, perhaps) meeting that allows a Q & A or a public forum is a possibility without violating FOIA regulations.

Mr. Byers feels not allowing citizens to comment or ask questions on items not on the meeting agenda is not a good policy, as people will feel they are being ignored. It is also frustrating if they are not hearing about issues until the third reading, when the item is being voted on. Mr. Millimet again suggested getting in touch with a councilmember directly or coming to Workshop or committee meetings rather than waiting for monthly Town Council meetings. Chair Novak reiterated that citizens can make a public comment on any item, regardless of whether or not it is on the agenda. They are also able to reach out to councilmembers and request to make a presentation or request for a topic to be put on the agenda.

Chair Novak discussed the options for getting something added to the meeting agenda. Requests can be emailed to the Town Administrator, Town Clerk, or any councilmembers at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. It does need the specific language requesting it be added to the agenda or be on the record. Any requests are emailed to the Council and are also included in the meeting agenda packet, which is available to the public on the Town's website. Mr. Benke added that FOIA requires the agenda to be published 24 hours in advance (by close of business the Monday prior to the meeting), so anything emailed within 24 hours of the meeting will not be added until the next meeting. He also mentioned that if a question or concern does not have to do with Town policies, it can likely be answered by Town staff, rather than placed on a Council agenda. Chair Novak encouraged residents to contact Town Staff directly for a quick answer on questions not involving policies or policy change requests.

Chair Novak stated the goal of these Administration meetings regarding public comments is to come up with best practices recommendations to pass on to the entire Council. He

also encourages residents to bring any and all ideas to councilmembers so they can at least be discussed.

Paul Vannetta, 1802 Back St, feels it is important that Council communicates with citizens how to best engage. He stated the 90 seconds of comment at meetings is more of an announcement and citizens need more explanation about when they can engage, and what they can speak about. He also feels an announcement should be made at every committee meeting as to how the Chair will run the meeting, in terms of public engagement. He also agrees there should be a Q & A session with Council, quarterly if possible, and include a planning session at one.

##### **5. Discussion of Adopting Community Outreach and Communication Technology Including a Mobile Application to Enhance Citizen Engagement**

Mr. Benke stated Citibot will likely have a soft roll out in May and is currently being worked on by Jacky Gypin and Mary Poole of Town staff. Town Council, staff, and possibly some residents will do a test run to work out any issues. Chair Novak inquired about an instant polling option for those opted into the service and asked to look into the idea. There are a few municipalities around Charleston that are currently using the application, including City of Charleston and Charleston County. In addition to a chat/search function on the Town's website, push notifications can be sent out to residents that opt into the service. It will likely include notifications about Town services, like a change in garbage collection, upcoming meetings, etc. In terms of alerting residents of accidents, power outages, etc, the Town currently uses Nixle, which is run by the police stations, when time allows. It may or may not be a possibility with Citibot.

Mr. Benke also mentioned that adjustments have been made to the microphones in the Council chambers to improve the sound quality during meetings. He emphasized the importance of council members and anyone making a public comment using the microphone properly in order to be heard and be on the record.

The quality of the videos was also discussed, with councilmember Kaye Smith mentioning she had gotten some complaints about the quality of the live stream. Mr. Benke mentioned it is not currently possible to change camera angles or zoom in on people speaking. The room also does not currently have a camera facing the podium for presenters and public comments.

Mr. Millimet asked about the possibility of having citizens attend remotely and participate in real time during meetings. Mr. Novak stated the technology team has been doing some investigating into different options. Mr. Benke also mentioned the issue with having a time delay during meetings.

## 6. Discussion of Official Town Holiday Schedule

The Administration Committee officially recommended to Town Council that the Town recognize Martin Luther King, Jr Day in the future. Chair Novak reviewed the days the Town currently recognizes compared to State holidays. The State recognizes Confederate Memorial Day and Presidents Day (Washington's Birthday) in addition to all what the Town recognizes. Federal holidays that the Town and/or State do not recognize are Presidents Day, Juneteenth, and Columbus Day. He stated he feels it would be beneficial to add Presidents Day to the Town holiday calendar for a variety of reasons, including the historical ties George Washington has to Charleston and Sullivan's Island.

Chair Kaye Smith would like to know how much it would cost to pay staff if holidays are added. Mr. Benke stated there is no extra cost to the Town to pay administrative staff. Fire and police staff would receive holiday pay for the day, in addition to regular pay.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Mr. Millimet to recommend to Council to add Presidents Day as an official Town Holiday, seconded by Kaye Smith, passed unanimously.

Mr. Benke suggested amending the motion to add MLK Day to also include Presidents Day. Mr. Novak disagreed and suggested each holiday be a separate motion to allow for more discussion from both Council and the public. It was decided it will be further discussed at Council Workshop.

## 7. Codification of Town Ordinances

Chair Novak stated the codification process should be done every five years to fix Scribner errors and make the ordinances more accessible. Mr. Blanton stated we are in the final process and are waiting for Zoning Administrator Joe Henderson to complete the corrections to zoning ordinances. The ordinances will then move to Council for the three-reading process. Mr. Benke mentioned the updated ordinances will look different but will be more user friendly.

8. **Adjourn.** There being no further public discussion or new business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:28 p.m.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Mr. Millimet to adjourn, seconded by Chair Novak, passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pamela Otto  
Administration Committee Staff Member