



**TOWN OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA  
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Monday, March 14, 2022

Committee met at 9:00 a.m., Monday, March 14, 2022, at Town Hall (2056 Middle St.), all requirements of the Freedom of Information Act having been met. Present were:

Committee members: Pat O'Neil (Chair) and Kaye Smith

Staff: Fire Chief Anthony Stith, Assistant Fire Chief Amanda Hawver, Mayor Pat O'Neil, Police Chief Chris Griffin, Police Captain Chris Wallace, Town Administrator Andy Benke, Comptroller Jason Blanton, and Committee staff member Pam Otto.

Public: Eight (8) members.

- I. **Call to Order.** Mayor O'Neil called the meeting to order at 9:17 a.m., stating the press and public were duly notified pursuant to state law, and all Committee members were present.

Media: None present

Public: Eight (8) member present

II. **Consideration of regulations of lawn tools with small combustion engines.**

A. **Public Comment:**

- Scott Jungles – Current cost of battery backpack units are currently \$1,800, with gas units running around \$500. The battery back technology is not currently updated enough for commercial landscape. The battery packs are also around \$1,400 and at least two are generally needed. The current lifespan of a battery pack is much lower than a gas blower.
- Laurie Ulmer – Discussed the decibel levels of various sound sources. Most commercial blowers typically run between 75-85 decibels. The latest electric blower (he had an example one with him) costs around \$1,700 and would cost around \$17,000 to outfit a truck with a generator to charge the machine. It registers around 60 decibels and turned it on for the committee to hear. He echoed Mr. Jungles' statement that the technology is not where it needs to be for these to be a viable replacement.
- Kevin Frances – Stated he surveyed around 500 clients and out of the 150 that responded, only one person would be willing to pay more for all electric landscaping equipment. He is supportive of moving to electric, but also agreed

that the technology is not updated enough yet and the costs are not sustainable.

- Mark Howard, 1820 Central Avenue – Stated the industry is also trying to lower the decibel levels of blowers, so that is in our favor. He suggested possible options could be to limit running hours, blowers per lot, and requiring ear protection for the operator of the blower.
- Michael Knoll, 1318 Middle Street – Stated that plugging in electrical equipment does not necessarily make the air cleaner in terms of emissions.

Councilmember Kaye Smith feels it is too soon to push this forward, given the information presented. Mayor O’Neil agreed, especially since the technology is not there yet. He asked about the number of blowers per yard and most agreed there were two on a lot at a time. Only allowing one would require more staff to blow for longer.

Fire Chief Stith agrees that both the industry and the Island are heading in the right direction, but it is not a viable option at the moment. Mr. Benke confirmed the operating hours for landscaping, Monday – Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Saturday: 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Councilmember Kaye Smith; seconded by Mayor O’Neil, to leave our ordinance as it is with regards to lawn and small combustion engines, motion passed unanimously.

### III. 2022 plans for beach traffic management

Police Chief Chris Griffin reported the Town has been working with Isle of Palms and Mount Pleasant to come up with some solutions to mitigate beach traffic for the summer. We are trying to get an officer at the light at Rifle Range and Ben Sawyer Blvd and 517 and Rifle Range. The Town will again hire someone to have at these lights.

Mayor O’Neil asked how much extra help will be hired for the summer traffic. Chief Griffin stated the rates go up by 33% starting July 1, but the Town has already had someone coming in the weekends with nice weather.

Mr. Benke stated the DOT does not like making the turn off Ben Sawyer Blvd onto Middle Street right turn only. It is allowed during the day, but all the cones must be cleared to make way for regular traffic by the end of the day. Making it right turn only presents challenges for people trying to get into the doctor’s office, as well as those trying to head back to Mount Pleasant from the gas station. It does help with the flow of traffic, but there are engineers working with DOT to come up with better alternatives. Putting up the traffic sign and cones during the summer, especially weekends present issues with manpower, since it requires at least two people. The “right turn only” sign is more of an issue than the traffic cones. Changing to traffic delineators is one solution, but they have to be approved by the engineers. The officers that are hired as back-up

serve a dual purpose, with traffic being the priority, but they are also available for police back-up. The main traffic priority is keeping Middle Street clear for the fire trucks to be able to get out.

Mayor O'Neil mentioned a meeting with the Mount Pleasant and Isle of Palms mayor, as well as Trooper Bob from ABC News 4 to discuss options on how to get traffic information better publicized to beach goers.

#### IV. **Review of St. Patrick's weekend event**

Chief Griffin stated it went smoothly and was less crowded, mainly due to the bad weather and wind, compared to past years. Chief Stith stated the cones were taken up early since most of the restaurants had stopped outside service early. It took around 30 minutes to pick up all the cones. No fencing was put because of the wind, and it seemed to work. Chief Stith suggested possibly not using the fencing in future years since the cones seemed to work and was a lot quicker to clean up.

Mayor O'Neil thanked the staff for working the event and noted the number of people there helping.

- V. **Adjourn.** There being no further public discussion or new business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 9:55 a.m.

**Motion:** A motion was made to adjourn by Councilmember Kaye Smith; seconded by Mayor O'Neil, motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pamela Otto