



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

Friday, July 21, 2023

Committee met at 9:00 a.m., Friday, July 21, 2023 at Town Hall (2056 Middle St.), all requirements of the Freedom of Information Act having been met.

Present were:

Chairman Pat O'Neil, Committee members Carl Hubbard and Scott Millimet

Staff: Fire Chief Anthony Stith, Assistant Fire Chief Amanda Hawver, Police Chief Chris Griffin, Deputy Police Chief Glenn Meadows, Town Administrator Andy Benke, and Staff Members Jason Blanton, Joe Henderson, and Pam Otto.

Public: None (0)

Media: None (0)

I. Call to Order and Confirmation of FOIA Notice

Mayor O'Neil called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., stating the press and public were duly notified pursuant to state law, and all Committee members were present.

Media: None present

Public: None present

II. Public comments and correspondence

- a. Bill Killough, concerns about groups of people on bicycles riding through the business district and elsewhere.

Police Chief Griffin clarified they are supposed to ride two abreast and as far to the right as possible. They are also required to stop at all stop signs and yield to all traffic signals, including crosswalks. He stated they have previously reached out to different bike groups and shops to brief them on the laws. He also mentioned that cars are not supposed to cross double yellow lines, like the ones on Middle Street. Mr. Millimet mentioned that cars need to be aware of bike riders as cars are not in as much danger as a cyclist in the event of a collision. Mr. Hubbard suggested removing perpendicular parking from Middle Street, making it all parallel. Mayor O'Neil stated it has been discussed at length but a decision has not been reached.

- b. Letter to Firefighter Adam Ivan, announcing his promotion to Training Officer.

Fire Chief Stith spoke about Mr. Ivan's new position that will now be a full-time Training Officer. He also stated Mr. Ivan is a registered nurse and has been with the Station since 2017.

III. Reports:

a. Reports from Chiefs: Nothing to Report

IV. Review of beach traffic management approaches

Chief Griffin stated there are usually two or three County deputies that are typically managing traffic in the Business District. They are also available to back up on calls if needed. He also feels traffic has been flowing better this year than in years past. Mt. Pleasant officers are also available for hire to work the traffic lights, if necessary, on weekends. The SCDOT traffic cameras are also working again, and they will take over operation of the cameras. The transition will take a month or two and will continue working during it.

V. Status of countywide intergovernmental agreements to allow assistance by officers of other departments

Chair O'Neil stated a meeting was held trying to get the County emergency people to take responsibility to coordinate responses to the beach communities on busy beach days. They also spoke about creating a county wide intergovernmental agreement that would allow officers from any other municipality to pull over people in the municipality that was in the county and a signatory to the agreement. This would create one agreement rather than have individual agreements with each municipality. Mr. Benke stated it was being Coordinated by Joe Coates with the Charleston County Emergency Management Department (EMD) and it will take some time to pass as there are a lot of jurisdictions involved, as well as a host of other issues that need to be worked through first. Mr. Benke clarified that this involved not just Charleston County, but Berkeley and Dorchester as well. Chief Griffin clarified that there is already a state law in place that allows other jurisdictions to respond in emergency situations. This agreement would be for non-emergency events, such as traffic violations.

VI. E-bikes on streets and sidewalks; status of our ordinances; MP and IOP ordinances

Mr. Benke stated there is a state statute that reads "e-bikes should be on a sidewalk, when possible," which preempts local ordinances, meaning the Town would not be able to make them ride in the road. Mr. Millimet feels having them on the sidewalk is more dangerous than the road as they typically have a high rate of speed, making them a hazard for pedestrians. Chief Griffin stated Isle of Palms may pass an ordinance regarding e-bikes, but it only pertains to them on the beach, not the road. Hilton Head restricts e-bikes from going over 20 mph on bike paths and are not allowed on the road.

VII. State and local laws regarding manual bicycle operation for single riders and groups of riders; enforcement update

Chief Griffin repeated his earlier statements about the rules bicyclists are required to follow. They can ride two abreast, are able to pass on the right, and are required to follow all the same traffic rules and signs as vehicles.

VIII. Procedures for reviewing and updating public safety departmental policies

Chief Griffin presented some of the policy changes that have and will be implemented within the department. He stated he found a company they have been meeting with every week reviewing each policy and confirming they are all correct and compliant with current laws. Officers will be required to sign, acknowledging they have read the updated policies. When everything is completed, it will be available on the website for the public. Chief Griffin and Mr. Benke provided further clarification and answered questions.

Chief Stith stated all fire departments go by the National Fire Protection Agency's (NFPA) sixteen books of codes. They also abide by the International Fire Agency's training policies. He stated he does not know of any departments that officially adopt the policies, but they all abide by it and they are extremely detailed. He then said they also follow the South Carolina Fire Protection checklist from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), a Standard Operation Procedures from Charleston County Emergency Preparedness Division (EPD), and Sullivan's Island Fire Department also has its own set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Finally, the Insurance Service Organization (ISO) sets the rating for the department, as well as the Water & Sewer Department. The station currently has an ISO rating of One (1) and a Class One (1), which is the highest class. All of these materials are available in the station's library.

IX. Re-consideration of radar speed limit sign for causeway

Chair O'Neil stated previous Councils discussed installing a speed radar for incoming traffic and that it is worth considering it again. Mr. Benke believes the cost would be \$3,500-\$4,000 and does not include installation costs, which will vary depending on whether it's hardwired or solar powered. He also stated tracking data costs extra. There are options about how it would be funded. Chief Griffin supports the idea and will do further research about options. Mr. Benke stated the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) would determine where it would be placed.

X. Consideration of Beach Fire permits

Chief Stith would like to end beach fire permits. He stated we are the only beach in South Carolina that allows fires, North Myrtle Beach just having done away with them, and feels it is too dangerous to continue for a number of reasons, including the accreted land. There is also an issue with participants not cleaning up after their fire, they are supposed to remove all trash and wood, and fill in any holes they made. He said many are not doing that and are burying their fires, creating a problem with holes showing up later as the tide comes in and out. There have been people out there having fires with no permit and fires have been left burning unattended. There have also been trash cans that catch fire from hot embers being placed in them. The

number of fires has increased significantly over the last few years, increasing the number of risk factors presented by allowing fires. Mr. Benke stated that appropriate wood is not always burned on the beach, leading to a problem of treated wood chemicals leaching into the soil and possible nails left behind. Chair O'Neil agrees if it is a safety issue, it should be considered. He would also like to advertise and get input from the public. Mr. Millimet agrees, especially seeing the increase in the number of fires. Chair O'Neil asked if there were any examples of towns that had successfully regulated fires on the beach, as an option instead of just doing away with them. Chief Griffin supports ending fire permits, also for a variety of safety reasons, as it can be a problem for the officers to check on them, driving at night on the beach is hazardous. There was more discussion about the pros and cons of allowing fires, with administrative staff also voicing their concerns. Mr. Benke discussed the potential conflicts with turtle nesting season. Mr. Blanton pointed out that the administrative staff has to spend a lot of time dealing with not only issuing fire permits, but also with a lot of questions and concerns before and after the event. Staff also pointed out with these events, there are also typically alcohol violations that can easily go unnoticed in the dark. It was suggested to draft potential changes to policies, which could include limiting the number of fires, limiting the areas where they are allowed, and increasing the permit and deposit fees. The solution is either to change the policies or just do away with them. Chair O'Neil suggested hearing from the turtle team before deciding on policy changes.

XI. **Adjourn.** There being no further public discussion or new business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 10:22 a.m.

Motion was made by Scott Millimet, seconded by Carl Hubbard to adjourn the meeting at 10:22 a.m., passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,



Pamela Otto