



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

Monday, September 18, 2023

Committee met at 3:00 p.m., Monday, September 18, 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 Member Pam Otto.

Public: Thirty-one (31)

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: Thirty-one (31) present

**II. Public comments and correspondence**

- Lynda Selby, 2650 Middle St – request to consider changing the parking situation in front of the Co-op and Breathe Pilates
- Chauncey Clarke, 2119 Pettigrew St – requests limbing up the maritime forest and clearing out flammable trees in the forest

**III. Reports: Reports from Chiefs**

Nothing to report

**IV. Consideration of issues with coyotes**

Police Chief Chris Griffin stated there are 8 traps total, from Stations 25-28 ½ and they have caught three coyotes since they started. He then reviewed the numbers for sightings, interactions, and attacks. He stated August had been the busiest month with ten calls for coyote related

reports. He requested the reports be made by calling the non-emergency dispatch line, (843) 743-7200, so calls can be recorded. They use these recorded calls to collect data and callers should request to speak to an officer. He also stated while DNR (Department of Natural Resources) recommends learning to co-habitate with coyotes is the best plan, they have increased trappings due to the increase in aggressive coyote behavior.

Town Administrator Andy Benke stated the Town has followed the DNR Guidelines for coyotes since they first began appearing nearby in 2006. He cited these guidelines to explain why trying to control coyote population by killing them is not always effective and can often actually increase the population.

#### **A. Public Comments:**

The following spoke about their concerns regarding coyotes or had questions about the efforts to control the population:

- Jim Whiteside, Mt Pleasant resident
- Jennifer King, 2419 Atlantic Ave

Chief Griffin stated the traps will be moved occasionally every few months and will go by the trapper's recommendations.

- Diane Neuhoff, 2918 Marshall Blvd
- Blythe Penna, 57 Montague St Charleston
- Pat Votava, 2214 Jasper Blvd
- Mary Regner, 1914 I'On Ave

Mr. Benke stated citizens are allowed to set soft leg-hold catch traps on their own private property. He also stated firearms are not allowed to be discharged anywhere on the Island and it would be extremely unsafe to use weapons in a densely populated area like Sullivan's Island. Chair O'Neil reminded everyone that the coyotes that are caught in traps are exterminated. It is against the law to relocate them in South Carolina.

- Luke Lewis, 2630 Raven Dr

Mr. Benke stated it is not wise to make the public aware of the location of the traps for several reasons. He also reminded people that the dog ordinance states dogs are not to be off leash until they are on the beach and are also not allowed behind the dune line.

- Cheryl Clarke, 2119 Pettigrew St
- Wayne Guckenberger, 2105 Pettigrew St
- Shawn Holland, 2068 Atlantic Ave

Chair O'Neil and Mr. Benke reiterated the importance of reporting sightings as well as working with dispatch by answering their questions and following correct protocol and procedures. Mr. Benke also mentioned the possibility of working with dispatch to streamline the process.

Mr. Hubbard and Mr. Benke discussed the possibility of getting an estimate of how many coyotes are on the Island, which Mr. Benke stated is not something the Town has ever hired someone to do. Mayor O'Neil stated the video from when DNR representative Jay Butfiloski gave a presentation on coyote to Council in April 2023 is available to view on the Town's website. Mr. Millimet stated it is best to continue to follow what the trappers and the experts at DNR are suggesting, as well as for residents to take caution when walking their dogs and to be diligent about not leaving food out. Chair O'Neil and Chief Griffin both agreed and reiterated the importance of taking steps to keep your kids and dogs safe. Mr. Millimet also wants to discourage people from bringing or using weapons on the Island.

The Committee requested that the Town reach out to Charleston County Dispatch to try and streamline and simplify the reporting process, which Chief Griffin and Mr. Benke agreed to do.

#### **V. Re-consideration of radar speed limit sign for causeway**

There was discussion about where the sign would go as well as the possibility of getting it installed cheaper than what was originally quoted. The Committee would like the police to do some research to see if speeding is big problem there and they would decide whether to go forward from there.

#### **VI. Consideration of Beach Fire Permits**

Chief Stith went over how some other municipalities deal with or have dealt with beach fires in the past. He also reviewed some of the issues his staff has with checking up on beach fires and showed a recent example of a fire that was left on the beach and not properly put out and nor was the debris disposed of. Hot ashes were left on the beach and a lot of time was spent cleaning it up. He mentioned people often bury their debris and it will wash up later, making it difficult to penalize the permit holder. He then stated they have safety concerns about the possibility of a fire spreading or causing damage.

Mr. Benke discussed some of the issues with deposits with fires, both with cash and checks. Administrative staff member Jacky Gypin mentioned the difficulty of having three departments involved with beach fires, especially if there are other emergencies going on and they are not able to check on fires immediately. She also stated past issues that make dealing with deposits difficult, as well as reiterated the safety concerns. Mr. Benke spoke again with some suggestions on how to possibly limit the number of fires, as well as possibly issuing tickets to anyone that does not follow the rules. Mr. Millimet and Mr. Hubbard agreed to look more into limiting the number and location of fires and increasing fees/deposits, rather banning them completely.

##### **A. Public Comments**

The following spoke in favor of keeping beach fires:

- Linda Perkis, 2871 Brownell Ave
- Pat Votava, 2214 Jasper Blvd

- Shawn Holland, 2068 Atlantic Ave

The following spoke in favor of banning or restricting beach fires, especially for safety issues:

- Luke Lewis, 2630 Raven Dr
- Wayne Guckenberger, 2105 Pettigrew St

Chair O'Neil recapped the discussions and while it is a nice activity for people to do, some restrictions should be added if the Town will continue allowing them. Mr. Millimet agreed and added he would like to differentiate the fee/deposit between Island residents and non-Island residents.

**Motion was made by Mr. Hubbard, seconded by Mr. Millimet, to recommend to Town Council to ask staff to review the ordinance and come up with some ideas based on the conversations and comments that have been made here today for beach fires, passed unanimously.**

VII. **Adjourn.** There being no further public discussion or new business, the meeting adjourned at approximately

**Motion was made by Mr. Hubbard, seconded by Mr. Millimet to adjourn the meeting at 4:25 p.m., passed unanimously.**

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Pamela Otto

Approved at the December 19, 2023 Town Council Meeting