

TOWN OF SEABROOK ISLAND
Town Council Meeting of February 25, 2014

MINUTES

After the pledge of allegiance, Mayor Ahearn called the February 25, 2014, Town Council meeting to order at 2:30 p.m. Councilmen Ciancio, Gregg, Romano and Turner, Town Administrator Pierce, Town Clerk Allbritton and several guests attended the meeting. The meeting was properly posted and the requirements of the SC Freedom of Information Act were met.

Minutes – The minutes for the Town Council Meeting and the Public Hearing of January 28, 2014, were unanimously approved.

Financials – Mayor Ahearn reported that the Town's assets are approximately \$3,000,000. The revenue and expenditures for January are below budget, but the excess of revenues over expenditures for January is almost \$12,000. Mayor Ahearn stated that, after the first couple of months of the year, the numbers should be closer to budget but are currently being affected by the accountant moving revenue and expenditures back the previous year even though it was received or spent in 2014.

Citizens/Guests Presentations, Comments:

- Mayor Ahearn introduced Molly Waring, who is Assistant Director of Media Relations for the Charleston Area Convention & Visitor's Bureau (CACVB). Ms. Waring explained that she will be attending Town Council meetings in an effort to help Seabrook Island be represented in the CACVB's tourism and promotional marketing efforts.

- Adrian Cain, Lowcountry Open Land Trust, thanked the Town Council and their constituents for supporting the initial acquisition of 17 acres of the Angel Oak Preserve. Mr. Cain stated that approximately 200 participants on Seabrook Island gave more than \$100,000 toward this endeavor. Mr. Cain explained that the Angel Oak Preserve project was an opportunity that was presented to the Lowcountry Open Land Trust a little over a year ago and they began an effort to raise \$7,100,000 to acquire 35.7 acres. Scott Wallinger, a Seabrook Island resident, is a member of the seven person steering committee for the Angel Oak initiative of the Land Trust. Mr. Wallinger stated that what is being done at the Angel Oak is really the beginning of a core initiative aimed at Johns Island. Other than development that is already present, almost everything between Bohicket Road, Maybank Highway and Church Creek will have been put into a non-development, protected status. Mr. Wallinger pointed out several areas on Johns Island that would be developed within the next decade or so. Mr. Wallinger stated that Charleston County is currently going through a 5-year update of the Charleston County Comprehensive Plan that is scheduled to be completed in April. One of the objectives of Mr. Wallinger's committee is to re-enforce the urban growth boundary as solidly as they can by commitments from the City, County, and anything that can be done to the plan that would preclude the extension of sewer lines, etc., to minimize tools to create development. A key thing is to take steps through conservation easements and other means to minimize the potential for development that will come regardless of what is done to enhance access to the islands. About a year ago a group was formed to focus on this and was active through the fall. In December, the group reconstituted itself as a task force. The Land Trust will be working with this task force on Johns Island for the next several years to place conservation easements and other mechanisms to minimize development that will occur and put together a rational plan in terms of transportation, agriculture and land protection. The Land Trust is going to use their resources and Seabrook Island has a unique opportunity since they still have funds allocated to such projects that they have been unable to spend. Mr. Cain encouraged Council to consider donating a substantial part of the balance left in the Town's Greenbelt funds to aid in the purchase of the remaining 18.7 acres at the Angel Oak Preserve. Mayor Ahearn explained that the Town previously tried to find green space projects within close proximity of the Town of Seabrook Island in order to use the funds (\$109,000) but have been unable to do so. Charleston County recently allowed the Town to use \$20,000 of the funds on the first phase of the Angel Oak initiative. Mr. Cain stated that, of the approximately \$3,300,000 needed for the 18.7 acre acquisition at the Angel Oak Preserve, the City of Charleston has committed \$400,000 and Charleston County Council will vote this evening on a \$2,500,000 donation to the

project. The Lowcountry Land Trust has also raised \$120,000 from individuals and businesses, leaving about \$280,000 to be raised. Councilman Turner moved to commit \$50,000 of the Town's Greenbelt funds to the current Angel Oak initiative. Mayor Ahearn recommended adding "pending the approval, if necessary, of Charleston County Council" to the motion. Councilman Romano seconded the motion and the vote to approve was unanimous.

- Sue Holloman, who is Seabrook Island's representative on the St. Johns Fire Commission, introduced Chief Gavin Gilcrease, who is the Administrative Battalion Chief for the St. Johns Fire Department and has been employed by the St. Johns Fire Department for 17 years. Chief Gilcrease reported that their new headquarters building should be finished toward the middle of May or the first part of June.

Reports of Standing Committees, Commissions, Boards:

Governments Relations – Mayor Ahearn reported that the Seabrook Island Club and the Seabrook Island Property Owners Association (SIPOA) held their annual meetings and election of officers recently. Ed Rinehimer was elected President of the SIPOA and Chuck Fox is Vice President. Jim Newton was elected President of the Seabrook Island Club and Bill Greubel is Vice President.

Community Relations – Councilman Romano reported that he attended the POA Long Range Planning Committee meeting recently. The annual survey has been completed and will be submitted to the POA Board by March 1st. The POA launched a community-wide blog at their annual meeting and they are expecting the Club and the Town to also contribute. The Long Range Plan (2 to 5 years) is being revised and will be submitted the POA Board in April. Councilman Romano also reported that Bohicket Marina is for sale and there are a number of offers on the table. Rosebank Farms Cafe has moved out of Bohicket Marina and Crave will be taking that space.

Community Relations – Councilman Gregg reported that the Seabrook Island Club Long Range Planning Committee did not meet in February.

Communications/Planning Commission – Councilman Turner reported that, at their last meeting, the Planning Commission decided to ask Tim Kana, from Coastal Science & Engineering, to submit a proposal to do the background work for the Beachfront Management Plan. The Town has received the proposal and it will be discussed at the next Planning Commission meeting.

Planning & Development – Councilman Ciancio reported that Virginia Brown, one of the writers involved in the familiarization trip at Seabrook Island last summer, has written an article based on her experience at Seabrook Island that appeared in the *Charlotte Magazine* recently. The article focused on the nature and environmental aspects of our community. The print magazine has a circulation of about 35,000 per month and the online version has about 100,000 new visitors per month. Obviouslee Marketing has also approached several equestrian magazines to attempt to get a photo shoot of Seabrook Island's equestrian facilities.

A number of changes have been made to the Town's website consistent with the recommendations of the Branding Committee. The cost for these changes was included in the 2014 advertising budget. Councilman Ciancio stated that during the past month he approved a \$3,800 invoice from the CACVB for the balance on a full page ad in their Visitor Guide. The total cost of that ad was \$9,600 and had been included in the overall advertising budget. Councilman Ciancio also reported that a meeting of the Visibility Committee was held several weeks ago and one issue the committee would like to address is obtaining compatibility, at least in terms of look and tone, of the Town, POA and Club websites to make the sites consistent with the recommendations of the Branding Committee. Obviouslee Marketing will attend the next Visibility Committee meeting to give proposals to the Club and the POA for changes to their websites.

Councilman Ciancio also stated that he has been talking with Obviouslee Marketing about doing a substantial revision to the Town's website in general and particularly the Town Administration portion of the site. The Town's website was redone about five years ago so that the website could serve as a portal to the Club, POA and numerous other websites.

Lea Deas Brown, from Obviouslee Marketing, stated that the objective of the website has changed somewhat since it was first designed. The website was originally designed to be a basic portal and was not a representation of all things happening in the Town, but there were bullets of many different things with a link out to other sites. The Club and POA would like to see more traffic coming in from the Town site. Another defect of the current website is that 40% of the people accessing the site are using mobile or tablet devices and the Town website is not mobile or tablet friendly. Ms. Brown stated that this item alone leads one to believe a website redesign should be considered. Also, to stay within budget on the current website, the content can be edited only on certain pages. The question is – do we continue to make edits to the website knowing we need to make structural changes or is this the time to redesign?

Councilman Ciancio stated that he has received a proposal from Obviouslee Marketing and the cost to make the changes to the website that have been discussed will be between \$25,000 and \$35,000. Councilman Ciancio summarized the changes proposed:

- Make the Town website to be more in concert with other town's websites.
- Make the site compatible with computers, mobile devices and tablets.
- Make changes to the portability aspect of the site.
- Make substantial changes to the Town Administration section.

Councilman Ciancio stated that he would like to be able to see a specific description of work to be done together with the component cost of the work on Obviouslee Marketing's proposal. Ms. Brown stated that she would have that before the next Town Council meeting.

Councilman Ciancio also reported that last month the Senate passed a bill that would delay Biggert-Waters for four months while FEMA completed a feasibility study. A companion measure will be heard in the House but faces opposition from conservative republicans who are concerned about the financial viability of the flood insurance program. The House is expected to act to protect the flood insurance program but also to protect homeowners from unreasonable and unrealistic premium increases. Councilman Ciancio commented that, in the House bill, homeowners will probably see premium increases but extended over longer periods of time. The White House has indicated it will not veto a reform bill if passed by the House and Senate.

Councilman Ciancio stated that Council has previously discussed the VC3 proposal to revise and revamp the Town's computer and phone systems on several occasions. The annual projected cost of the proposal is \$33,000. Councilman Ciancio moved that Council accept VC3's proposal and that Town Council execute a contract with VC3 to provide the services as indicated in their proposal. Councilman Romano seconded the motion and the vote to approve was unanimous.

Public Safety – Councilman Gregg reported that the Public Safety Committee is continuing its work to review and update the Town's Comprehensive Emergency Plan. The last meeting was February 18th and the next meeting will be held on Monday, March 3rd. When the review is completed, the proposed changes will be passed along to Scott Cave to affect the updates to the plan. The target date for completion of the changes is April 1. Councilman Gregg also reported that the Disaster Recovery Council meeting on February 10th was led by Scott Cave. A list of action items that came up in discussion was compiled and given to the Public Safety Committee since most of them are action items for that committee. The next meeting of the Disaster Recovery Council has not yet been scheduled but will be in June around the time the County has their disaster exercises.

Ways & Means – No Report

Planning Commission – No Report

Board of Zoning Appeals – No Report

Reports of Ad Hoc Committees:

Accommodations Tax Advisory – See Planning & Development

Reports of Town Officers:

Mayor - Mayor Ahearn reported that *The Seabrooker* came to the Town recently requesting approximately \$23,000 toward the 2014 budget for the newspaper. Mayor Ahearn and Councilman Ciancio met with Teri Lash and Mike Morris and several things were suggested to the *The Seabrooker* representatives to increase revenue and decrease expenses. *The Seabrooker* has not responded back after they were contacted several days ago and Mayor Ahearn would like to have a motion made to deny *The Seabrooker* the funds requested but stated that there is always a chance the Town would find some reason to buy space in the newspaper. Mayor Ahearn commented that there are many reasons for this but we do not feel that it is the Town's position to spend Town funds on a newspaper. Councilman Romano made a motion to deny the funds requested by *The Seabrooker*. Councilman Gregg seconded the motion and the vote to approve the motion was unanimous. Councilman Ciancio stated that he agreed with the position of Council. *The Seabrooker* provides a useful service and is a valued communication tool and he hopes that they find a way to make their enterprise economically viable without the support of the Town. Councilman Romano added that he would like to see them take some of the suggestions given to them to increase their revenue and decrease their cost.

Councilman Ahearn proposed that money be transferred from the General Fund to raise the amount in the Emergency Fund up to \$1,200,000. Councilman Gregg moved that the Town increase the amount of the Emergency Fund to the amount of \$1,200,000. Councilman Romano seconded the motion and the vote to approve was unanimous.

Town Administrator – Town Administrator Pierce reported that, in the budget for 2014, Council approved funding to work on the landscaping around the Town Hall, up and down the parkway, the bike path and also some drainage work. All the trees and shrubs had become overgrown and are currently being trimmed and pruned. Town Administrator Pierce also reported that Shred 360 will be at the Town Hall on Thursday, March 20th, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. to shred documents for residents.

Town Council Members – See Above

Utility Commission – Chairman Jeff Bostock reported that the Utility Commission met last Wednesday and the financials for January are within budget. Operations for both water and waste treatment were both normal.

Petitions Received, Referred or Disposed of: None

Ordinances for First Reading: None

Ordinances for Second Reading: None

Miscellaneous Business:

- **Proclamation 2014-01**, Proclaiming March 2014 as American Red Cross Month. Mayor Ahearn read the proclamation proclaiming March American Red Cross Month aloud. Councilman Romano moved to approve Proclamation 2014-01. Council Gregg seconded the motion and the vote to approve was unanimous. Bruce Newton, a resident of Kiawah Island and a volunteer for the American Red Cross, attended the meeting to accept the proclamation from Mayor Ahearn.

Citizens Comments: Bill Greubel, the Vice President of the Seabrook Island Club Board, asked about the Town's goal as far as continuing to increase their Emergency Fund and if there was a list of expenses that would justify this goal. Councilman Ciancio explained that this money would be used for expenses associated with debris removal and the goal, in his own perspective, is to put as much as we reasonably can in the Emergency Fund. If we have a Category 2 or 3 hurricane, the expenses for debris removal could be approximately \$5,000,000 and sand removal could be an equal amount. Councilman Ciancio added that the Town does have the capability to issue bonds in an emergency situation but does not want to borrow money unless absolutely necessary. There is also the possibility that FEMA will reimburse for debris removal. Mr. Greubel asked who would be responsible for bringing back up the wastewater/sewage operation for the Town in an emergency situation and Chairman Bostock responded that the Utility Commission would be responsible and that they have \$400,000 in reserve for emergency situations.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Approved: March 25, 2014

Faye Allbritton, Town Clerk