

Public Safety Committee

July 16, 2024 @ 10:00 AM

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Seabrook Island Town Hall, Council Chambers
2001 Seabrook Island Road
Seabrook Island, SC 29455



MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Kortvelesy called the meeting to order at 10:05 am.

ROLL CALL

Committee Members Present: Dan Kortvelesy, Chairman; Committee Members Ed Maher, John Kinne (Virtual), Virginia “Lark” Asbelle (Virtual)

Town Staff Present: Joe Cronin (Town Administrator), Katharine Watkins (Assistant Town Administrator), Abigail Grooms (Communications and Events Manager)

Other: Deputy Thomas Junkin, Charleston County Sheriff’s Office

FOIA STATEMENT

Ms. Watkins confirmed that the meeting was advertised in compliance with the requirements of the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act. The following press was notified of the meeting by email: Post & Courier, Island Connection, WCBD (News 2), WCIV (ABC News 4), and WCSC (Live 5 News). A copy of the meeting agenda was also posted on the town website and on the bulletin board at the entrance to Town Hall.

NEW BUSINESS

DRC Report Review

Mr. Kortvelesy spoke briefly on the DRC’s disaster exercise. Mr. Kortvelesy asked committee members to review the report.

In response to the DRC’s after-action report, a discussion was had related to the mayor’s ability to order non-residents to leave the island in response to an approaching storm. Mr. Cronin said that the mayor can declare an evacuation and added that the mayor’s emergency powers allow him to suspend commercial activity within the Town, specifically short-term rentals. Mr. Cronin reminded the committee that council can also suspend commercial activity as was done in response to COVID-19.

Deputy Junkin reminded the committee that law enforcement officers will treat renters in a similar fashion to full-time residents. He stated they cannot force residents and/or renters to evacuate homes. He stated it would be up to the Town to contact rental companies, report those individuals who are not heeding the evacuation order to decide on any penalties that could be assessed.

A brief discussion was had related to information available to residents in the event of an evacuation. Ms. Grooms stated that information could be found on the Charleston County Emergency Management website.

Mr. Kortvelesy discussed the possibility of finding volunteers to help with storm recovery. A brief discussion was had amongst the committee related to who these volunteers would be, what their role would be during recovery, and if they would need to remain on the island during recovery.

Brief discussions were had related to the possibility of establishing cooling centers as part of recovery efforts.

Mr. Kinne asked if there was a published list of individuals who had re-entry passes and if the re-entry list included members of the DRC. Mr. Cronin stated that Charleston County Government sends the list of individuals permitted on the island in the “first wave” after a storm. Mr. Kortvelesy said that members of the DRC are not on the list.

Mr. Kortvelesy discussed the possibility of upgrading communications equipment. The sheriff’s office deputy stated that Charleston County has a contact that can look at what the Town has and recommend upgrading if needed.

Mr. Kortvelesy asked Mr. Cronin if there was a need to update various Memorandum’s of Understanding before next summer. Mr. Cronin addressed the MOU the Town has with the Seabrook Island Property Owners Association (SIPOA). He said the MOU was last updated in 2021 and is valid for ten years.

Mr. Kortvelesy asked the committee if it may be appropriate for a representative from MUSC to sit on the DRC. He stated that in the case of an evacuation, MUSC’s facilities may be needed. Mr. Kortvelesy stated the committee should keep this in mind as their facility gets closer to completion.

Mr. Kortvelesy asked the committee if there was anything that should be added to the DRC’s after-action report. Mr. Kinne said he had nothing to add and said the report was well done.

Sheriff’s Office Update

Mr. Kortvelesy informed the committee that he received comments regarding laws as they relate to Low Speed Vehicles (LSV). Mr. Kortvelesy reminded the committee, and the Deputy Junkin confirmed that operators of LSV’s can be cited for impeding traffic. Impeding traffic is failing to pull off the road if there are ten or more vehicles waiting to pass. The deputy stated that to his knowledge there have been no citations written for impeding traffic in the last three months.

Mr. Kinne commented on an LSV he saw on the bike path near the Bohicket Marina. The committee discussed the possibility of installing signs reminding LSV drivers they are to remain on the road and failing to allow vehicle traffic to pass could result in a citation.

Public Safety Committee
Vacancy

Mr. Kortvelesy stated that Mr. Cronin had forwarded all applications for the committee vacancy. Mr. Kortvelesy stated he is looking for individuals that indicated they have prior experience in the public safety field. He further stated that he will narrow the applications down to two or three individuals and speak with them to find out what their ideas are for the committee. Mr. Kinne asked if the committee had a sufficient number of candidates. Mr. Kortvelesy said they had.

Comprehensive Emergency
Plan (CEP) Update

There was a discussion had amongst committee members and Mr. Cronin on the length of the CEP. Mr. Kortvelesy said that the document was unnecessarily long. He wished that as the plan is updated this fall, the committee should make it a goal to take out redundant parts of the CEP. Mr. Cronin wished that rather than updating the CEP, the committee should look into a comprehensive rewrite of the plan. His timeline for completing this is six to twelve months.

Mr. Kinne asked where the committee should begin when updating the plan. He recommended starting with the table of contents and ranking the sections of the plan based on their importance to the entire CEP.

Debris Management
Services Contract Review

Mr. Kortvelesy asked Mr. Cronin if a representative from Phillips and Jordan could be present at the August meeting of the committee. Mr. Cronin said he would reach out to their representatives.

Disaster Awareness Day

Mr. Kortvelesy stated that considering the seriousness of the subject matter, the session hosts were very engaging, entertaining, and fun. He was disappointed with the attendance and asked if the event could continue in its current format. There was further discussion related to recommended changes to the format of the event. The committee discussed the possibility of a resident survey related to Disaster Awareness Day.

**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION OR
DISCUSSION**

Mr. Kortvelesy asked members if they had anything for the good of the committee.

Mr. Cronin commented he had received comments from beach patrol staff that coverage was becoming difficult in some areas due to beach erosion.

Mr. Cronin also said that there could be an attempt in the state legislature to restrict vehicles on the beach. He said the committee should speak with beach patrol staff and talk about how staff might handle any new legislation.

Mr. Kinne informed members that SIPOA introduced new rules related to alligators. He stated that there is a new fine for feeding and/or harassing alligators of \$1,000.00. He also said that SIPOA will be installing new signage reminding visitors and residents of state statutes that prohibit feeding alligators.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, Mr. Kortvelesy adjourned the meeting at 11:45 am.

Peter D. Wiggins II
Town Clerk