

Public Safety Committee Regular Meeting

November 19, 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

Chairman Kortvelesy called the meeting to order at 9:58 am.

ROLL CALL

Committee Members Present: Chairman Dan Kortvelesy; Committee members John Kinne, Virginia "Lark" Asbelle, and Leslie Baylis.

Town Staff Present: Joe Cronin (Town Administrator) and Peter Wiggins (Town Clerk).

FOIA STATEMENT

Mr. Wiggins confirmed that the meeting was advertised in compliance with the requirements of the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act. Agendas were posted and furnished to news media and all persons requesting notification.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

None

NEW BUSINESS ITEMS

Resignation of Ed Maher

Mr. Kortvelesy announced the resignation of Ed Maher from the Public Safety Committee. He stated that Mr. Maher had devoted a significant portion of his time to the Public Safety Committee and the Town of Seabrook Island. Mr. Kortvelesy stated he accepted his resignation with regret. He went on to say that Mr. Maher's institutional knowledge as well as Mr. Maher himself will be greatly missed.

Appointment of John Kinne as Vice-Chairman

Mr. Kortvelesy nominated John Kinne as Vice-Chairman, replacing Mr. Maher. The committee unanimously voted in favor of his appointment.

Mr. Cronin gave a brief report to the committee on how Mr. Maher's replacement will be selected. He stated that the Town has a pool of volunteer applications from prior openings. He stated there are also various openings on other boards, commissions, and committees that will attract additional volunteer applications. He urged anyone interested to go to the Town's website and complete an application. Mr. Cronin stated that the ordinance requires Mr. Kortvelesy to make a recommendation to town council, and then council will make the appointment. Mr. Cronin hoped that the appointment would be made at the December meeting of town council.

SJFD Update

Chief Kunitzer gave a brief report on the activities of the St. John's Fire District (SJFD) since the last meeting. He stated that some staff were sent to Greenville County, South Carolina to help with Hurricane Helene recovery. He stated that staff learned several things that will help them when responding to potential emergencies on Seabrook Island. He stated that communication is always a challenge when responding to larger emergencies. He stated the district has made investments in Starlink which can serve as an added line of communication for staff, but also for residents after any potential disaster.

Chief Kunitzer announced that SJFD had advertised a request for proposal to procure a highwater vehicle that could be used in highwater rescues on Seabrook Island. He stated that the district had selected a contractor, and that the vehicle will be built in Texas. He stated the vehicle will be completed in twenty months. Chief Kunitzer stated that the bids came in under what the district had budgeted. He said this will allow the district to customize equipment that will be included on the vehicle. The chief assured the committee that the vehicle will be housed on Seabrook Island.

Mr. Kortvelesy asked if there would be newer technology developed that would make Starlink obsolete in the coming years. Chief Kunitzer stated that Starlink is powered by internet wi-fi. He stated that wi-fi was standard and probably not going anywhere anytime soon. He stated he believed the recent investments the district had made in wi-fi communications was wise.

Ms. Asbelle asked if the Town should be coordinating their communications with the district for ease of use. Chief Kunitzer said it depends on what kind of emergency that staff is responding. He stated there are variables like location of staff and if the Seabrook Island Town Hall is operational. He stated that the district uses satellite phones. Mr. Cronin stated the Town is in possession of satellite phones, but the phones have not been used. He reminded the committee that iPhone 15 and newer has the same satellite capabilities.

Mr. Kinne asked the committee a question related to a medivac helicopter service to which the Town has a contract. Mr. Cronin stated that the contract provides a medical helicopter service to any resident or property owner of Seabrook Island provided the flight originates in Charleston County. Mr. Cronin further stated that individuals can purchase additional coverage that would provide a nationwide service.

CCSO Update

Deputy Junkin gave an update of the Charleston County Sheriff's Office's (CCSO) activity on Seabrook Island since the last meeting.

Deputy Junkin shared call data with the committee and staff. Mr. Kortvelesy asked the deputy to define "patrols" in the data. Deputy

Junkin stated that “patrols” refers to an officer proactively patrolling a particular neighborhood or street. He stated a patrol is not initiated by a call from a resident, rather it is an officer proactively monitoring an area.

Deputy Junkin was asked about the coordination that exists between CCSO and the Seabrook Island Property Owners Association (SIPOA). He stated that the biggest issue both entities continue to see is the coyote population. But he said communication and coordination between the two entities is good.

Heather Paton of SIPOA stated that there are resources posted on SIPOA’s website related to coyotes. She stated residents can find information on what to do if you encounter a coyote. SIPOA staff urged residents to call the gatehouse if a coyote is seen. Deputy Junkin stated that from his experience, the coyotes are most common near Camp St. Christopher and near the Equestrian Center.

Mr. Kinne asked the deputy if he was aware of any traffic stops involving LSV’s. Deputy Junkin stated he was aware of one stop of an LSV on Seabrook Island Road for suspected underage drivers.

Ms. Asbelle asked the deputy if he had seen an increase in cybercrimes. He stated that cybercrimes are on the increase because it is a relatively easy crime to commit undetected. There was a discussion that followed related to what individuals can do to protect themselves from being a victim of cybercrime.

SIPOA Safety & Security

SIPOA staff asked a question related to the potential passing of ordinances administering to short-term rentals (STR). SIPOA staff urged the Town to forward any issues normally under the jurisdiction of SIPOA to SIPOA so that they may respond accordingly.

Mr. Kortvelesy asked SIPOA staff about plans to place portable radar signs around Seabrook Island. SIPOA staff stated they do have plans to place the signs around the island although they do not make the exact locations public. Heather Paton stated they will also gather data from the signs such as how many vehicles pass a particular sign, the time at which a vehicle passes a sign, and how fast the vehicle was traveling.

Susan Ferland of SIPOA asked a question related to enforcement of certain livability issues currently being considered by the town council. Mr. Kortvelesy stated that consideration of the ordinance has been postponed until January, but that he shared her concern. Mr. Cronin stated that a common complaint is that in the cases of nuisance properties that continually break rules, why the Town does not restrict their ability to rent the property. He stated that even though those livability issues fall under the jurisdiction of SIPOA, the Town must have

a similar ordinance if the Town is expected to suspend or in some cases revoke their STR permit.

Ms. Ferland asked about beach patrol specifically. She stated that she saw verbal and written warnings, but no citations given. She inquired as to whether the Town had a mechanism in which to issue citations. Mr. Cronin stated that he was aware of a citation issued in the summer of 2024. Mr. Cronin also stated that code enforcement will not automatically issue a citation for a first offense. He said they will typically issue a verbal, then written warning, then an ordinance summons, if necessary.

Ms. Baylis proposed that renters be required to sign a document acknowledging they have read the Town's and SIPOA's rules regarding livability issues like leaving out garbage cans and/or parking on the grass. She proposed that SIPOA issue a citation for renters breaking rules and she also would like to see rental companies be held accountable for rule breaking as well.

Ms. Paton of SIPOA reminded the committee that there is a mechanism through which the property owner can be held responsible for rule breaking by their renters. She also confirmed that these types of citations and fines have been enforced in the past.

Mr. Kortvelesy asked Ms. Paton a question related to SIPOA hiring and retaining enforcement staff. Ms. Paton said she currently has two spots open. She said there are two main challenges to hiring staff. She stated that by the time that SIPOA reviews applications and contacts the potential employee, they have already found gainful employment. She also stated that the requirements of the job are a challenge for most potential employees. She stated that most individuals see the job as "an argument."

Mr. Cronin stated the Town has similar challenges considering that multiple entities are recruiting for the same roles.

Mr. Cronin stated for SIPOA staff that the ordinance amending the beach rules to accommodate the beach scraping project would expire on the evening of November 22nd. Mr. Cronin said the beach rules would return to normal beginning on Saturday, November 23rd.

**COMPREHENSIVE
EMERGENCY PLAN**

Mr. Kortvelesy reminded the committee that they would begin working on the comprehensive emergency plan after the holidays.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

There were no committee comments.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, Mr. Kortvelesy declared the meeting adjourned at 11:52 am.

Peter D. Wiggins II, MPA
Town Clerk