

Public Safety Committee Regular Meeting

October 16, 2024 @ 10:00 AM

[Watch Live on YouTube](#)

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



Virtual Participation: Individuals who wish to participate in the meeting via Zoom may call (843) 768-9121 or email pwiggins@townofseabrookisland.org for log-in information prior to the meeting.

AGENDA

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL & FOIA STATEMENT

2. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

- May 14, 2024
- May 21, 2024
- July 16, 2024
- August 20, 2024

3. OLD BUSINESS ITEMS

- NONE

4. NEW BUSINESS ITEMS

- CCSO Update (tentative)
- 2025 Budget
- Meeting with P&J representative and TetraTech
- Meeting with SIPOA S&S
- Comprehensive Emergency Plan (CEP) Update, Threat Analysis

5. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION OR DISCUSSION

- Citizen Comments
- Committee member concerns and/or unscheduled items
- Next Regular Meeting will be held on November 19th, 2024

6. ADJOURNMENT

Public Safety Committee Special Called Meeting

May 14, 2024 @ 10:00 am

[View Meeting on YouTube](#)

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



MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Dan Kortvelesy called the meeting to order at 10:07 am.

ROLL CALL

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

Town Staff Present: Joe Cronin (Town Administrator), Katharine Watkins (Assistant Town Administrator)

FOIA STATEMENT

The Town Clerk 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.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman Kortvelesy stated there was a need for an Executive Session to discuss contractual matters related to the Town’s Debris Management contract.

Mr. Kinne motioned to enter into an Executive Session seconded by Mr. Maher. The motion passed unanimously.

The motion was approved UNANIMOUSLY.

The public safety committee entered into Executive Session at 10:09 am.

The committee returned from Executive Session at 11:23 am. No motions were made and no votes were taken during the Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, Mr. Kortvelesy adjourned the meeting at 11:24 am.

Peter D. Wiggins II
Town Clerk

Public Safety Committee

May 21, 2024 @ 10:00 AM

[View Meeting on YouTube](#)

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 10:01 am.

ROLL CALL

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

Town Staff Present: Joe Cronin (Town Administrator), Abigail Grooms (Communication & Events Manager)

FOIA STATEMENT

Mr. Cronin 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.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Maher motioned to approve the minutes of April 16 seconded by Mr. Kinne. The motion was approved unanimously.

The motion passed UNANIMOUSLY.

NEW BUSINESS

Resignation of Frank Farfonne

Mr. Kortvelesy stated to the committee that Frank Farfonne resigned from the Public Safety Committee. Committee members thanked Mr. Farfonne for his years of service to the committee as well as Seabrook Island.

Ms. Grooms stated that the opening on the committee was posted to the Town’s website and will be open through the end of May. Committee members encouraged everyone who feels that they could be of service to the committee to apply. Mr. Kortvelesy hoped that Town Council could appoint a new member to the committee by the end of June. There was a brief discussion on how many members make up the Public Safety Committee. Mr. Cronin stated that there is one place reserved for a member of Town Council and four appointments.

Disaster Recovery Council (DRC)

Mr. Kortvelesy confirmed the DRC will meet on June 18, 2024. Various agencies will be participating, including Berkeley Electric Cooperative, Charleston County Emergency Management, the Charleston County Sheriff’s Office, and St. John’s Fire. Ms. Asbelle commented on what a valuable asset the DRC has been.

Comprehensive
Emergency Plan

Mr. Kortvelesy stated once the Debris Management contract is signed, the committee can turn its attention to the comprehensive plan. There was a discussion related to the realities of debris removal after a major hurricane. Mr. Kortvelesy stated he was in contact with Charleston County Public Works about where debris might go in the event that the Bees Ferry Landfill was unable to accept debris. Public Works is working to identify other sites for debris removal.

Ms. Asbelle asked if the comprehensive plan was posted on the Town's website. Mr. Cronin stated it was. There are other versions with logins and usernames that staff and committee members can access if needed. Mr. Cronin stated the current plan is fifteen years old. He stated there will be a need to rewrite the plan in the near future to update risk assessments and delete outdated information.

Disaster Awareness
Day

Communications and Events Manager, Abigail Grooms reminded the committee that Disaster Awareness Day will be May 31, beginning at 9:30 am. The event is being held on Kiawah Island. Mr. Kortvelesy thanked Ms. Grooms for her efforts and encouraged residents to attend.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Kortvelesy stated there was a need for an Executive Session to discuss contractual matters related to the Debris Management Services contract.

Mr. Maher motioned to approve the Executive Session seconded by Ms. Asbelle. The motion was approved.

The motion was approved UNANIMOUSLY.

The Public Safety committee entered into Executive Session at 10:34 am.

The committee came out of the Executive Session at 11:14 am. No motions were made and no votes were taken during the closed session.

AWARD OF
CONTRACT
RECOMMENDATION

Mr. Maher made a motion to recommend the awarding of the Debris Management Services contract to Phillips and Jordan for a period of three years with the ability to renew for two, one-year periods. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kinne. The motion was approved.

The recommendation was approved UNANIMOUSLY.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Mr. Kortvelesy said he has received comments related to the purchase of a high-water rescue vehicle.

Mr. Cronin explained to the committee that the Special Committee on ARPA Expenditures recommended that the Town budget \$400,000 to be used by the St. John's Fire District to purchase a high-water vehicle that would be housed on Seabrook Island.

Mr. Kortvelesy stated the comments were opposed to the Town using funds for equipment that may be used in other jurisdictions (Wadmalaw Island, John's Island, Kiawah Island, etc.).

Ms. Asbelle asked if there was any data showing how often St. John's Fire District responded to emergencies with similar vehicles. Mr. Cronin stated that while they didn't have comprehensive data, the use of those vehicles is not an everyday occurrence.

Mr. Maher commented that the idea of rejecting this recommendation without an alternative proposal is being disingenuous.

Mr. Kortvelesy said that if this is what it takes to acquire or upgrade life saving equipment for use on Seabrook Island, the committee should be in support.

Mr. Kinne voiced his concerns that because St. John's Fire District could use the rescue vehicle in whatever manner they choose, the vehicle may or may not be available if needed on Seabrook Island.

Mr. Kortvelesy reminded the committee that Town Council was not looking for a recommendation from the committee. He was only sharing these comments for informational purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, Mr. Kortvelesy adjourned the meeting at 11:36 am.

Peter D. Wiggins II
Town Clerk

Public Safety Committee

July 16, 2024 @ 10:00 AM

[View Meeting on YouTube](#)

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

Public Safety Committee

August 20, 2024, 10:00 am

[View Meeting on YouTube](#)

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



MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Kortvelesy called the regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee to order at 10:01 am.

ROLL CALL

Committee Members Present: Dan Kortvelesy, Chairman; Ed Maher, and John Kinne

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

Others Present: Chief Ryan Kunitzer, St. John's Fire Department (SJFD), Robert Edgerton and Mike Sosnowski, Island Beach Services

FOIA STATEMENT

Ms. Watkins confirmed that the committee was in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act. Notice of meetings and agendas were posted and furnished to news media and all persons requesting notification.

NEW BUSINESS

Beach Patrol

Island Beach Services, the "Beach Patrol" provided a report to the committee. Their representative began with stating that the beaches had undergone significant change since Island Beach Services began providing service. High tide prohibits patrols between Boardwalks #3 and #9, and beyond Camp St. Christopher. Mr. Kortvelesy stated that SIPOA has a beach renourishment project scheduled for October 2025 and he hoped that the project will allow beach patrol staff to access some of those areas.

Mr. Kortvelesy asked patrol staff what council could do to ensure that the beaches remain protected. Mr. Edgerton stated they held brainstorming sessions that included the idea of adding an all-terrain vehicle that could access areas of the beach that are difficult to reach, installing cameras on drones, and installing lifeguard towers. Beach patrol staff stated that their main concern was the beach near Boardwalk #4. This area is a concern due to the volume of swimmers in or near swift flowing currents.

Mr. Kinne asked patrol staff how many emergencies they typically respond to in any given season. Staff stated that they can only remember five emergencies since 2003.

Mr. Kortvelesy asked patrol staff what kind of working relationship they had with SJFD. Staff and Chief Kunitzer stated they had a good working relationship. They attend first responder training together and the beach patrol depends on the fire department for access to equipment that the beach patrol does not have, particularly boats.

Beach staff stated a problem they are having is communicating with other agencies while on the beach. Staff said there is a noticeable gap in radio tower coverage on the beaches of Seabrook Island that causes communications with SJFD and the Charleston County Sheriff's Office to be dropped. Chief Kunitzer said he has communicated this gap to Charleston County Government as an issue that needs addressed.

SJFD Strategic Plan

Chief Kunitzer gave a report to the committee on the SJFD strategic plan. The plan will cover the next five years. SJFD solicited feedback from the communities they serve and shared that information with their own staff. Planning sessions were originally only scheduled to last three days but stretched into weeks. The Chief said this was a good thing for staff and ultimately resulted in a better plan. Chief Kunitzer stated that goals are hiring and retaining qualified staff, data acquisition and management, maintaining capital resources, staff training, and acquiring international accreditation.

Mr. Kortvelesy asked Chief Kunitzer about the possibility of SJFD acquiring grant funding. Chief Kunitzer stated that they have applied for grants in the past. He stated that grants at both the local and federal level are broken into two categories, staffing, and capital acquisition. He stated they have not been successful recently in acquiring funding.

Mr. Kinne asked Chief Kunitzer what the rate of turnover was for newer staff. The Chief replied that in the last year it was the lowest it has ever been. He said that it is rare for a firefighter to leave SJFD to work at another local fire agency.

Mr. Cronin asked about the frequency of calls and if call volume increased in the warmer months. Chief Kunitzer stated that Seabrook will see a small increase in the summer season, but not to the extent of Kiawah's increase.

Mr. Kortvelesy thanked the chief for attending and said he would share the plan with the rest of the committee.

Tropical Storm Debby

Chief Kunitzer stated that the storm was good for staff from a preparation standpoint. He commented on how pleased he was to see

that residents heeded the warning from emergency management personnel to stay home. He said the fact that the roads were clear helped his staff respond to emergencies during and after the storm.

Mr. Kortvelesy said he was disappointed to hear from residents that they were not receiving pertinent information about the storm. Abigail Grooms stated that storm updates were sent to individuals on the email list as well as posted to the Town's website. Ms. Grooms said the information that is available to residents is more extensive than the updates supplied by the Seabrook Island Property Owners Association (SIPOA). Mr. Kortvelesy stated that this is caused by resident interactions with the Town being limited. He encouraged individuals to sign up to receive regular emails from the Town.

Mr. Kinne asked if it might be possible for SIPOA to share their email list with the Town. Mr. Kortvelesy said the communications aspect is an issue that is often discussed by the Disaster Recovery Council (DRC). Mr. Kinne commented that if SIPOA has email addresses for all residents, they should be sharing that with the Town.

2025 Budget Needs

Mr. Kortvelesy stated that the Public Safety Committee's budget needs historically, have been low. Mr. Cronin reminded the committee that Seabrook Island will host the 2025 Disaster Awareness Day.

Mr. Kortvelesy asked for any other information related to 2025 budget needs. In response to beach patrol staff, Mr. Cronin asked for the members' attitudes on a year-round beach patrol. Mr. Kortvelesy said he would like to hear from patrol staff about providing a scaled back service in the off season.

Mr. Kortvelesy addressed the possible need to upgrade communications equipment. He asked Mr. Cronin if it would be appropriate to ask staff from Charleston County Government speak to the Public Safety Committee in the next few months.

Mr. Cronin said that there is a need to replace batteries in the 800 MHz radios owned by the Town. Mr. Kortvelesy stated that any budget request that comes from the committee should at least maintain what the Town already has.

TetraTech/Phillips and Jordan

Mr. Kortvelesy asked Mr. Cronin about the possibility of representatives from TetraTech and Phillips and Jordan being present at one of the next two meetings. Mr. Cronin said he would ask them to attend the October meeting.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Mr. Kortvelesy informed the committee he received a comment related to Low-Speed Vehicles (LSV) impeding traffic between town hall and the

traffic-circle. Mr. Kinne asked about installing pullout lanes for use by LSV's.

Mr. Maher stated the problem was an LSV operator's lack of awareness of local rules related to impeding traffic.

Mr. Cronin stated that staff received a comment related to tree roots damaging parts of the pathway. Mr. Cronin said staff were working on repairs in those areas.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Peter D. Wiggins II
Town Clerk