

Public Safety Committee Regular Meeting

April 15, 2025 @ 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 Pete Wiggins 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

- March 18, 2025

3. OLD BUSINESS ITEMS

- Meeting with P&J (and Tetrattech)

4. NEW BUSINESS ITEMS

- Discussion w/ Ben Webster, CCEMD
- CCSO Concerns (tentative)
- Disaster Awareness Day, May 29
- DRC Meeting, June 17, Update
- CEP Review and Update

5. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION OR DISCUSSION

- 2025 Atlantic Basin Hurricane Forecast
- Citizen Comments
- Committee member concerns and/or unscheduled items
- Next Regular Meeting will be held on May 20th, 2025.

6. ADJOURNMENT

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MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Kortvelesy called the meeting to order at 10:02 am.

ROLL CALL

Committee Members Present: Chairman Dan Kortvelesy; Committee members Virginia "Lark" Asbelle, John Kinne, and Dr. Carl Bergren

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

FOIA STATEMENT

The Town Clerk 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 local news media and all person's requesting notification.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

January 21, 2025

Town Council Regular Meeting

Mr. Kinne made a motion to approve the minutes from the prior committee meeting of January 21, 2025, seconded by Mr. Kortvelesy.

The motion was approved UNANIMOUSLY.

OLD BUSINESS ITEMS

Mr. Kortvelesy stated that the committee had been attempting to hear from Phillips and Jordan and TetraTech at prior committee meetings. He stated that due to the numerous disasters to which the two entities are responding, he understands it may be difficult for them to be in attendance at meetings of the Public Safety committee.

NEW BUSINESS ITEMS

Disaster Recovery Council (DRC)

There was a brief discussion related to updating the DRC roster for 2025.

The committee discussed potential scenarios and scheduling the annual DRC emergency drill. Mr. Kortvelesy announced the DRC emergency drill would be set for June 17th.

Comprehensive Emergency Plan (CEP)

Mr. Kortvelesy stated that one of Town Council's 2025 Strategic Priorities was to update the CEP.

Mr. Kortvelesy asked the members of the committee what their priorities are for the CEP update. Mr. Kortvelesy stated his priorities are for the plan to be condensed and made available electronically.

Ms. Asbelle asked that the plan emphasize evacuation information.

Mr. Kinne asked that two versions of the plan exist. He stated it was his opinion that the plan should not lose the detail that is included in the current plan. He stated that there should be a condensed version for public consumption and one more detailed version for staff and/or other users of the plan.

Dr. Bergren asked that the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) be included in the CEP update.

Mr. Kortvelesy asked Mayor Kleinman what his priorities are for the CEP update.

Mayor Kleinman stated it was his wish that the rewrite of the plan incorporate input from several different groups.

Mayor Kleinman stated at the time the last plan was created, elected officials filled most of the duties required in the plan. He stated that now, the town has more staff, and it is important that the plan turn those duties over to professionals (e.g., town staff).

Mayor Kleinman also stated that it was his wish that the plan should build on the South Carolina and Charleston County plans. He stated the plan should not be longer than either the state or county plan.

Mr. Kortvelesy asked the town's Planning and Zoning Director, Tyler Newman his thoughts on the recovery portion of the new CEP. Mr. Newman stated that currently, after a storm where structures may need to be rebuilt, there is no mechanism through which the town can issue emergency permits. He stated that it is possible that contractors would need to go back and forth between Seabrook Island and the Charleston County Public Services Building in North Charleston to obtain the proper permits.

Mr. Newman further stated that of all the permitting entities, Charleston County is the most critical.

The town's emergency preparedness consultant, Scott Cave, said there are two main changes to the plan being proposed. He stated the first is

that the plan be condensed and streamlined. He also stated that there is a need to switch emergency roles from elected officials and volunteers, to staff. Mr. Cave also stated he agreed with the idea of creating two different versions of a new CEP.

Ms. Asbelle asked if volunteers and elected officials were not filling roles under the new CEP, who would be carrying out those duties. Mr. Cave stated those roles would be transferred to staff. He stated under the current plan, Chairman Kortvelesy, in part, creates and distributes communications on behalf of the town during emergencies. He stated that since the town has hired a communications director with experience in that field, there was no longer a need for elected officials to create and distribute town communications.

Ms. Asbelle stated that the federal government writes their emergency plans around finance, logistics, operations, and planning (FLOP). She stated that the committee and staff need to keep that in mind as the new plan is created. Mr. Cave stated that now that the town has employed more staff, it is possible that professional staff can fill all those roles in the FLOP framework.

Mr. Cave suggested that an ad hoc committee be created so that he can consult with those individuals as the plan is created. He stated that as the plan progresses, both he and the members of the ad hoc committee can report back to the Public Safety Committee, Mayor Kleinman, and if necessary, Town Council.

Ms. Asbelle asked if there was a mechanism through which residents can be alerted of pending emergencies. Mr. Cave stated the town has contracted with CodeRed to communicate emergency information with Seabrook Island. Ms. Asbelle asked if there could be emergency information posted to the town's website. Mr. Cave stated he was concerned that individuals could use information posted to the website to do harm to the town during emergency events.

Mr. Cave asked the committee to consider potentially outdated Memorandum's of Understanding between the town and other entities related to debris removal.

Mr. Kortvelesy stated the point of contention between entities was the potential reimbursement of public funds used for recovery efforts behind the property owner's association security gate. Mr. Cave and Mr. Kinne suggested the committee and town engage the debris removal contractor to gauge the sentiment of FEMA related to reimbursing public funds used for disaster recovery in private communities.

Mr. Cave suggested the town consider adding the raising of Seabrook Island Road to their hazard mitigation plan so the project can make itself available to federal funds disbursed for the purposes of flood and storm preparation. Mr. Cronin stated the town has included elevating Seabrook Island Road in their hazard mitigation plan.

Mr. Cave stated a priority for the updating and/or rewrite of the CEP should be to solidify how the town continues normal business functions during a potential emergency. He stated the plan should include how the town continues to issue business licenses and permits during an emergency.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

There were no Citizen Comments.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Mr. Kortvelesy asked the committee to review an article included in the agenda packet related to traffic calming.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, Chairman Kortvelesy declared the meeting adjourned at 11:38 am.

The forecast for the 2025 hurricane season is in. It doesn't look good for SC.

BY TONY KUKULICH TKUKULICH@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

APR 8, 2025



Floodwaters from the nearby Edisto River inundate Canaan United Methodist Church on Augusta Highway in Ridgeville on Aug. 10. At the time, the Edisto had reached nearly 17 feet, well above the major flooding stage at 15 feet.

FILE/TONY KUKULICH/STAFF

Atlantic hurricane season.

The early prediction **from Colorado State University** is less intense than the 2024 forecast, when an extremely active season was in the cards. The not-as-good news is that the 2025 forecast still calls for above-average storm activity in the Atlantic Basin.

The CSU forecast predicts 17 named storms, including nine hurricanes — with four of those expected to be major storms. A major hurricane is rated as a Category 3 or higher on the Saffir-Simpson Scale with sustained winds of at least 111 mph.

By comparison, CSU forecasted 23 named storms, 11 hurricanes and five major hurricanes for the 2024 season. An average season produces 14 named storms, seven hurricanes and three major hurricanes.

'So far, the 2025 hurricane season is exhibiting characteristics similar to 1996, 1999, 2006, 2008, 2011 and 2017,' said Phil Klotzbach, a senior research scientist at CSU and the forecast's lead author.

Hurricane activity in the Atlantic Basin is expected to be about 25 percent higher than the long-term average, which is a measure of activity from 1991 to 2020. Activity in the 2024 season was about 30 percent above average.

The report states that there are slightly better-than-even odds that a major hurricane will make landfall somewhere along the U.S. coastline this year. There's about a one-in-four chance that the East Coast will be hit by a major hurricane. Odds increase to one in three that the Gulf Coast will see a major hurricane this year.



A road is covered in water near the Congaree River, which rose to historic levels due to flooding from Tropical Storm Helene, Monday, Sept. 30, 2024, in Cayce.

FILE/STAFF

Above-average temperatures on the surface of the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea are major factors in the forecast. The trend toward higher water temperatures is expected to continue into the coming months.

"A warm Atlantic favors an above-average season, since a hurricane's fuel source is warm ocean water. Additionally, a warm Atlantic leads to lower atmospheric pressure and a more unstable atmosphere. Both conditions favor hurricane formation," read the CSU report, in part.

La Niña conditions currently in place in the Pacific Ocean are expected to diminish over the coming months, though it's still unclear when or if an El Niño will form in its place. Upper-level winds associated with an El Niño tend to discourage hurricane formation and intensification. Without an El Niño in place, there may be little to slow hurricane formation.

The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 to Nov. 30.

The **2024 hurricane season** delivered 18 named storms, 11 hurricanes and five major hurricanes, including Hurricane Beryl, which was the earliest Category 5 hurricane to ever form.

Hurricane Helene made landfall as a Category 4 storm on Florida's Gulf Coast on Sept. 26. The storm caused catastrophic flooding across the southern Appalachians, widespread wind damage from the Gulf Coast to the North Carolina mountains and storm surge flooding along portions of western Florida. Helene was the deadliest hurricane to affect the continental U.S. since Katrina in 2005, with about 220 deaths

tropical storm, **Helene took 50 lives in the state**, making it deadlier than Hurricane Hugo in 1989.



Homeowner Mike Garner wades through floodwaters near his home on Sullivans Ferry Road in Cottageville, Saturday, Aug. 10, 2024. At the time, the nearby Edisto River had reached nearly 17 feet, well above the major flooding stage at 5 feet, but Garner's home remained above the high-water mark.

FILE/TONY KUKULICH/STAFF

The impacts from Helene continue to be felt in the state.

The largest wildland fire in state history, the Table Rock Complex Fire in Pickens and Greenville counties was fed by timber felled by the storm. **Downed trees also slowed**

Carolina. During a March 28 press conference in Table Rock State Park, an official with the S.C. Forestry Commission said the fallen trees will continue to be a factor in wildland fires for years to come.

In August 2024, Tropical Storm Debby inched its way across the Palmetto State, dumping nearly 18 inches of rain in some locations. It left widespread flooding in its wake, **hitting the communities along the Edisto River** particularly hard.

The 2024 season could have been worse. A weeks-long lull developed unexpectedly during the peak of the season. When the dry spell ended, storm activity roared back to life, with 12 of the season's 18 storms developing in the second half of the season.

Beryl, Helene and Milton were all retired from usage as storm names by the World Meteorological Organization, the entity responsible for assigning names to storms that reach tropical-storm strength, which means it has sustained winds of at least 39 mph.

Colorado State University has issued forecasts for the Atlantic hurricane season since 1989. Their forecast will be updated on June 11, July 9 and Aug. 6.

Reach Tony Kukulich at 843-709-8929.

TONY KUKULICH

Tony Kukulich is an editor/reporter working in the Beaufort County bureau. Turning to journalism as a second career, he started as a photojournalist in the San Francisco Bay Area in 2015. After moving to Bluffton in 2021, he wrote for several area publications before starting with The Post and Courier the following year. His work has been recognized by the National Newspaper Association, the California Newspaper Publishers Association and the South Carolina Press Association. Tony covers local government, environmental issues and development in addition to authoring the Hurricane Wire newsletter.