

Public Safety Committee Regular Meeting

December 16, 2025 @ 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 10:03 am.

ROLL CALL

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

Town Staff Present: Joe Cronin (Town Administrator), Tyler Newman (Zoning Administrator), Abby Grooms (Communications and Events Manager), and Peter Wiggins (Town Clerk).

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 news media and all others requesting notification.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

October 21, 2025

Mr. Kinne motioned to approve the minutes of October 21, 2025, seconded by Ms. Baylis.

Mr. Kinne's motion was APPROVED unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS ITEMS

FEMA Update

Chairman Kortvelesy stated the committee has been lucky to have an employee of FEMA on the committee in Lark Asbelle.

Ms. Asbelle provided a written report to the committee and all others in attendance.

Chairman Kortvelesy stated there were a few points in the report he on which he wanted to touch. He stated a few of the reasons the committee exists is disaster awareness and recovery. He highlighted staffing shortages at FEMA, which may directly impact the residents of Seabrook Island in the event of a disaster. He also highlighted the cuts to hazard mitigation grants.

Chairman Kortvelesy continued by saying it appeared that some disaster preparedness and recovery responsibility was being transferred from federal to state and local entities. He stated it was his opinion that disaster recovery efforts should be funded wherever they occur, and that disaster preparedness and recovery is a federal responsibility.

Chairman Kortvelesy asked what Seabrook Island needs to do as a community to adjust to these changes at the federal level. He stated if you read the report provided by Ms. Asbelle, there are a few different options that are presented. Chairman Kortvelesy thanked Ms. Asbelle for bringing this to the attention of the committee.

Ms. Asbelle stated that it was her intent to call attention to the options for federal funding assistance outside of FEMA. She stated that she was disappointed she could not serve on the committee in 2026. She continued by saying she wanted to leave the town with information for their use as it relates to disaster preparedness and recovery.

Dr. Bergren asked about the "BRIC" Grant Program mentioned in the report.

Ms. Asbelle stated that grant program was cancelled as part of the reductions in disaster funding.

Chairman Kortvelesy stated there were grant programs that were mentioned in the report that town council has discussed. He stated most of those programs, are programs for which the Town of Seabrook Island does not qualify. He further stated that Mr. Cronin and his staff do a good job researching funding opportunities.

Mr. Kinne stated he wished these funding opportunities could be incorporated into the Town's Comprehensive Emergency Plan. He stated that next year's Public Safety Committee should consider making these grant programs a part of the emergency plan.

Mr. Cronin stated the Town had approximately \$3,000,000 set aside for emergency response. He further stated that the money set aside was not meant to wholly cover the cost of disaster recovery, rather it was meant to be used to initiate recovery efforts until FEMA reimbursement payments are received by the town. He closed by stating that expecting South Carolina to be financially responsible for disaster recovery should be concerning.

Mr. Kinne asked what that status is of the rewrite of the Charleston County Emergency Plan.

Chairman Kortvelesy stated he recently talked to Ben Webster of Charleston County Emergency Management. He said that although he could be wrong, he stated the county was having staffing issues related to emergency services.

Ms. Asbelle stated that the town and county should address costs in the permitting process post-disaster in both plans.

Mr. Cronin stated that the town can control its own fees, however it cannot control fees set by Charleston County. He stated contrary to what one might think, the town would see increased revenue post-disaster due to permit fee revenue coming from repair and rebuild projects on the island.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION OR DISCUSSION

Everbridge

Chairman Kortvelesy heard from Mr. Cronin that the Town's current emergency communications provider has had issues this year. Chairman Kortvelesy stated that a change in providers would be coming before the committee, and that hopefully a new provider would be in place before next year's storm season.

Chairman Kortvelesy stated that one feature he liked was the interactive nature of the Everbridge alerts. He stated one feature he liked was Everbridge's ability to ask their users whether they would evacuate before a pending disaster. He stated the town would be able to know who was and who was not still on the island.

Mr. Cronin reminded the committee the Town was still under contract with its current provider through July of 2026.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Dan Kortvelesy

Chairman Kortvelesy thanked the members of the committee for the time they have invested in the Town and Seabrook Island. He continued by thanking the current and past chairmen of the Public Safety Committee, John Kinne and Ed Maher.

Chairman Kortvelesy thanked Mr. Cronin, Mr. Wiggins, and Ms. Grooms for their work with the committee over the past year. He continued by thanking Chief Ryan Kunitzer of the St. John's Fire District for his service to the island and its residents.

Mr. Wiggins, Mr. Cronin, and the rest of the committee thanked Chairman Kortvelesy for his service to the town.

Chief Ryan Kunitzer presented Chairman Kortvelesy with a challenge coin from the St. John's Fire District.

Coyotes

Mr. Wiggins informed the committee that there was a public comment submitted related to the coyote population on Seabrook Island. Mr. Wiggins stated the email was forwarded to the 2026 Environment & Wildlife Committee chairman.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, Chairman Kortvelesy declared the meeting adjourned at 10:55 am.

Peter D. Wiggins II, MPA
Town Clerk