

TOWN OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, May 9, 2016

A meeting of the Public Safety Committee of Council was held at 8:30 a.m. on Monday, May 9, 2016 at Town Hall, 2050-B Middle Street, all requirements of the Freedom of Information Act having been satisfied. Present were Committee members, Chauncey Clark, Chair, Council members Mayor Pat O'Neil and Sarah Church; staff included Administrator Benke, Police Chief Howard, Fire Chief Stith, Zoning Administrator Henderson and Asst. to Administrator Darrow.

I. Call to Order. Chair Clark called the meeting to order, stated the press and public were duly notified pursuant to state law and noted that all Committee members were present. Approximately fifteen residents and one media member (Moultrie News) were in attendance.

II. Parking Plan Summer 2016

Town continues work toward a managed parking plan. Administrator Benke provided a staff report and Plan status update, highlights being:

Overview:

- Population growth in neighboring municipalities and sustained popularity of Charleston as a destination place contributes to the increasing influx of tourist traffic on Sullivan's Island. The impact of increased Island tourism, particularly in the beach season (May to September), results in a growing strain on Town resources, from sanitation/maintenance to public safety.
- Town is host to approximately 5,000-6,000 people on high summer weekends. This is in addition to the approximately 1700 Island residents.
- Town Council's position is to pursue managed parking from a public safety perspective and not engage in paid parking.

Parking Inventory:

- Approximately 4,700 right-of-way parking spaces available island-wide
- Beach season traffic, historically, increases from mid-May to a zenith over Independence Day weekend (July 4th), leveling off and then declining by early August (July 4, 2015: estimated 1,300 cars on the Island)

Public Safety Considerations:

- Town fire and police 9-1-1 emergency call response time is 2-4 minutes island-wide (vehicles able to navigate roads)
- EMS response time: 7-10 minutes from Mathis Ferry Road to Island, provided the ambulance is at its station with clear traffic to Sullivan's Island. Delta force vehicle is staged in the summer to provide quicker first response emergency care (not including hospital transport)

Vehicle parking will not improve ingress/egress from the Island. Parking plan cost will be offset by hospitality tax funds, not property taxes.

Parking Strategies:

- Modify Town ordinances to require all wheels off the pavement onto right-of-way
- Parking on one-side of Island either island-wide or from Middle Street south to the ocean

Plan Highlights:

- Parking Plan would focus on ability for emergency apparatus to navigate through streets and make appropriate turns, for private vehicles to pull off the road to allow emergency access, and, increased pedestrian safety with one side of street free of vehicles
- Parking inventory would be reduced to approximately 2,848 spaces of which 1,760 spaces would be from Middle Street to the Atlantic Ocean
- Signage: approximately 1,000 signs required at estimated cost of \$148,000; Town would use same vendor who provided/installed Isle of Palms signs

Plan Status:

- SCDOT received draft Plan last week and will require a two week review
- Sign vendor needs approximately two weeks to prepare and install signage
- Implementation should be ready by mid-June

Legislative Consideration:

- Town ordinance Section 11-4 regulates parking; approval of a text amendment change (all wheels off the paved road) would not be an impediment to mid-June Parking Plan implementation.
- Staff consulted with Municipal Judge Duffy on language and signage requirements for effective parking enforcement

Chief Howard reported on following:

Enforcement & Public Outreach/Education:

- Additional Staff has been added to Police Department: four beach services officers (BSO) (normally two BSO hired each season). One BSO will remain on the beach and one will handle parking. Two new BSO's will focus on parking enforcement

Chair Clark opened floor for public comments related to parking

Public Comments:

Mike Walsh, 2530 I'On Avenue, questioned enforcement of the Parking Plan: does Town maintain a parking ticket database, what about towing/parking boot and repeat offenders? Administrator Benke responded that the Town does not have towing plans at present and would have to consider manpower and liability issues with towing. Town does not have metered parking and each parking ticket is a single violation

Chief Howard noted that the Town can track a ticket by the vehicle tag number in its reporting system; however, the officers do not have access to this reporting system in the field.

Dan Legare, 3104 Marshall Boulevard, suggested a time stamp for parking violations. Officers could return and issue another ticket to a vehicle owner who remained in parking violation throughout the day. This way the Town could discourage visitors from parking illegally all day because they could receive more than one \$50 parking violation ticket.

Chair Clark noted these resident suggestions were helpful and could be reviewed during the Plan implementation.

Mike Walsh, 2530 I'On Avenue, questioned how the residents could support parking enforcement and recommended the Town advertise such information to residents.

Chair Clark noted that residents could call the non-emergency phone (Charleston County Dispatch at 843-743-7200) to report a current parking violation. BSO's have radios on their carts and could respond quickly to a dispatcher call.

Susan Middaugh, 2420 Raven Drive, suggested Town should verify the no-parking signage before vendor posts to avoid illogical parking restrictions (example being Raven Drive open ditches limiting off-street parking feasibility).

Staff noted that site restrictions, such as open ditches, have been factored into the parking inventory; however, Staff will verify installation of final signage.

Dan Legare, 3104 Marshall Boulevard, respectfully questioned why Council waited to implement the Parking Plan in mid-June. Submitted the Town's Plan appeared reactionary to the Isle of Palms plan and difficult to effectively enforce.

Mayor O'Neil assured the audience that the Town has been working toward a managed parking plan for a long period of time.

Mark Howard, 1820 Central Avenue, commented on three items:

1. Suggested a legal loading zone for visitors along secondary streets, to allow families to unload/load their items from the car so the driver can move the vehicle a further distance from the beach paths.
2. Town should, in the future, consider parking on Middle Street, particularly in the Community Commercial District, viewing parking restrictions from a public safety standpoint.
3. Implementation – provide sufficient notice and time for residents to address landscaping near the right-of-way and for clearance of vegetation in the public rights-of-way.

Amy Salzhauer, 1850 Flagg Street, noted the problem of long-idling tourist/party buses on roads.

Public Safety Chiefs noted the Fire and Police Department work together to watch for party buses to monitor the beach activity and ask bus drivers to refrain from blocking roads. The non-

emergency dispatch line is a good way for residents to report party buses to the safety departments.

Cheryl Clark, 2119 Pettigrew, noted that Uber drivers often block the road along the Community Commercial District waiting for a fare in front of the restaurants. Questioned how long a car or boat could remain parked in a legal space.

Chief Howard noted that, after 48 hours, the vehicle or boat could be tagged and then, after another 48 hours, towed.

Hartley Cooper, 2420 Myrtle Avenue, questioned if Plan would consider feasibility of parking on narrow streets that include ditches and other items, such as trash cans and tree limbs.

Administrator Benke noted the Parking Plan was configured to accommodate required turn radius for emergency apparatus and existing land restrictions (i.e. open ditches).

III. Public Safety Summer 2016

Traffic Flow

Police Chief Howard offered a report:

- Annually hires two Charleston County deputies for traffic control at the major intersections of Highway 703/Jasper Boulevard and Highway 703/Middle Street
- Administrator and he will work with Mt. Pleasant on the timing of the red light at the Ben Sawyer Boulevard/Rifle Range Road intersection to maximize traffic flow through it.
- Ben Sawyer Bridge opens on the hour in summer months except for commercial boating and boating distress calls.

Noted traffic flow delays along Middle Street are exacerbated by motorists waiting for vehicles to pull out of Community Commercial District perpendicular parking and/or to gain a parking space near the restaurants.

Commented that Sullivan's Island is a funnel with six roads emptying onto one main exit (Ben Sawyer Bridge) and when vehicles converge during high traffic times (beach season ingress around 11AM and egress between 3-5PM), the number of deputies at the intersections will not impact the traffic jam. He noted that pop-up thunderstorms exacerbate the traffic jams.

Committee suggested an officer be placed at Rifle Range Road to manually work the traffic during high periods. Additionally, County deputies could walk in the Community Commercial District at non-peak traffic periods to enhance police presence in this area.

Mark Howard, 1820 Central Avenue, suggested Council consider option to change perpendicular parking to parallel parking along the Community Commercial District.

Hartley Cooper, 2420 Myrtle Avenue, noted Town Council could request a change to the bridge opening times based upon her previous research on this topic. She noted that a request could be

made to allow no bridge opening from 3-5PM during the summer months except for boats in distress and commercial boat traffic.

Chair Clark asked Ms. Cooper to share this information and contact numbers with him.

Ms. Hartley further recommended an officer be placed at the following three major roads that relay traffic onto Hwy 703: Middle Street, Jasper and Myrtle Avenue

Other Public Safety Agenda Items: Weekend and Holiday Staffing; EMS Support

Chair Clark noted these items were reviewed earlier in this meeting

IV. Maintenance Department

A. Beach Path Cans – Holiday Collection

B. Dog Waste Bags

Staff reported the Town will pay for an extra weekend collection of trash cans at the beach access paths for the three big summer holiday weekends: Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day. Dog waste bags are checked at least three times/week (currently checked daily). Dog waste bags are well utilized with the Town purchasing \$6,000 in baggies with each order.

Other Public Comment:

Amy Salzauer, 1850 Flag Street, returned to the topic of traffic flow. She suggested additional signage or a speed hump at the intersection of Station 18 ½.

Committee briefly discussed speed humps. Administrator Benke noted the Town approached SCDOT in the past regarding speed humps in the Community Commercial District (CCD). A minimum sustained traffic flow volume is required for speed humps. SCDOT evaluation determined that the CCD area did not meet traffic flow volume to warrant speed humps. It is very unlikely, based upon those findings, that secondary roads will meet the threshold for speed humps.

Council member Church requested Committee re-address a potential reduction to the speed limit in the future.

Rita Langley, 1618 Middle Street, asked about special consideration for smaller streets with the parking plan. She noted that in the area where she lives residents require on-street parking and have to compete with beach visitors for parking near their homes.

Administrator Benke noted that the Parking Plan does not provide for residential only parking districts or decals.

Administrator Benke clarified that SCDOT would provide the Town leeway to tweak the Parking Plan during implementation. Minor modifications would include temporary no-parking areas for temporary road-work. SCDOT would consider a major Plan change to be restricting one-side of

street only parking from portions of the island to an island-wide restriction. He reiterated that the Parking Plan will not alleviate Island ingress/egress congestion.

Committee Action Items

Committee consensus on the following:

- 1. Recommend to Council implementation of one-side of street only parking, island-wide**
- 2. Recommend to Council text amendment to require all wheels off the paved roads**
- 3. Defer consideration to modify parking on Middle Street in the Community Commercial District until implementation of the Island Parking Plan**

V. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned (Mayor O'Neil motion; Councilmember Church seconded; unanimous approval) at approximately 10:04a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Chauncey Clark, Chair
Public Safety Committee

For review/approval at the May 17, 2016 Regular Council Meeting