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2 **TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND**
3 **PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE**
4

5 Date: November 1, 2011

Time: 2:00 P.M.

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7 Members Present: Kim Likins, Bill Harkins, Bill Ferguson, *Alternate*

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9 Members Absent: George Williams

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11 Staff Present: Scott Liggett, Tom Fultz, Jill Foster, Shea Farrar, Teri Lewis,
12 Charles Cousins

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14 Others Present: Ken Heitzke, *Councilman*, Jim Collett, Al Bischoff, Kathy Ewell,
15 Glenn Way, Joe Baker, *Telecommunications Task Force*

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17 Media Present: Tom Barton, *The Island Packet*
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21 **1. Call to Order.**

22 The meeting was called to order at 2:00 P.M.

23 **2. FOIA Compliance:**

24 Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted and mailed in
25 compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Town of Hilton Head
26 Island requirements.

27 **3. Committee Business:**

28 **1. Approval of Minutes:**

29 Councilman Harkins moved to approve the Minutes of October 4, 2011. Chairman
30 Likins seconded. The Minutes of October 4, 2011 were unanimously approved.

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32 Councilman Harkins motioned to reverse the order of items presented under New
33 Business this afternoon. Chairman Likins seconded. The motion passed
34 unanimously.
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36 **4. Unfinished Business:** None

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38 **5. New Business**

39 • **Aurora Loan Services, LLC – Request for Easement**

40 Scott Liggett, Director of Public Projects & Facilities advised the Committee
41 the Town has received a request from Aurora Loan Services, LLC, for an
42 easement over the existing roadway known as “Adriana Lane,” to provide
43 access from U.S. 278 to property owned by Aurora Loan Services, LLC, that
44 lies on the marshes of Jarvis Creek, adjacent to the “Old Schoolhouse” tract.
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46 Prior to 2006, the 2 separate parcels that comprise the “Old Schoolhouse” tract were
47 separately owned by the Town and by Beaufort County. In 2006, the Town and County
48 executed a series of deeds whereby the Town and the County conveyed to the other an
49 ownership interest in each other’s parcels. The effect of this transaction was that the

50 entire 6.9 acre site is now owned jointly by Beaufort County and by the Town. A
51 similar request regarding this easement has been submitted to Beaufort County, and
52 Beaufort County is currently in the process of sending this easement through its
53 Committee system, and on to Beaufort County Council.

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55 After a brief discussion, Councilman Harkins moved to approve. Councilman
56 Ferguson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

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58 • **Telecommunications Task Force Presentation**

59 Mr. Jim Collett, Chairman of the Telecommunications advised the Task Force
60 was formed in March, 2011 to examine all the Island’s telecommunications
61 issues and primarily cell phone service. The Task Force embarked on a study
62 that 1) examined the technologies involved, 2) met with the wireless and
63 wireline carriers, the tower companies and other involved parties, and 3)
64 performed tests of the actual levels of cell phone service.

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66 Mr. Collett reviewed with the Committee the following:

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68 **Current Situation**

- 69 ○ 2 million plus visitors/tourists expect their mobile phones, tablets and
70 laptops to work when they are on vacation.
- 71 ○ If Hilton Head Island cannot meet their expectations, many of those
72 tourists may look elsewhere.
- 73 ○ Poor cell phone service is a “deal breaker” when trying to attract
74 business meetings/conferences.
- 75 ○ To successfully make up for a reduction in retirees moving to Hilton
76 Head Island, the Island needs to attract mobile executives and the half of
77 second home owners who are still working (both groups are highly
78 dependent on excellent wireless service.)
- 79 ○ Poor cell phone service is starting to negatively affect home values and
80 resale opportunities.

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82 **Mission Statement**

83 Advise the Town and its various communities on telecommunications issues
84 and opportunities as they affect the future of our Island

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86 The areas the Task Force will address are:

- 87 ○ Act as a technical resource to the Town and its various communities on
88 telecommunications issues.
- 89 ○ Advise the Town and its various communities on the impact of their
90 actions and rules and procedures in dealing with carriers and others such
91 as infrastructure providers.
- 92 ○ Evaluate the impact of the quality of telecommunications services on
93 living and working on the Island and how that affects our
94 competitiveness with other towns and cities.
- 95 ○ Provide an annual assessment on the progress of improving
96 telecommunications services on the Island.

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99 **The Goal**

- The Town of Hilton Head Island becomes a Technology Showcase that strengthens its reputation as a world class resort destination, eco friendly environment and a great place to live and raise a family!

What's changing?

- An explosion of wireless data services are available today and growing exponentially.
- A desire to always be “connected 24/7” via email, text messaging, Facebook, Twitter and voice.
- A requirement for in-building solutions and the growing need for ubiquitous WiFi connectivity.
- **What hasn't changed** is the amount of available spectrum, the physics of radio signals, the need for more towers to address coverage and usage/capacity issues, and the ongoing consolidation of wireless carriers.
- Excellent cell service is quickly becoming an essential part of community infrastructure.

Mr. Collett also mentioned to the Committee that tower height is critical because of the extensive tree coverage we have on the Island.

Mr. Collett reviewed the key players which include, Town of Hilton Head Island, Verizon, AT&T, American Tower, Crown Castle, Hargray, Time Warner, Sprint and T Mobile.

Mr. Collett also mentioned that when you open up a magazine or advertisement from Verizon, AT&T and other carriers it looks like everything is great with no problems. We were trying to come up with how we could do a measurement of how phone service really is on Hilton Head Island.

We started to look for an independent source where we could get this information from. We found a company called Root Metrics and from the minute we got them on the phone, it was clear we had found the right company. Root Metrics is a Seattle based company with the goal of being the premier independent and unbiased source of measurement of cellular quality of service. They provide “real world” testing data vs. carrier marketing maps. Data input is based on end-user initiated tests using personal smart phones. Volunteers have performed more than 20,000 tests on Hilton Head Island since April, 2011. The Town of Hilton Head Island is the first municipality to partner with Root Metrics at no charge.

We found that most of the wireless coverage issues reside within the gated communities. Coverage in the major traffic corridors appears to be adequate.

Mr. Collett advised that the biggest lesson they learned was the only way cell phone service will improve on Hilton Head Island is if the wireless carriers **choose** to spend more money to upgrade their facilities on the Island. The biggest challenge is greater flexibility with where the cell towers can be placed on the Island and treating cell towers as essential infrastructure projects like water, sewers and power – primarily in the gated communities.

Mr. Collett advised the Telecommunications Task Force recommends the following:

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Town Council should:

- Regard cellular phone service as an essential community infrastructure program.
- Expedite the authorization process for approving new cellular towers – within a 90 day timeframe.
- Adopt a standard carrier tower rental rate, protected by a “Most Favored Nations Clause” in the contract.
- Install Town sponsored WiFi “Hotspots” in key locations.
- Promote merchants/businesses joining a Town-wide WiFi Alliance.
- Initiate a focused education program targeting all residents and businesses, especially within the gated communities, though a partnership between the Town and the Telecommunications Task Force.

Mr. Collett reviewed the next steps to be taken:

- Collaborate with Root Metrics to collect independent, fact based data on wireless coverage gaps and share with carriers.
- Develop a standard carrier contract for tower rental fees which includes a Most Favored Nation Clause to eliminate lengthy negotiations cycles.
- Streamline tower/carrier approval process.....become the model for cooperation and teamwork in the carrier community.
- Encourage carriers to spend their investment capital on the Island by working within the parameters of their annual budget cycles.
- Assist carriers by identifying potential tower locations on the Island.
- Encourage hotels, water tower owners etc., to work with the wireless companies.
- Promote “in building” wireless solutions to improve coverage in business and residential locations (Microcell.)
- Determine the Town’s role in WiFi coverage and support “hot spot” installations within the business community.
- Educate the gated communities on how they will play a key role in improving wireless coverage in their neighborhoods.

Chairman Likins thanked Mr. Collett for the excellent presentation and asked the Committee if they had any questions. Councilman Harkins also thanked Mr. Collett and the Committee for all their hard work.

6. Adjournment:

Councilman Harkins moved to adjourn. Councilman Ferguson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen D. Knox
Senior Administrative Assistant