

TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING

Date: January 28, 2013

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Members Present: Marc A. Grant, *Chairman*; John J. McCann, *Council Member*; Bill Harkins, *Council Member*

Members Absent: None

Town Staff Present: Lavarn Lucas, *Fire Chief*; Randy Lindstrom, *Administrative Battalion Chief*; Ed Boring, *Deputy Fire Chief – Support Services*; Brad Tadlock, *Deputy Fire Chief – Operations*; Cathy Jones-Gooding, *Communications Manager*; and Lynn Buchman, *Administrative Assistant*

Others Present: George Williams, *Council Member*; Jocelyn Metzger Staigar, *Hilton Head Area Association of Realtors*; and Eleanor O’Key, *Lowcountry Inside Track*

Media Present: Brian Heffernan, *Island Packet*

1. Call to Order

2. Freedom of Information Act Compliance

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

3. Approval of Minutes

a. Regular Public Safety Committee Meeting of January 7, 2013

Motion to approve the minutes of the January 7, 2013 Regular Public Safety Committee meeting was made by John McCann and seconded by Marc Grant. The Motion was approved by a vote of 2-0-0, with Bill Harkins abstaining since he was not in attendance at that meeting.

4. Unfinished Business

a. 2013 Fire & Rescue Strategic Plan – Review of Recommendations from the following Divisions: Administration, Support Services, Public Safety Systems, Planning, Communications, Fleet Maintenance, and Emergency Management

At the request of Lavarn Lucas, Fire Chief, the Committee agreed to deviate from the order of the Recommendation list and begin with an item under Emergency Management since a representative from Hilton Head Public Service District was present who wanted to comment.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT:

Chief Lucas explained in detail the need to pursue the acquisition or development of an off-island facility of suitable size, construction and elevation for use during hurricanes as a public safety evacuation site/base camp for Fire and Rescue personnel and key Town Staff. He noted concerns, problems, and hindrances with both the USC-B New River Campus, which is the current primary evacuation facility for use in a Category 3 or less storm, and with the Barnwell facility for Category 4 or 5 or strong storm surge Category 3 storms.

Richard Cyr, General Manager, of the Hilton Head Public Service District, speaking on behalf of all three Public Service Districts on the Island, cited similar concerns and difficulties in returning to the Island after an evacuation as quickly as possible. He expressed an interest in conceptually working with the Town for a facility to house all of the Hilton Head Island first providers, and requested that the Recommendation be considered favorably.

Mr. Harkins and Chief Lucas discussed the possibility of a regional approach to such a facility and the feasibility of a multi-purpose building. Chief Lucas explained the regional plan for which Beaufort County is responsible, and the role of Southern Command under that plan. He pointed out the staffing needs required to manage Southern Command would tax the ability of his staff to assist in getting Hilton Head Island back up and running. As a separate issue, he discussed the need for a facility to serve as Base Camp to centralize all of Hilton Head Island's emergency services, the PSDs, and integral Town Hall staff.

In response to Mr. Harkins' inquiry, Chief Lucas agreed this would be a single-purpose facility, which hopefully will be used on a rare to never basis. They discussed the possibility of optimizing any facility owned by the Town by leasing space for income. The capital outlay for purchasing and retrofitting an existing building, needs for the building, and size requirements were discussed in generalities. Mr. McCann noted a bigger issue would be the on-going maintenance cost and suggested joint partnering the facility with the PSDs, the Town of Bluffton, and the Bluffton Township Fire District. Chief Lucas noted the Recommendation did not preclude sharing the facility and its cost, but he was willing to reword the Recommendation to indicate that the acquisition and development of an off-site facility would be done in conjunction with the PSDs, the Town of Bluffton, and the Bluffton Township Fire District if they wished to participate.

Mr. McCann, Mr. Harkins, and Chief Lucas discussed storm hardening of fire headquarters, the essential need for the building after a storm, and the unavailability of Federal grant money. The estimated cost determined several years ago and the processes needed to harden the building were outlined by Chief Lucas, as well as the history of the building that was acquired by the Town. Since the building meets the size requirement, is in good shape and in a good location, Chief Lucas expressed confidence that the building would not be out-grown anytime in the near future, justifying the expense of hardening the building. Chairman Grant indicated he had toured the building and expressed his support.

Chairman Grant suggested that Chief Lucas return to the beginning of the Recommendation list, and proceed from there by section, with questions posed at the end of each section.

ADMINISTRATION:

Chief Lucas explained the three Recommendations concerning Administration and the need to revise the enabling Ordinance to more accurately reflect the name and legal authority of Fire and

Rescue. He cited concerns expressed by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International and problems relating to DHEC regulations. He assured Chairman Grant that such changes would not result in any increase to the current budget.

SUPPORT SERVICES:

Mr. Harkins and Chairman Grant inquired about security, and Chief Lucas expressed confidence in current security measures in place to protect the assets of the Town and its personnel, but indicated they will always look for improvements.

Mr. Harkins and Chief Lucas discussed the current ISO rating of 3, its correlation with the insurance rates charged to the public, the cost is to maintain the 3 rating or to improve it to a 2, and what effect that would have on insurance rates. Chief Lucas expressed his belief that it was not worth the investment to increase the rating from a 3 to a 2, which would require building multiple stations and hiring more firefighters. He indicated that obtaining and maintaining the Class 3 rating is complicated, but even if it should slip to a Class 4 rating, he expressed doubts that residential insurance rates would change, however, commercial insurance would increase.

At Mr. Harkins' request, Chief Lucas agreed to look at the Recommendations and point out any that might have a favorable or critical impact on the ISO, but at this point, he saw none.

Mr. McCann requested a copy of the schedule of replacement for equipment and vehicles, and Chief Lucas provided copies for each member of the Committee (copy attached to the Minutes and made a part hereof). Mr. Harkins and Chief Lucas discussed the analysis process followed - qualitative, feature, and cost-benefit - before decisions to purchase or trade-in vehicles.

Chairman Grant inquired about the government access channel and whether streaming videos had been considered. Chief Lucas noted this had been considered, however, a subsequent agreement with WHHI had been reached with the Town to run more discussions on issues and concerns pertaining to the Town of Hilton Head Island, which might offer an alternative to a full government access channel. Mr. McCann asked that this be included in the final presentation and Chief Lucas agreed to update the Recommendation to reflect this.

PUBLIC SAFETY SYSTEMS:

Mr. Harkins questioned the requirement of the Computer Aided Dispatch software system to never be more than one whole version old. Chief Lucas explained the wording is the same as is in the existing Master Plan and has been the standard for keeping the computer-aided dispatch system up-to-date. He explained vendors do not make new versions unless it truly improves the system, and Ed Boring, Deputy Fire Chief, confirmed that on average there are probably 2 sub-versions which are essentially fixes to bugs before new versions come out every 2 to 3 years.

PLANNING:

Mr. Harkins complimented the Department for its use of AED's in as many Town vehicles as possible, which is providing a good public service. Chief Lucas acknowledged that the program is continuing to be enhanced.

Mr. Harkins and Chief Lucas discussed what was needed to achieve formal accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services. After discussion, Mr. Harkins suggested the Recommendation be re-worded to indicate that Fire & Rescue would work toward identifying what were the requirements and the cost benefit, and Chief Lucas agreed to do so.

Mr. Harkins inquired about the Recommendation concerning the emergency gate access program and the level of cooperation experienced with the PUDs. He encouraged Chief Lucas to keep working on this to educate and underscore the importance of the access gates, since the success of their efforts could help save lives. Chief Lucas indicated they would continue to do so. He reviewed the background of the list, and how several gates have been abandoned after a “cost versus gain” evaluation, with the monies released back into the CIP Program. He also noted several gates listed as proposed that would be beneficial, and several recommended for removal.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Chief Lucas noted that no cost issues were involved in these Recommendations.

FLEET MAINTENANCE:

Mr. Harkins inquired about personnel reduction in maintenance and whether this has compromised the ability for fleet maintenance. Chief Lucas indicated Deputy Chief Boring’s extensive experience and expertise in overseeing the maintenance, which is a large part of his duties, has enabled the Department to streamline maintenance and it is working well.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (continued):

Chief Lucas explained that a change in the Municipal Code may be required to establish a chain of command that extends beyond the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem in emergency situations.

Mr. Harkins and Chief Lucas discussed the Emergency Management Accreditation Program and agreed that it should be worded similarly to the ambulance accreditation recommendation.

Chief Lucas noted that there are only 6 municipalities in the State of South Carolina who has a person who is tasked with emergency management responsibilities, and the current State recognition of only those Emergency Managers at the county level. He explained that this change would need to take place at the State level, which would involve the Intergovernmental Relations Committee.

Chairman Grant thanked Chief Lucas and asked for public comments. There were none.

New Business

None

Adjournment

At 11:25 a.m. Mr. Grant moved to adjourn the meeting and Mr. McCann seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Respectfully submitted:

Lynn W. Buchman
Administrative Assistant

Approved by:

Marc A. Grant, Chairman