



Town of Hilton Head Island
**COMMUNITY SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY
COMMITTEE MEETING**
Monday, February 10, 2025, 10:00 AM
Minutes

Call to Order

Chair Becker called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Committee Members Present: Tamara Becker, Chair; Steve Alfred, Steve DeSimone

Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Alfred made a motion to add an additional opportunity for public comment after the approval of the minutes. Mr. DeSimone seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Mr. Alfred made a motion to adopt the agenda. Mr. DeSimone seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Approval of the Minutes

Regular Meeting Minutes of September 16, 2024

Mr. Alfred moved to approve. Mrs. Becker seconded. Motion carried 2-1.

Public Comment

There was no public comment at this time.

New Business

General Discussion for Community Services and Public Safety Committee Agenda Priorities

Mrs. Becker indicated that today's meeting would be an open discussion between the Committee Members and the public, encouraging participation and input. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Community Services & Public Safety agenda priorities for the year.

Mr. Alfred addressed the Committee and the public regarding his thoughts on Municipal Police Services. He shared his prior experience, noting that in many places, municipal police services are standard, with each municipality having its own department. However, he explained that this is not the case in the Southeast, where municipal powers were originally granted to counties. Over time, some municipalities have assumed responsibility for certain services, but not all. His concern that the level of police services currently provided to the Town of Hilton Head Island does not fully align with Town Council's expectations. He also noted that many of the gated communities on the island oversee their own security. While

these security forces have the authority to arrest and detain individuals, they do not have the ability to transport them to the County facility. In these cases, the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office is contacted for transport, but in some instances, deputies have not responded in a timely manner. As a result, security personnel must decide whether to release the individual or continue waiting for law enforcement transport. Lastly, Mr. Alfred recommended that the Town conduct an assessment of its current law enforcement services, identify gaps, evaluate the potential costs of additional services, and determine how to move forward in addressing these needs.

Other Committee members noted that previous Town Councils have faced similar challenges; however, with the Town's growth, these issues have also expanded. Mr. DeSimone suggested that Town Manager Marc Orlando's input on the matter would be valuable in achieving the Committee's goals. Mrs. Becker emphasized the importance of identifying specific public safety concerns, their frequency, and their locations. She advised that when community members bring issues to her, she encourages them to file an official report with the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office. This practice ensures incidents are documented for data tracking purposes, allowing for more accurate reports on the types of incidents occurring on Hilton Head Island. Lastly, the Town could consider assuming responsibility for specific services gradually, rather than incurring a large expenditure all at once.

Mrs. Becker asked for public Comment.

Chester Williams: Mr. Williams clarified for the Committee regarding a previous statement that was made regarding that EMS services were not taken over from the County but instead by an independent volunteer squad and a local Public Service district that ran them at the time.

Ashleigh Phillips: Ms. Phillips addressed the Committee regarding her thoughts on receiving a crime report to show where crimes are happening and what kind of crime is happening. She made mention to the recent incident where acid was thrown on a woman, however, there has not been any real information regarding the case published.

Brenda Armstrong: Ms. Armstrong addressed the Committee regarding the traffic on Gum Tree Road and the safety of the children that live in that area walking across the streets to and from school. She indicated that there should be a police presence as currently there is not one.

Katie Henderson: Ms. Henderson addressed the Committee regarding the Town's Northpoint Housing development project should be considered when there are discussions regarding children and schools as Gum Tree Road is not safe.

Beth Petro: Ms. Petro addressed the Committee regarding the crime and safety issues that the Forest Beach Owners Association has been having, potentially hiring their own security, and working with the Town to make Forest Beach a safer place.

Paul Sheer: Mr. Sheer addressed the Committee regarding his thoughts that elected

representatives do not feel it is important to enforce the law or they take the law into their own hands. Lastly, he believes that if Town Council adopted a “zero tolerance policy”, crime would be cleaned up rather quickly as there would be consequences for crimes.

Bob Bromage, Public Safety Director, addressed the Committee to provide a clear picture of the previous comments of crime on Hilton Head. Mr. Bromage stated that property crime statistics are down, violent crime remains about the same and all calls for services are logged. He also encouraged all residents to sign up for the Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office communications platform, Everbridge. This is used to provide users with information about a variety of things for anyone that has signed up.

Mr. Alfred asked that Mr. Bromage provide periodic reports to the Committee regarding various elements of criminal activity that take place on Hilton Head. This would be in addition to Major Jeff Purdy’s quarterly report on crime statistics that are also presented to the Committee.

Other comments made by Mr. DeSimone were that the Town could benefit from a small Public Works Department. This would be essential and key to no longer bidding out small projects that have a multistep procurement process to go through. He provided an example of a roadway having a pothole that needs repair. He believed that if the town had its own Public Works Department, that issue could be fixed in several hours. Mrs. Becker reminded Mr. DeSimone that most roads the Town do not own and the repairs have to be done by its owner or the entity that owns it and go through their process.

Brenda Armstrong: Ms. Armstrong addressed the Committee regarding the lack of clean up after the snowstorm on the roads that the Island experienced a few weeks prior.

Marc Orlando, Town Manager, spoke with the Committee about their discussion during the meeting. He confirmed that all the points that they previously made were important. Mr. Orlando also addressed the conditions of our roads after the snowstorm. He stated that the roads are not ours to plow, nor did the Town have authority to do so, however, he did have discussion with Beaufort County and South Carolina Department of transportation to have them cleared as soon as possible. The Town took care of what they owned as much as needed. He closed by saying that he looked forward to continuing these discussions of the various topics mentioned at today’s meeting at the upcoming Strategic Planning Workshop.

Chair Becker invited Council Member Melinda Tunner to the podium to make a comment: Ms. Tunner address the Committee that she originally was unaware of what the Community Services & Public Safety Committee is in charge of as a Town Standing Committee, and she appreciated having that information. She also spoke to the Committee regarding beach parking for the Coligny area and when that process will be in place.

Mr. Orlando concluded the meeting with the Committee and stated that he had been taking notes of the discussion and would work with Chair Becker to have some of the mentioned items for further discussion at the upcoming strategic plan workshop or future committee agendas; Police Department assessment, Public Works Team, Municipal court path forward, right of way accusation, pedestrian safety at Gum Tree Road, Forest Beach Property Owners

Association follow up, beach parking status, bike safety reports, and housing data follow up.

Paul Sheer: Mr. Sheer addressed the Committee regarding the adoption of the Integrated Pest Management Policy. He stated that there currently is no product that has been invented to offer a nontoxic solution that will kill weeds and vermin.

Public Comment - Non Agenda Items

There was no public comment at this time.

Adjournment

Chair Becker adjourned the meeting at 11:17 a.m.

Approved: March 17, 2025

The recording of this Meeting can be found on the Town's website at www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov