

MINUTES

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

5:00 P. M., JULY 15, 2024

AV ROOM, CITY HALL

Shawn Taylor, Chair, called the meeting of the Charleston City Council Committee on Public Safety to order at 5:00 p.m., July 15, 2024.

Present:

Shawn Taylor, Chair
Chuck Overstreet, Vice Chair
Caitlin Cook
Mary Beth Hoover
Beth Kerns
Bruce King (arrived after approval of previous minutes)

Absent:

Kathy Rubio

Other Councilmembers Present:

Frank Annie
Emmett Pepper
Chelsea Steelhammer

1. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES –
Councilmember Hoover moved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on 3-4-2024. Councilmember Kerns seconded the motion. There was no objection, and the minutes were approved.

2. To hear from public speakers on public safety related topics.

None

3. TO HEAR FROM PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED DEPARTMENTS -

- Charleston Police Department
- Charleston Fire Department
- CARE Office
- Parking Department

Police Chief Dempsey stated that the force is currently at 159 officers, with three new officers being sworn in that morning. They are currently short of 14 positions. The next test date will be August 10th. The department has ramped up their recruiting efforts by setting up tents at special events (Regatta, Live on the Levee, other cities, etc.). The Chief added that their best recruiting effort is word of mouth. Chief Dempsey added that the Regatta was very safe. There were 6 lost children, 5 small disturbances that were resolved peacefully, 1 battery report, some parking complaints and some elderly assistance calls. One arrest was made. His recommendation is that they purchase a larger golf cart for the event. The recently purchased shooting simulator has been received and will soon be installed.

Fire Chief Matthews stated that for 2023 the Department ran 17,233 calls and 15,667 ambulance calls. This is approximately a 3% increase from the previous year. The Fire Prevention Investigators conducted 108 fire investigations, ruling 52 as accidental, 29 as arson and 27 as undetermined. The Return of Spontaneous Circulation rate for the CPD is 28.02% with the national average being 9.1-15.9%. This has to do with the number of staff and the availability of equipment. During the Regatta, the Department had 58 calls, which were mostly heat related. The boat crew was able to assist a stranded sternwheel. Councilmember Taylor added that he witnessed their quick response time during the Regatta.

Parking Director Terri Allen added that accessible parking is a safety issue that she has discussed with the Mayor. A nationwide problem is abuse of accessible parking, and has become a priority of the Department. Allen has requested a national PSA that all cities could use. Director Allen added that another safety concern was parking in traffic with hazard lights. There have been concerns raised about the Cinema being empty, and Allen stated that the area is well staffed and watched. There have not been any issues so far. The cinema manager has been hired by the City as a part-time consultant/employee to help with the management of the property and equipment. Mayor Goodwin added that the manager was extremely knowledgeable about the facility.

Councilmember Hoover motioned to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Kerns seconded. Meeting adjourned.