

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

Municipal Center Council Chambers

January 16, 2025; 11:00 AM

Minutes

I. **Call to Order:** *Chairman Berner called the meeting to order at 11:00 am.*

II. **Roll Call:**

Present: Russell Berner, Chairman
Yvonne Johnstone
Nancy Robison
Steve Rolando
Al Sines
Bill Thomae

Also Present: Craig Harris, *Public Safety Director*
Lt. Turner, *Charleston County Sheriff's Office*
Fire Chief Kunitzer, *St. Johns Fire District*
Chief Abrams, *Charleston County EMS*

III. **Approval of Minutes:**

- A. Public Safety Committee Meeting Minutes of September 19, 2024
- B. Public Safety Committee Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2024

Mr. Thomae made a motion to approve the September 19, 2024, and November 14, 2024, Public Safety Committee Minutes. Ms. Robison seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

IV. **Agency Updates (as required)**

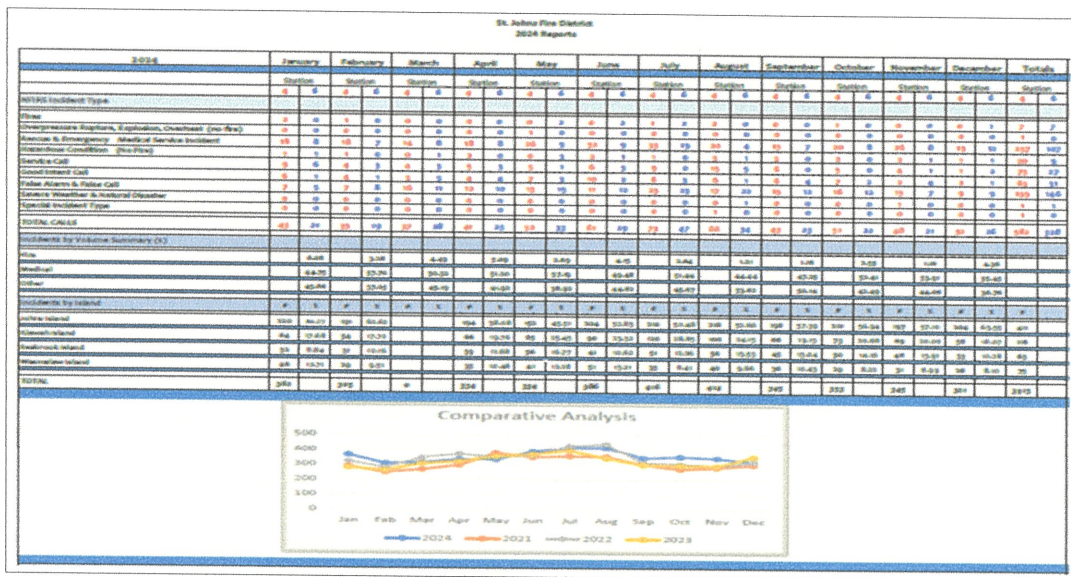
A. Charleston County Sheriff's Department

Town of Kiawah Monthly Report	December	Year to Date
Number of all Written Report (excluding accident reports)	9	169
Accident Reports – Vehicle Mishaps	5	98
Number of Calls Handle Not Requiring a Report	89	795
Number of Traffic Stops	34	373
TOTAL NUMBER OF CALLS HANDLED (dispatched/self-generated)	137	1435
Written Warnings Issued	25	314
Traffic Citations Issued	9	61
Total Warnings and Citations Issued	34	375
Alarms	36	365
Specific Patrols Requests	43	2061

Lt. Turner from the Sheriff's Department apologized for the short notice and provided a brief update on the restructuring and changes in leadership under Sheriff Ritchie. He stated that the Town's new point of contact would be Captain Scott E. Banks and was unsure what information should be provided from the CCSO.

Chairman Berner stated that what was requested was stats for Johns Island with particular emphasis on Kiawah, broken out into crime and vehicular incident stats, which Mr. Turner agreed to provide next time.

B. St. John's Fire District



Fire Chief Kunitzer indicated that he had distributed a copy of the STJFD annual report to each of the members. He stated that 2024 had been a year of significant progress, highlighting that with the commitment and selflessness of his personnel, there had been big strides with professional standards and response delivery, noting over 950 incidents for Kiawah Island and over 4000 incidents for Johns Island.

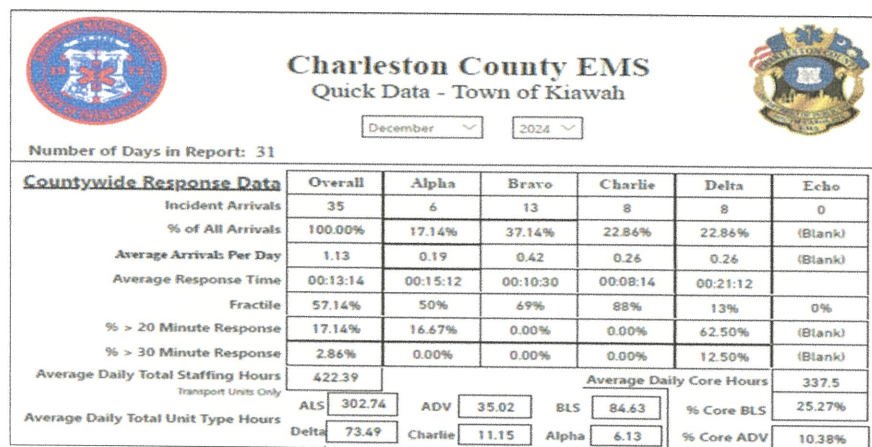
Fire Chief Kunitzer discusses the importance of preparing for wildfire risks, especially with the recent California wildfires in mind. He explained a wildland urban interface and emphasized the need for community education on fire prevention and the creation of fire breaks to prevent fire spread.

Chairman Berner requested a list of homeowner actions to prevent fire spread, which Chief Kunitzer agreed to provide.

Mr. Harris commended Chief Kunitzer and Chief Abrams for their assistance in improving the communications on the island, allowing the Town to obtain real-time information when critical incidents occur.

Mr. Harris also asked for elaboration on identifying reunification areas. Chief Kunitzer pointed to the Sanctuary because of the size of its parking lot but noted a need for more collaborative discussions to develop more of a plan for critical incidents.

C. Charleston County Emergency Medical Services



Chief Abrams reported a significant increase in demand over the past five years, going from .52 calls per day in 2019 to 1.13 calls per day in 2023.

Chief Abrams detailed the statistics for the 35 incidences in December 2024. Of the 35 responses, 28 were transports; of those responses, nine were under 10 minutes, 14 were between 10 and 20 minutes, and five were between 20 and 27 minutes, also reviewing the various call levels.

Chief Abrams explained that because of budget constraints, he was forced to make the decision to de-staff Medic 50 and 51, both of which were staffed with overtime personnel. There were plans to maintain coverage during the summer and special events. He noted that with future increases in the workforce and ambulances, he anticipated seeing those units being staffed with regularly scheduled, straight-time employees.

Chairman Berner questioned the response time discrepancies between different call levels, and Chief Abrams explained the geographical challenges and ongoing efforts to improve response times. Also noted was that the completion of the MUSC facility should greatly increase patient resources.

D. Beach Patrol

Enforcement	Subcategory	Verbal Warning	Written Warning	Citation	Violation Total
	Alcohol 15-208				0
	Alligator 15-501				0
	Beached Boat 16-803				0
	Beach Fee 15-105				0
	Build Permit				0
	Business License				0
	Critical Habitat 16-604	5			5
	Disorderly 15-204				0
	Drone 7-302				0
	Dune 16-304	18			18
	Fireworks 15-209				0
	Glass 16-818	2			2
	Harass Animal 16-810				0
	Leash 7-201	1			1
	Lights 16-107				0
	Littering 15-212				0
	Narcotics 15-213				0
	Noise 15-306				0
	Nudity 16-806				0
	Other	1			1
	Parking 13-103		4		4
	Personal Article Storage 8-119				0
	Plastic 14-402				0
	Shovel 16-409				0
	Storage 16-805				0
	STR Bikes Beach Gear 14-506f				0
	STR Parking 14-506d				0
	STR Parking 14-506d(1)				0
	STR Parking 14-506d(5)				0
	STR Trash 14-506e(1)				0
	Swim Wade 15-314				0
	Trespass 15-119				0
	Vehicle 16-302b				0
	Total	27	4	0	31

Enforcement	Subcategory	Verbal Warning	Written Warning	Citation	Violation Total
	Alcohol 15-208				0
	Alligator 15-501				0
	Beached Boat 16-803				0
	Beach Fee 15-105				0
	Build Permit				0
	Business License				0
	Critical Habitat 16-604				0
	Disorderly 15-204				0
	Drone 7-302				0
	Dune 16-304				0
	Fireworks 15-209				0
	Glass 16-818				0
	Harass Animal 16-810				0
	Leash 7-201				0
	Lights 16-107				0
	Littering 15-212		9		9
	Narcotics 15-213				0
	Noise 15-306				0
	Nudity 16-806				0
	Other	3	12		15
	Parking 13-103				0
	Personal Article Storage 8-119		11		11
	Plastic 14-402				0
	Shovel 16-409				0
	Storage 16-805				0
	STR Bikes Beach Gear 14-506f		17		17
	STR Parking 14-506d		2		2
	STR Parking 14-506d(1)		4		4
	STR Parking 14-506d(5)				0
	STR Trash 14-506e(1)		2		2
	Swim Wade 15-314				0
	Trespass 15-119				0
	Vehicle 16-302b				0
	Total	3	57	0	60

E. Kiawah Island Community Association

KICA Security Report Monthly Statistics: December 2024			
	2022	2023	2024
Deer Related Accidents (no personal injury)	3	0	0
False Residential Alarms	0	1	2
Vehicles passed through the Main Gate	154,813	147,610	147,524
Vehicles passed through the Vanderhorst Gate	92,613	82,002	73,423

Speaker 9 from KICA Security thanked the Town, CCSO, EMS, and STJFD for their collaborative efforts during the transition, noting Jody Forest as the new Operations Director as well as the ongoing search for a new Security Director.

Speaker 9 provided an update on gate operations, indicating that both gate and security operations were fully staffed, along with the recent addition of a patrol officer from 11 PM to 7 AM. He also discussed the implementation of new safety measures, including red light indicators to slow traffic to allow checks for expired decals and blue reflectors for fire hydrants.

Mr. Rolando suggested communicating the red light indicators to the residents and requested information on the status of the reader at the V gate. Speaker 9 explained the ongoing technical issues and efforts to resolve them, also mentioning the upcoming enclosure project for the AV gate to protect guards from weather exposure.

V. Old Business:

A. Comments on the Comprehensive Public Safety Feasibility Study Draft Report

Chairman Berner expresses disappointment with the rejected police feasibility study report. Both he and the Mayor felt the report did not have proper or detailed analysis to identify where the holes are in coverage or safety or security on the island. Despite the missing analytical component, the report said that the island was safe but suggested creating a new police department with a \$1.8 million annual budget.

Chairman Berner stated the incomplete analysis was blamed on the failure to get adequate data from the Sheriff's Department, so the consultant was asked to go back and complete a more detailed analytical investigation to identify coverage and safety gaps.

Committee Members discussed whether, under the new CCSO leadership, there was a possibility of renewing the permanent deputy contract and the timeline of the revised report.

B. Dumpster Covering Updates

Chairman Berner raises concerns about the dumpster covering ordinance, noting issues with trash blowing around and vermin in Blue Heron Pond Road. He stated that because of the feedback received from developers, revisions were made to the ordinance, which provided leeway in requiring the dumpsters to be covered every night. He explained that since the revision, there have been a number of complaints of trash blowing around and vermin incidents happening on Blue Heron Pond Road.

Committee Members discussed the complaints, the additional issue of items being placed on top of the coverings, potential littering issues, and potential solutions, including revisiting the ordinance or requiring daily covering of dumpsters

VI. New Business:

A. Is There a Safety Concern for Residents Regarding the Increased Number of Coyotes

Chairman Berner stated that the Town has released a draft plan on how to deal with coyotes and asked for feedback on what other towns have done to address the coyote problem the Town is encountering. He indicated that Kiawah homeowners are citing that they are afraid to go outside at night because they have observed, according to them, coyotes stalking the pets.

Mr. Jordan provided an overview of the historical data on coyote sightings and behavior. H indicated that coyotes first came to Kiawah in 2012. Numbers went up as they were colonizing the island, and by 2014, numbers had stabilized. Between 2015 and 2023, there were no coyote sightings and no issues with coyotes of any sort. In 2023, coyotes again moved into Kiawah and started recolonizing the island.

Mr. Jordan shared recent daytime sightings of a single coyote at the Ocean Course and the recent increase in the number of sightings in Ocean Park, but no reports of any aggressive, threatening behavior or any direct interaction between a coyote and a person or a pet.

Mr. Jordan stated that in light of the reports received, he and his department were directed by the Mayor to prepare a draft Coyote Management Plan. He explained the plan to monitor and manage coyotes through hazing and potential lethal removal if necessary, as well as the ongoing efforts to assess coyote behavior and its impact on the community.

Further discussion included turtle nest predation by coyotes, the probability of two pairs of coyotes establishing territories on each end of the island, and updates on the locations of the two transient coyotes collared last year.

B. Marathon Feedback – Any Issues

Russ Berner provided his feedback on the recent marathon, indicating that his only comment was that there was a point in time when traffic was allowed to flow again on Governors Drive. The slower runners had to deal with traffic going past them. He also noted the successful coordination and organization by the CERT group.

Ms. Johnstone thanked Mr. Harris for approving the lane reversal, which helped improve traffic flow during the marathon.

C. CERT Training

Chairman Berner announced the upcoming training sessions for both Kiawah and Seabrook CERT Teams in early March. The training sessions will be on a Friday and Saturday, with plans for both in-house and outdoor practical exercises.

Chairman Berner mentioned new CERT team members with a trained dog to assist in finding individuals in distress during emergencies.

VII. Chairman’s Updates

None

VIII. Committee Members’ Comments:

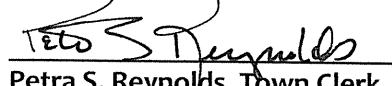
None

IX. Citizens' Comments:
None

X. Adjournment:

Mr. Rolando made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:10 pm. The motion was seconded, and it was unanimously approved.

Submitted by,


Petra S. Reynolds, Town Clerk

3/17/2025
Date