

# PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

Municipal Center Council Chambers

September 18, 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  
Steve Rolando  
Al Sines  
Bill Thomae

**Absent:** Adam Shubsda  
Jim Harrington

**Also Present:** Craig Harris, *Public Safety Director*  
Captain Strickland, *Charleston County Sheriff's Office*  
Fire Chief Kunitzer, *St. Johns Fire District*  
Chief Way, *Charleston County EMS*  
Deputy Chief Winn, *Charleston County EMS*  
Rob Edgerton, *Beach Patrol*  
Jody Forrest, *Kiawah Island Community Association*  
Daryl Smalls, *Kiawah Island Community Association*  
Libby Lynskey, *American Red Cross, Community Disaster Program Manager*

III. **Approval of Minutes:**

- A. Public Safety Committee Meeting Minutes of March 13, 2025
- B. Public Safety Committee Meeting Minutes of May 15, 2025

Chairman Berner asked if there were any comments or corrections on the minutes from the March 13<sup>th</sup> and May 15<sup>th</sup> meetings. Hearing none, both sets of minutes were approved.

Before the Red Cross presentation began, Mr. Harris asked to introduce Christopher Way, the new Charleston County EMS Chief. Chief Way, in his fourth week on the job, introduced himself to the committee. He previously served as Fire Chief in Kootenai County, Idaho, and had been involved with the South Carolina EMS Association for nine years through speaking engagements and strategic planning. He expressed his enthusiasm for working with the Kiawah Island community on public safety initiatives. Chairman Berner welcomed him and noted his own connection to Idaho, having previously lived in Boise with daughters who currently reside there.

IV. **Presentation:**

A. American Red Cross - Libby Lynskey, Community Disaster Program Manager

Libby Lynskey then presented on behalf of the American Red Cross. She serves as the Disaster Program Manager for the Lowcountry chapter, covering nine coastal counties, including Charleston County. She emphasized that the Red Cross is over 90% volunteer-based, with only two paid disaster services staff supporting 236 volunteers in the Lowcountry chapter. The organization relies entirely on private donations, receiving no public funding except for one small grant related to armed forces services.

Ms. Lynskey detailed the Red Cross's disaster response activities in Charleston County. In the last fiscal year (July to June), they responded to 79 events, primarily house fires, serving 300 individuals

across 137 cases. Through their Home Fire Campaign in partnership with local fire departments, they installed over 3,000 smoke alarms in Lowcountry homes, with over 500 in Charleston County. This program has documented 146 lives saved in South Carolina since 2014, including 72 in the Lowcountry.

Ms. Lyskey explained that house fires represent their largest response category, even more than hurricanes. The Red Cross can scale up operations for major disasters by bringing in volunteers from across the country. Two major disasters affecting South Carolina in the past year were Hurricanes Debby and Helene, each costing over \$250,000 in response efforts.

When asked about activation procedures, Ms. Lyskey explained that the Red Cross prefers to be contacted by fire departments through a dedicated 800 number that connects directly to their dispatch team. They commit to calling back within 15 minutes to coordinate assistance. The organization provides financial assistance and resources to residents affected by disasters, though it cannot assist short-term vacation rental occupants.

Ms. Lyskey emphasized the importance of pre-disaster relationships and coordination with local emergency management. She encouraged everyone to download the free Red Cross Emergency App, which provides real-time information about shelters, distribution sites, and other resources during disasters. The app also includes preparedness planning tools and can send location-based alerts even when users are traveling.

## **V. Agency Updates (as required)**

### **A. Charleston County Sheriff's Department**

Captain Strickland provided the Charleston County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) update. He explained that, since the transition to an off-duty program for Kiawah Island, statistics are now collected differently, with the data provided directly to Director Harris. He confirmed that no directed traffic enforcement activities had occurred on Betsy Kerrison or the island recently, as the department was focused on a countywide "move over" law enforcement initiative following three incidents where law enforcement vehicles were struck.

Captain Strickland extensively discussed FLOCK camera technology, which the Sheriff's Office is implementing as part of a real-time crime center. He shared a video example of how FLOCK cameras detected a stolen vehicle involved in a home invasion before the Sheriff's Office was even notified. He emphasized that FLOCK does not use facial recognition and only captures license plate numbers, vehicle descriptions, and identifying features. The county currently has 25 cameras, and he suggested that even one or two cameras on Betsy Kerrison could be beneficial for law enforcement.

The Captain highlighted that scams are a significant trending crime issue. He described incidents in which scammers impersonate Sheriff's Office personnel, claim victims missed jury duty, and demand payment in gift cards or via Bitcoin ATMs. One victim lost \$19,000 to such a scam. He stressed that the Sheriff's Office would never call demanding payment to avoid arrest.

Regarding the Marsh Hen hunting incident that had concerned residents, Captain Strickland confirmed that, while the Sheriff's Office and Marine Patrol responded to reports of gunfire, the hunters were legally permitted to hunt. The hunting occurred in marshy waterways not owned by Kiawah, and the hunters had proper Marsh Hen hunting permits. When asked about distance requirements for firing weapons near populated areas, he indicated this would be a DNR question rather than a Sheriff's Office matter.

Chairman Berner thanked CCSO for improved traffic enforcement on the island, noting that traffic speeds had decreased. When Chairman Berner asked about a home burglary behind the second gate, where a family appeared to have lived in the vacant home for an extended period, Captain Strickland indicated this was his first time hearing about it. He suggested the perpetrators likely had inside knowledge of the homeowner's absence, possibly through community connections, cleaning crews, or property management.

Committee Member Sines raised significant privacy concerns about FLOCK technology, citing instances of law enforcement misusing the system to track ex-spouses and ex-girlfriends. He questioned how Charleston County would protect the data and ensure only authorized law enforcement access. Captain Strickland acknowledged he couldn't guarantee such misuse would never occur among the department's 300 officers, but emphasized that FLOCK uses two-factor authentication. He suggested that specific data privacy questions should be directed to FLOCK, which controls the cloud-based system, rather than to Charleston County.

**B. St. John's Fire District**

Basic Incident Zone Number (FD1.32)	District 4					District 6					Percent of Count of Fire Incidents Grand Total
	BC702	E704	E706	L702	SQ701	BC702	E704	E706	L702	SQ701	
Apparatus Resource ID (FD18.1)											
Basic Incident Type Category (FD1.21)											
1 - Fire	2	1	2	2	2			1			6.15%
2 - Overpressure Rupture, Explosion, Overheat (No Fire)						1	1	1	1	1	2.59%
3 - Rescue & Emergency Medical Service Incident		20		6	16	2	12	1	7		32.99%
4 - Hazardous Condition (No Fire)	2	1	1	2		2	1	2	2		6.70%
5 - Service Call		5		1							3.09%
6 - Good Intent Call	1	4	1	2	3		1		1		6.70%
7 - False Alarm & False Call	4	14	2	13		4	4	19	20		41.24%
8 - Severe Weather & Natural Disaster		1		1	1						1.55%
<b>Grand Total:</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100%</b>

Chief Ryan Kunitzer reported a successful summer with small fires mitigated quickly and no major incidents on Kiawah Island. He announced that he and Chief Way needed to leave early for a 1:00 PM meeting in North Charleston, citing significant traffic on Johns Island.

Chief Kunitzer provided updates on two major infrastructure projects. The Kiawah River Neighborhood Fire Station has progressed to the design phase, with construction expected to begin next year. This station will be crucial for supporting structure fire responses on Kiawah Island. Additionally, Fire Station 5 on River Road will be demolished and replaced with a new station and world-class training facility to support the entire district.

Chief Kunitzer emphasized the District's increased focus on emergency management in the new fiscal year. The Swiftwater team has been conducting new training programs. He presented long-term plans to the Board of Commissioners for an emergency operations center for the Sea Islands communities, recognizing the vulnerability posed by the islands' reliance on only two bridges.

Chief Kunitzer reported that the District is planning helicopter landing zone training with advanced airway scenarios at Night Heron Park in mid-October, coordinating with the Resort and involving multiple agencies. Chief Kunitzer also expressed interest in conducting CERT training and mock scenarios in the fall, requesting coordination with Chairman Berner on the date of the October CERT meeting.

**C. Charleston County Emergency Medical Services**

Countywide Response Data		Overall	Bravo thru Echo	Alpha	Bravo	Charlie	Delta	Echo
Incident Arrivals	33	24	9	8	7	8	1	
% of All Responses	100.00%	72.73%	27.27%	24.24%	21.21%	24.24%	3.03%	
Average Arrivals Per Day	1.06	0.77	0.29	0.26	0.23	0.26	0.03	
Average Response Time	00:19:05	00:13:17	00:19:51	00:13:20	00:12:52	00:14:03	00:09:37	
Fractile	48.48%	50.00%	44%	50%	71%	25%	100%	
% > 20 Minute Response	15.15%	8.33%	33.33%	12.50%	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%	
% > 30 Minute Response	6.06%	0.00%	22.22%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	
Average Daily Total Staffing Hours	463.52	Average Daily Core Hours 390.0						
Average Daily Total Unit Type Hours	ALS 287.03	ADV 49.21	BLS 127.28	% Core BLS 32.57%				
	Delta 80.22	Charlie 16.12	Alpha 3.63	% Core ADV 12.39%				

Chief Winn reported for Charleston County EMS and agreed with Chief Kunitzer about the successful summer. Of approximately 70 calls in the past two months from the Kiawah area, roughly 50 resulted in transports. Only one was a priority two transport, with the remainder being lower priority calls.

Chief Winn praised the Red Cross's involvement in planning for all large events in Charleston County, including the Cooper River Bridge Run. She announced that Charleston County EMS is approaching 300 personnel and has restarted paramedic training to increase advanced life support capabilities, with completion expected next year.

The department recently completed a shift rotation, so crews are still adjusting to new partners and areas. Clinical operating guidelines were updated in early September, with input from both St. Johns and Barrier Island EMS partners.

Chief Winn requested a CERT contact for an upcoming Tri-County Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) plan exercise scheduled for March at the fairgrounds. The full-scale exercise will involve Charleston, Dorchester, and Berkeley counties and will need volunteers to play the roles of patients, observers, and evaluators. Chairman Berner committed to sharing this opportunity at the October CERT meeting.

**D. Beach Patrol**

Rob Edgerton reported that Beach Patrol successfully completed another summer season. He will be attending the United States Lifesaving Association national conference in Idaho. Recruitment for the 2026 season has already begun, with two interviews completed, and it is starting early due to extensive training requirements.

Mr. Edgerton highlighted a notable cardiac arrest on the beach that, while unrelated to water activities, required a significant medical response and created a spectacle for several hours. He has been working with Craig Harris, the Sheriff's Office, and the Fire Department to develop a new protocol for missing persons to improve communication efficiency.

An issue was identified with someone at The Cape incorrectly directing emergency beach calls to Beach Patrol instead of 911. Mr. Edgerton was working with dispatch to resolve this issue. He reported increased written warnings and citations for off-leash dog violations over the past two months, resulting in improved compliance. Most violations stem from a lack of compliance rather than a lack of awareness. The seasonal off-leash period begins October 16, though dogs must remain under voice command.

Mr. Edgerton apologized for not submitting statistics in time for the meeting packet but offered to provide them separately.

**E. Kiawah Island Community Association**

**KICA Security Report**  
Monthly Statistics: August 2025

	2023	2024	2025
Deer Related Accidents (no personal injury)	0	1	0
False Residential Alarms	2	5	0
Vehicles passed through the Main Gate	206,389	201,039	206,489
Vehicles passed through the Vanderhorst Gate	115,371	102,028	111,427

Mr. Smalls reported that KICA reinstated speed enforcement in June. Internal speed enforcement in August showed 96% driver compliance in surveyed areas of Ocean Marsh and Ocean Oaks. Speed display trailers proved effective as deterrents, causing approximately 20% of speeders to slow down. Of 22,000 vehicles monitored, only 15 were captured exceeding the speed limit by 10 mph or more.

External speed enforcement conducted by the Charleston County Sheriff's Office occurred on 6 days, resulting in 11 citations, 24 warnings for speeding and stop-sign violations, and five calls for service. KICA patrol responded to 181 cases in August, including 87 verbal contacts, 37 written warnings, and 87 penalty citations.

KICA continues searching for a Director of Security and is currently working with interim director Jody Forrest. The new gate access policy is with the Board of Directors and is awaiting implementation. Smalls expressed gratitude to all public safety agencies for their collaboration and assistance.

**VI. Old Business:**

**A. Update on the Comprehensive Public Safety Feasibility Study**

Director Harris first took the opportunity to thank all the public safety agencies for their collaboration during a busy summer, particularly highlighting an incident where interagency cooperation saved a young man who was 450 yards out in the water. He noted that public safety professionals don't seek recognition but do their jobs.

Regarding the feasibility study, Director Harris reported that it is nearly complete. Ms. Tillerson has submitted all materials, and a representative will present the final project at the next Public Safety Committee meeting. Director Harris is committed to sending copies to committee members in advance for review.

**VII. New Business:**

**A. Three to Five Year Public Safety Strategic Plan**

Director Harris outlined the framework for a new 3-5-year strategic plan for public safety, centered on technology, communication, and the identification and remediation of discovered vulnerabilities. He emphasized that protecting Kiawah Island's vulnerabilities extends beyond just the gated areas to encompass the entire island.

Director Harris reported attending a FirstNet seminar that demonstrated how to accomplish more with less technology. He discovered capabilities that would allow emergency alerts to reach CERT members even with phones on silent mode. The focus is on upgrading internal communications since public safety personnel are "boots on the ground" and need immediate notification capabilities during incidents. He stressed that "vulnerability" will be a key focus in the future.

**VIII. Chairman's Updates**

Chairman Berner reported that his primary focus is on CERT preparedness as hurricane season reaches its peak. He plans to meet with Chief Kunitzer to ensure activation protocols are established. During the past week, he personally inspected the CERT trailer stationed at the firehouse to verify that all equipment is up-to-date and operational, which it was.

**IX. Committee Members' Comments:**

None

**X. Citizens' Comments:**

**Mayor Brad Belt - 151 Bobcat Lane**

Mayor Belt thanked the committee and first responders for their ongoing hard work and cooperation. He addressed the FLOCK camera discussion, acknowledging the tension between security and privacy. While recognizing FLOCK as a useful law enforcement tool, he expressed personal skepticism about whether Kiawah Island's security concerns justify the privacy and data collection risks.

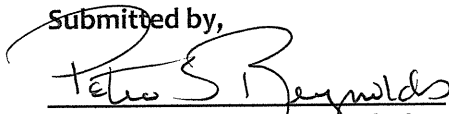
Mayor Belt stated he had reviewed FLOCK's standard contract. He assured the committee that if

the Town considered implementing FLOCK cameras, the contract would require substantial revision regarding data collection, retention, access controls, and usage parameters. He cited a specific concern about states that have criminalized obtaining out-of-state abortions, noting that FLOCK technology could enable tracking residents who travel to states where abortion is legal. As a father of two daughters of childbearing age, he found this particularly concerning.

Mayor Belt acknowledged that some issues could be addressed through contract amendments. Still, he urged the committee to carefully weigh law enforcement's legitimate interests against countervailing privacy concerns specific to the Kiawah community.

**XI. Adjournment:**

***Chairman Berner adjourned the meeting at 12:33 pm.***

Submitted by,  
  
Petra S. Reynolds, Town Clerk

11-18-2024  
Date