

NEWBERRY COUNTY COUNCIL
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES

OCTOBER 24, 2022

The Newberry County Council Public Safety Committee met on Monday, October 24, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chamber at the Courthouse Annex, 1309 College Street, Newberry, SC, for a regular scheduled meeting.

Notice of the meeting was duly advertised, as required by law.

PRESENT: Todd Johnson, Committee Chairman
Mary Arrowood, Committee Member
Christopher Inglese, County Administrator
Tommy Long, Public Safety Director
Lee Foster, Newberry County Sheriff
Major Robert Dennis
Captain Ben Chapman
Jackie Lawrence, Clerk to Council

ABSENT: Johnny Mack Scurry, Committee Member

Mr. Johnson called the meeting to order and determined a quorum to be present.

Additions, Deletions & Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Johnson asked if there were any changes to the agenda. No changes being offered Mrs. Arrowood moved to adopt the agenda, seconded by Mr. Johnson. Mr. Johnson called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

An Ordinance establishing and implementing a program to charge mitigation rates for the deployment of emergency and non-emergency services by the fire or rescue department for services provided/rendered for the Newberry County Emergency Services.

Mr. Long explained that from the previous Public Safety meeting that he has made some adjustments to the proposed ordinance and that he would like approval to send it to full council.

Mr. Johnson moved to send the Ordinance to full Council, seconded by Mrs. Arrowood. Mr. Johnson called for the vote. Vote was unanimous.

Discussion of county policy on guns in public buildings, particularly fire/rescue buildings

Sheriff Foster discussed several SC Code of Laws. Many are not specific as to who would be allowed or exempt. One also states that he as the Sheriff is allowed to say who can and cannot carry a firearm in a Fire Station or Rescue Squad. He would like to amend the current county ordinance so that it follows the code of laws. Also, there needs to be some direction as to who can carry and where and that should not come from the Sheriff.

Tommy Long is concerned as there is no direction as to what volunteers are supposed to do with their weapon when they are out and need to respond to a call. Should there be a lockbox on the apparatus that is being used to secure the weapon.

Committee believes that the current ordinance came about due to a mistake made by one person that resulted in a knee jerk reaction. Additionally, to allow volunteers to carry to a call but not on a call is a must. There should be a designee that can strip a volunteer that violates the ordinance from being allowed to carry.

Sheriff Foster suggested that legal be asked to review the codes of law for clarification of all matters pertaining to the right to carry when and where so that the county complies.

Committee agrees that there needs to be some way to secure the weapons that volunteers are carrying to calls to keep everyone safe.

Discussion of impacts of House Bill and now law H3050

This new law impacts all law enforcement in South Carolina. It is the Law Enforcement Accountability Act. It requires nine different policies that each department must maintain and follow. Once every three years an auditor from the State will come in to be sure the policies are in place and being followed. Currently Newberry County Sheriff's Office is reviewing all policies to make sure they are up to date. The guidelines are very strict and require the time of one person full-time. The number of hours that this will take cannot be covered by a current deputy. Sheriff Foster is requesting an additional position for this work. The new rules and regulations for this Act goes into effect January 1, 2023. The Sheriff's Department is also trying to find out if it is economically feasible for the department to be accredited.

Discussion of amending the Noise Ordinance

Sheriff Foster is requesting the current Noise Ordinance be reviewed. The language is very vague. With the current amount of growth in Newberry County the incoming complaints have risen exponentially. In 2020 there were 119 noise complaints. In 2021 the were 127 noise complaints. As of this date, there have been 150 noise complaints. Some of the complaints are loud music and construction equipment. The Sheriff is asking that the Interim County Attorney look at the current Ordinance to see if there is a better way to make it less subjective.

Discussion of the increase in vehicle prices and the negative impact on the budget

Captain Ben Chapman spoke regarding the increase in the price of vehicles. The availability of the vehicles is also an issue. In 2018 the Sheriff's Department was able to purchase 8 cars with the budgeted amount. The allowable budget has not increased since then and this year only 5 will be able to be purchased. The rise in the cost for example, in 2018 the cost was just under \$25,000. This year's cost is \$36,000. After the vehicle is equipped, the cost is around \$40,000. Next year's cost will be up another \$10,000.

Committee noted that making a change to the budget will be discussed with full council.

Discussion of mowing at the Fire and Rescue Stations

Tommy Long, Director of Public Safety presented a potential cost of hiring a vendor to cut the grass at all Fire and Rescue Stations.

Committee stated they would take it under advisement.

Discussion of utility bills at Fire and Rescue Stations

Tommy Long stated that this matter was addressed at a previous meeting. The charts given included the costs of utilities for each station. It is staff's suggestion that the payment of utilities be done by the administrative staff. It was stated that all Chief's agree with turning the bills over.

Debbie Crona, Finance Director is continuing to work with the numbers to make sure she will have all of the correct information to present to council.

Public Comments

Major Robert Dennis spoke regarding the number of complaints the county receives due to people burning. He presented another county's ordinance as an example. Currently the Sheriff's department is not able to enforce any sort of repercussions for any violations since there is no ordinance.

Committee suggested moving forward with an ordinance to help the immediate burning complaints.

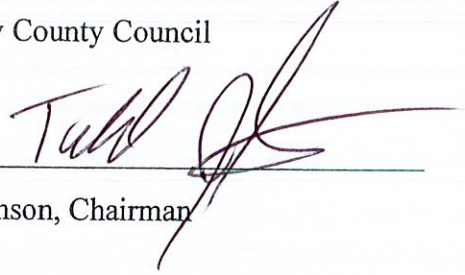
Comments/Requests from Committee

No comments.

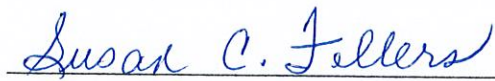
Adjournment

Mrs. Arrowood moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Johnson. Meeting adjourned at 7:28.

Newberry County Council



Todd Johnson, Chairman



~~Jackie Lawrence~~, Clerk to Council

Minutes approved: 11-16-2022