**Highlights from the Town Council Meeting on May 23, 2017**

Councilman John Gregg reported that the Public Safety Committee’s consultant has provided the approved updates to the Town’s Comprehensive Emergency Plan and the paperwork has been distributed to the appropriate parties. Mr. Gregg will meet with the consultant on May 24 to plan for the June 6-7 Disaster Recovery Council meeting and training exercise. Other items noted by Mr. Gregg included:

* The Town tested its procedure for generating Town emails to all Property Owners on May 16; the exercise went well, but it revealed the importance of becoming proficient in using the new capability.
* The Town leases property behind Freshfields Village for storage and reduction of debris that is collected following a disaster. Upon learning that SC-DHEC guidelines require obtaining DHEC approval prior to use of a site for debris management, Town officials immediately began working to obtain that approval.
* The Town has received approximately $6,200 for “debris removal,” the second of three projects submitted for FEMA public assistance. (The first project, paid to the Town by FEMA last month, was for “emergency protective measures;” the money has been remitted by the Town to the Seabrook Island Utility Commission).
* The agenda for Disaster Awareness Day (sponsored jointly by the Towns of Kiawah Island and Seabrook Island) will soon be available and will be distributed via SIPOA’s weekly eBlast and Tidelines; Mr. Gregg noted once again that there will be prize drawings and “*FREE LUNCH!!*”

Councilman Jody Turner reminded Council that it had gone on record in 2015 as opposing the Department of Interior’s proposed inclusion of the Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic Planning Areas in the 2017-2022 oil and gas leasing program and also as opposing the seismic testing that would precede the exploration phase. He then reported that an Executive Order issued by President Trump in the last several weeks endorsed a policy which encouraged renewed efforts to lease sites for oil and gas exploration in planning areas previously excluded from the 2017-2022 plan. In addition, the Executive Order revoked the establishment of previously declared marine sanctuaries. Mr. Turner recommended that the Town reaffirm its objection to offshore exploration and drilling in the region. Council passed a motion directing the Mayor to submit a letter expressing Seabrook Island’s opposition to both offshore drilling and changes to the standards. Other items noted by Mr. Turner included:

* The proposed acquisition of 800 MHz radios to complement current use of ham radios during emergencies. Benefits of having these radios include closer Town coordination with SIPOA and SIUC and improved communication with local emergency officials.
* On a recent visit to Charleston County’s Emergency Operations Center (CC-EOC), Mr. Turner learned that the CC-EOC encouraged the Town to have members of its Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) organization volunteer to provide assistance to the CC-EOC in the event of an emergency. The CC-EOC will introduce the concept in a session to be attended by CERT volunteers. The Town will encourage representatives of Seabrook Island’s CERT to participate in this effort because, if CERT members are in the CC-EOC during the course of an emergency, they can facilitate communication between the between County and Seabrook Island EOCs.

Councilman John Wells said that the Town gave a presentation to the Accommodations Tax (ATAX) Advisory Committee on the expenditure of ATAX funds received from the state of South Carolina, and then led the Committee’s review of 2018 applications for state ATAX funding.

Mayor Ron Ciancio reported that Charleston County officials will hold a FEMA Flood Map Open House at the Seabrook Island Club on May 30 (1PM – 5PM). The event, similar to the public Open Houses held elsewhere in the County in late March, will be open to all Seabrookers and will allow them to review the preliminary FEMA flood maps, learn how the revised maps will affect their homes and basic flood insurance premiums, and ask questions about what the new maps will mean for their property.

The mayor reviewed the history of the property at 1126 Ocean Forest Lane. He noted that the Town had issued a zoning permit for the property in December of 2005, the original contractor experienced financial difficulty, and the successor contractor had gone bankrupt around 2007. The structure was never completed, and litigation between the bankrupt contractor and mortgage holder continued through 2016 when the mortgage holder finally took title. The mayor then noted that the Town had a contract with Charleston County under which the County performs building services for the Town. He called on Carl Simmons (Director of Building Inspection Services for Charleston County and agent for the Town with regard to building inspection services) to describe the condition of the structure. Mr. Simmons noted that he, along with Town Administrator Randy Pierce, had inspected the property on numerous occasions. He said that, during the course of his most recent inspection, he found the structure to be rife with water stains, leaks, mold, and unsafe construction elements. He noted that the staircase in the back had separated from the structure. Mr. Simmons concluded that the condition of the property meets the conditions of a “public nuisance,” as that term is defined in the Town’s ordinance, and recommended that it be demolished due to its unsafe condition. Mayor Ciancio noted that he had received complaints with respect to the condition of the property since his term on the SIPOA Board of Directors ten years ago. He also noted that he had been advised that a property in the vicinity of the property in question had been sold to a family with young children. Council members asked numerous questions of Mr. Simmons regarding the condition of the property and the cost of demolition. After discussion, and upon motion duly made, seconded, and unanimously approved, the Council authorized and directed Mr. Simmons on behalf of the Town to provide notice to the Property Owner that it “must abate or remove the public nuisance” within 30 days of the date of the notice or the Town will take such action with respect to the property, including demolition, as is permitted by ordinance. Mr. Simmons estimated that it will cost the Town between $60K and $80K to demolish the structure. If this work should be done by the Town, it will place a lien on the property for its expense of demolition.

Town Administrator Randy Pierce reported that the Mayor would soon swear in employees of Island Beach Services (IBS) who will patrol our beach through the summer as Code Enforcement Officers. Council will train IBS employees on the Town’s Code Enforcement requirements. Mayor Ciancio noted that the Town will use every effort to strike an equitable balance between Seabrook Island as a family-friendly tourist destination and our need to protect and promote the conservation of the environment and marine wildlife.

Utility Commissioner Jim Bannwart reported that SIUC’s April operations were well within requirements. He said that SIUC’s current $2.5 million balance of Unrestricted Cash will allow the utility to make some needed acquisitions, starting with purchase of a backup generator at a cost not to exceed $60K for its most critical pumping station (#1, on Royal Pine Drive). SIUC will also replace the roof of its administration building.

Official minutes of this meeting will be approved at the next Town Council meeting (June 27, 2017) and published on the Town’s web site shortly thereafter.

-Submitted by *Tidelines* Staff