

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

April 23, 2019

A meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held this date beginning at 3:18 p.m., at 80 Broad Street, City Hall, First Floor Conference Room

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

PRESENT

Councilmember Shahid, Chair, Councilmember Seekings, Councilmember Wagner, and Mayor Tecklenburg **Staff:** Keith Benjamin, Steve Ruemelin, Mike Julazadeh, Fire Marshal, and Bethany Whitaker, Council Secretary

The meeting was opened with a moment of silence provided by Councilmember Wagner.

Approval of Minutes

On the motion of Councilmember Wagner, seconded by Councilmember Seekings, the Committee voted to approve the minutes of the March 25, 2019 meeting. Councilmember Seekings abstained.

An ordinance to amend the Code of the City of Charleston, South Carolina, Chapter 19, Section 234 to make it unlawful to park a vehicle in a marked fire lane when signs, curb painting, pavement markings, or other approved notices or markings are installed giving notice thereof.

Mr. Ruemelin stated that he was getting questions from the officers about when a car was parked in the fire lane, under what section they could write a ticket or under what authority they could request the owner to remove the vehicle. So, he got together with Mr. Julazadeh and they discussed that. There was a roundabout where to get to that. In the Fire Department chapter in the ordinance, they adopted the International Fire Code. He thought it referenced the code of 2000 that had been updated several times since then. If they went into the fire code, they would find there was a section that talked about parking and obstruction of fire apparatus access. Coming back into the ordinance, if someone was in violation of that code, they could be written a ticket under 116, but there was specific reference in the City's code to parking in a fire lane. So, they thought it might help the officers and the public in general if there was a clear delineation of that being in violation of the ordinance and also giving the officers a number under which they could write the citation, instead of writing it down as a fire code violation. He had neglected to include Mr. Benjamin in on the discussions and he apologized for that. He didn't realize at the time that Mr. Benjamin needed to be a part of that.

Councilmember Seekings said that it should be illegal and they should have plenty of tools in their disposal to make sure people weren't parking in fire lanes. He did think this should involve Mr. Benjamin and his team because they were the ones that would have to sign this and enforce it. He didn't want to delay justice, but he thought it should be run through Traffic and Transportation to make sure they were in the position that, as soon as it was adopted, they had the ability to sign, understand, and enforce it. He thought it needed to come to the Traffic and Transportation issue. Mr. Benjamin said there was great partnership and coordination. They just needed to know where the obligation was between police officers and parking enforcement officers for who gave tickets and where those spots were. He didn't think they had any rebuttals to the language as it was being written. It was more about the process and what would be expected of their office versus Police Department. Those were things he wanted staff to be clear on. If there was anything that his department needed to clean up to make sure things were official, he would do his due diligence to do that. Councilmember Seekings said that they might need to just make a motion to send it to T&T for adoption of the ordinance. That would give Mr. Benjamin a few weeks to make sure everything was squared away.

Chairman Shahid said there was a fire hydrant in front of his office and he had called the Police multiple times because people would park right in front of it. It was amazing to him that there wasn't an ordinance to address that and asked if there was State statute to address that. Mr. Ruemelin said there was a state statute for fire hydrants that prohibited parking in front of a hydrant, but there was no state statute that addressed fire lanes. Councilmember Seekings said they should just send it on a recommendation to T&T, because he thought only T&T could adopt it.

On the motion of Councilmember Seekings, seconded by Mayor Tecklenburg the Committee voted unanimously to send the ordinance to Traffic and Transportation Committee on a positive recommendation for their review and adoption.

Having no further business, the Committee adjourned at 3:26 p.m.

Bethany Whitaker
Council Secretary