

TO: Beaufort County Council's Public Facilities Committee
Mr. Thomas Keaveny, II

FROM: Daufuskie Island Council

RE: Recommendations on Nighttime Use of Carts on Daufuskie Island

DATE: March 27, 2017

The Daufuskie Island Council appreciates the County Council's decision to send the proposed ordinance relating to nighttime use of golf carts on our island back to the Public Facilities Committee for further review. Following that action, a group of Daufuskie residents and rental cart providers met as a focus group to review this issue. The Daufuskie Island Council has reviewed that group's recommendations, and supports its findings.

In addition, our Council commits to conducting a thorough review of the new requirements one year after the effective date of the ordinance. Following that review, we will issue a report to the County Council that may include recommendations for additional safety enhancements.

We have several additional observations to share with your committee.

Unique Nature of Daufuskie

As several of you noted at your March 13th Council meeting, the use of golf carts on Daufuskie is indeed different from any other Beaufort County community. The vast majority of our residents use golf carts as a primary mode of transportation, and we do not believe that the Daufuskie ordinance should necessarily be used as a template for other communities.

Terminology

The ordinance as written pertains to "Golf Carts" only. On Daufuskie low speed vehicles are employed for a host of uses other than golf. Residents use GEM Cars, All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), etc., as well as cart vehicles (Electric and Gas) for touring and vacation guest transportation. It may be more appropriate to target the ordinance to "low speed community vehicles" defined as any vehicle whose top speed is equal to or greater than 15 miles per hour but not greater than 25 miles per hour.

Rental Cart Providers

The original ordinance appears to be written with just personal carts in mind. It's important to remember, however, that most visitors coming to Daufuskie are cart

renters, and that the island companies that own and/or lease carts for rental purposes have special circumstances that should be taken into consideration.

As examples, not all upgrades would be allowed by leasing companies. There is also the question of who is legally responsible when a cart renter does not report a malfunctioning safety feature (such as a broken taillight) nor complies with safe cart use practices such as not sitting on laps. We ask for clarification on these questions.

Finally, implementing all of the original ordinance's safety features would impose a severe cost on the rental companies. As one cart provider said, "This ordinance would make my entire fleet of carts obsolete overnight."

Costs

The work document sent to us by Councilman Rodman includes estimated costs for most of the safety equipment included in the original ordinance. However, these costs do NOT include the labor costs most residents would have to incur to retrofit carts with these parts, and in some cases those labor costs would meet or exceed the cost of the parts themselves. Island Carts & Services (a Daufuskie-based company) is developing estimates for installing these safety requirements, including labor costs and shipping costs, and we will provide those figures to your committee as soon as they are available.

In addition, passage of the original ordinance would require retrofits for almost every cart on the island. Cart repair services are already in short supply on the island, and to satisfy all these new requirements would almost certainly necessitate barging many carts off the island for that service work.

Both the community focus group and the DI Council believe that it is most important that carts have adequate lighting at night, and therefore strongly support functioning head and tail lights. Reflectors were also supported. Other proposed features, such as the strobe light and stop bar lights, were not determined to be necessary for our island circumstances, and in some cases (especially the strobe light) may actually cause result in a safety hazard.

Implementation and Penalties

An island education process for the requirements in the final ordinance will be necessary in order to achieve maximum compliance, and we would suggest a 60 or 90 day implementation period versus 30 days. We also recommend that the penalty for non-compliance not include jail time.

Thank you for your consideration of our views on this matter, and we do appreciate your efforts to legalize nighttime driving on Daufuskie Island.

Attachments:

- Excel Work Document Requested by Councilman Rodman
- Document summarizing the findings on nighttime use of golf carts by the March 22nd Daufuskie focus group.