

ST. AUGUSTINE PORT, WATERWAY & BEACH DISTRICT
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, November 21, 2017

The regular meeting of the St. Augustine Port, Waterway & Beach District was held at the St. Augustine Beach City Commission Meeting Room, 2200 A1A South, St. Augustine Beach, Florida on Tuesday, November 21, 2017.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Vice-Chairman Barry Benjamin called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America followed.

3. ROLL CALL:

Vice-Chairman Barry Benjamin, and Commissioners Tom Rivers, Chris Way and Mark Helman were in attendance. Chairman Gerry Dixon was absent. The meeting was also attended by Mike Trudnak of Taylor Engineering, District Counsel Jim Bedsole and Secretary-Treasurer Elyse Kemper.

4. SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT:

Secretary-Treasurer Kemper delivered the financial report. As of October 31, 2017, the District had spent none of its budgeted project funds of \$361,150, and had spent \$17,869 in operating expenses and \$22,120 for the removal of hurricane debris from Matanzas Bay. Total funds on deposit were \$1,982,051 and net funds on reserve were \$1,662,890. Funds remaining in the account for the Summer Haven River restoration project totaled \$69,365. The District has collected \$84,917 of the \$488,230 in tax revenue projected for fiscal year 2017-2018.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The board considered the minutes for the regular meeting of October 17, 2017.

A motion by Commissioner Rivers to approve the minutes of the October 17, 2017, regular meeting was seconded by Vice-Chairman Benjamin and passed unanimously.

6. ENGINEERING REPORT:

Mike Trudnak delivered the engineering report on behalf of Taylor Engineering. Mr. Trudnak reported he received a bid from marine contractor Grants Diversified to repair leaning sign pilings in Salt Run for \$6,600 and recommended the board accept the bid.

A motion by Commissioner Helman to approve the payment of \$6,600 to Grants Diversified to repair various pilings in Salt Run, was seconded by Commissioner Way and passed unanimously.

Mr. Trudnak also reported the Army Corps of Engineers is studying portions of the flood shoal in preparation for the next dredge cycle for the federal channel at St. Augustine Inlet and that several dozen core samples have been taken from the flood shoal. All the information will appear in the next plan for inlet dredging to be funded in 2019.

Carl Blow, St. Johns County's Commissioner to the Florida Inland Navigation District, said the post-Irma survey of the St. Augustine Inlet found no damage to the channel. However, the survey of Summer Haven found 50 thousand cubic yards of new sand in the Intracoastal Waterway which will be dredged after an archeological survey. Mr. Trudnak said the Corps will be the permittee on the project when it takes place and that no action is required by the District. Mr. Blow said the Corps is planning to use all the dredged sand for the beach at Old A1A. The Corps is also moving forward with a plan to fortify the north jetty at St. Augustine Inlet with the aim of making it more resistant to the leakage of sand into the inlet.

Mr. Blow then presented a check for \$50,000 from FIND to the District. He said the money is intended to assist the District with the Summer Haven River restoration project. The board thanked Mr. Blow for delivering the check and for his advocacy for the interests of St. Johns County. There was a round of applause from the entire room as Mr. Blow handed the check to the Secretary-Treasurer.

In response to a question by Commissioner Helman, Mr. Blow said the Corps of Engineers will begin ebb shoal dredging after Thanksgiving and that some beach renourishment material will be coming from the federal channel as well. He said funding is also in place to repair the north jetty.

Mr. Trudnak said the contractor has ceased excavating the Summer Haven River and will now begin grading the material on the beach at the south end of Old A1A and will stop work when the remaining funds run out. He added that both the District's requests for funding from FEMA to complete the restoration project are still under review.

7. **OLD BUSINESS: NONE**

8. **NEW BUSINESS:**

A. **St. Johns County Sheriff's Office Marine Unit - Corporal Josh Underwood**

Corporal Josh Underwood appeared on behalf of the Saint Johns County Sheriff's Office and requested \$60,000 in financial assistance to purchase an airboat for his agency. He said the Sheriff's Office could contribute \$30,000 to the cost of the airboat and explained why such a craft would benefit rescue and recovery operations in shallow water areas.

Commissioner Helman said an airboat would be valuable to the law enforcement community but said the District's budget was already set for the year and that its expenses rise every year. He said he would like to see the Sheriff's Office provide for this item in their own budget.

Vice-Chairman Benjamin questioned whether all the agencies who would potentially use this boat are also participating in the cost. He said the District has just contributed to new police and fire boats for the City of St. Augustine and that he would like to see other agencies partner on this request by also providing funds.

Commissioner Way asked how many times a year such a boat is needed. Corporal Underwood said there have been a number of incidents recently when a small airboat would have been helpful. He said accessing anything in the local marshes is very difficult because of the soft soil and the lack of water. He said the airboat is easy to maintain and light enough to run over marsh grass. He cited recent incidents involving derelict boats, people stuck in marsh mud and a plane crash, as examples where an airboat would have reduced response time. He said his agency must rely on airboats operated by other law enforcement agencies, but that those boats are usually too heavy to traverse local salt marshes.

Commissioner Rivers said he is generally in favor of the idea, but would like to have more information, such as photographs and technical data, before making a decision. Corporal Underwood said he would provide the board more information and would talk to other agencies about partnering in the expense.

9. GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE COMMENTS:

Officer Megan Aswall, FWC, reported there were 44 vessels county-wide displaced by Hurricane Irma and that nine are still in the water. One is in East Creek, one in Salt Run, one in Hospital Creek, and 6 are sunk near Doug Crane Park. She said all of the owners have been contacted and that the Coast Guard will be removing all nine boats. None of them was insured.

In response to questions by the board, Corporal Underwood said many counties charge an extra fee on boat registrations which can be used for marine public safety expenses. He said larger counties have designated committees responsible for the use of the funds. St. Johns County has almost 15,000 registered boats. Many counties also charge launch fees at their boat ramps. Vice-Chairman Benjamin said no launch fees have been implemented in the District because of the staff needed to handle the process.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Linda Ginn, Friends of the Summer Haven River, said the river restoration project is not finished, primarily because of a shortage of funds. She said the combination of delays from nesting terns, equipment failures, and the expenses of dealing with the damage from two hurricanes have left the project far from complete. She said St. Johns County owes the project \$352,000 for repairs to county road Old A1A after Hurricane Matthew, and that the planned dune system cannot be completed and planted until dredging the river is finished. She said the homeowners on Old A1A are subject to an extra county tax assessment for repair

of their road, and that FOSHR is looking for FEMA funds and private money to complete the project. She said characterizing excavation work in the river as “finished” is inaccurate because so much work remains to be done.

Brad Meager, a homeowner near the restoration project, asked what the ultimate time-frame and cost are for completing the restoration. Mr. Trudnak said the contractor will continue to work until funds run out and then demobilize and wait for more money, perhaps from pending county and state FEMA claims.

11. COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS:

Commissioner Rivers reminded the board that the Regatta of Lights will be on Saturday, December 2, 2017, and that board members are invited to the reception after the regatta.

12. NEXT MEETING

Vice-Chairman Benjamin announced the next meeting of the board will be held at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 19, 2017, in the St. Augustine Beach City Commission Room.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business, Vice-Chairman Benjamin adjourned the meeting at 3:50 p.m.

Secretary-Treasurer

Chairman