

ST. AUGUSTINE PORT, WATERWAY & BEACH DISTRICT

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, February 18, 2014

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, February 18, 2014.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Herb Rippe called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

ROLL CALL

Chairman Herb Rippe, Vice-Chairman Chuck Hennessey, Commissioners Barry Benjamin, Jerry Dixon and Jay Bliss were in attendance. The meeting was also attended by Steve Schropp, Jim Marino and Ken Craig of Taylor Engineering, District Counsel Jim Bedsole and Secretary-Treasurer Elyse Kemper.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

Secretary-Treasurer Kemper delivered the report. Funds available for use as of January 31, 2014 totaled \$2,164,402 and committed funds were \$828,182. Net available funds as of that date were \$1,324,677, held by the Florida Board of Administration and by BB&T Bank. Tax revenue received to date is \$325,417 with \$51,327 expected. Commissioner Rippe said committed dredge funds of \$610,000 should be reduced to \$370,917 because funds actually committed for local match of Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) grants for 2012 and 2013 equal that amount. **Ms. Kemper agreed and the Board directed that the figure should be changed.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Vice-Chairman Hennessey moved to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2014 regular meeting and Commissioner Bliss seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

ENGINEERING REPORT

Dr. Steve Schropp of Taylor Engineering delivered the engineering report. He introduced Jim Marino and Ken Craig of Taylor Engineering and said they were attending to answer questions about the revised Inlet Management Plan (IMP). This discussion was moved from Item 8.B to this report. Dr. Schropp reviewed the District response to the presentation of the draft IMP last year by officials of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The District requested DEP to remove any limits on the amount of sand taken from the federal navigation channel in any year, and this was done in the plan. It was also requested that dredging for beach sand be allowed below the channel's authorized depth. This was also done.

The third request was to allow placing dredge sand on the ebb shoal for storage. No mention was made of this in the IMP.

The District also requested that DEP remove from the plan any specification of the method of moving sand to the north of the inlet. DEP did not remove its suggestions as to methods, but added language stating that nothing in the plan precludes the use of the most economically efficient methods. The fifth item requested was to allow the relic shoal south of the inlet to be used as a borrow area. This is prohibited by the IMP.

The last request was to clarify the District is not required to use alternate sources for beach-compatible sand for north beaches if insufficient amounts of such sand can be found in the inlet and ebb shoal. The IMP is silent on this issue.

Commissioner Dixon said the ability to store sand on the ebb shoal is important because the hopper dredges used by the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) in emergencies now have to travel several miles to a dump site. This practice wastes time and greatly decreases efficiency. Dr. Schropp said that because hopper dredges are used mainly in emergencies, gaining permission to dump on the ebb shoal would be easier to obtain.

Commissioner Bliss said he was concerned by language in the plan which places responsibility on the District for the effects of dredging, including erosion. Dr. Schropp said that is because the District is the local sponsor for the inlet and that all of the entities involved will always look to the District as a responsible party. Jim Marino said all of the special districts sponsoring the many inlets in Florida are held responsible for the effects of inlet dredging. This responsibility is mitigated by the fact most dredging is carried out by the ACOE, which bears primary responsibility for the results.

Commissioner Hennessey asked whether one-third of dredged sand would be required to go to the north beaches during each dredge project. Dr. Schropp said this would not be necessary each time, but that the old plan actually directed all sand southward, precluding sending it to the north.

In response to a question by Commissioner Rippe, Dr. Schropp said the revised IMP is acceptable to Taylor Engineering. He said the IMP should be used to increase cooperation among local agencies by funding and conducting dredge projects to maximum benefit for everyone.

Commissioner Hennessey asked why the federal government has to comply with the Inlet Management Plan. Jim Marino and Ken Craig explained ACOE voluntarily complies with local rules and regulations to the extent its funding will allow. Any excessive cost of complying with local requirements, such as sending sand north from the inlet, would be paid for from local funds when federal funds run out.

Commissioner Bliss asked what the Board needs to do now. Dr. Schropp said one option is to rescind the District's request for an extension of time for a response. Another is to simply do nothing and wait for all review periods to expire. Commissioner Rippe suggested the Board take no action at this time and all commissioners agreed.

Dr. Schropp said FDEP issued the permit for the restoration of the Summer Haven River in spite of the pending petition for review of the least tern incidental take permit. **Commissioner Rippe said Dr. Schropp and Mr. Bedsole will be attending the hearing in Tallahassee on March 18, 2014, and that the Board does not need a substitute attorney to sit in with the Board that day.**

Commissioner Bliss asked if a review of the project is now pending by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Dr. Schropp said he was unaware of any such review.

Dr. Schropp then announced he would be reducing his work hours in the future and that Mr. Marino and Mr. Craig will be attending meetings from now on. Dr. Schropp has been working with the District for 23 years.

OLD BUSINESS - NONE

NEW BUSINESS

8.A. FIND Project Funding, Fiscal year 2014-2015 - Jim Piggott, City of St. Augustine.

Mr. Piggott presented two interlocal agreements with the City of St. Augustine for approval by the Board. One agreement commits \$30,000 for repairs to the Lighthouse Boat Ramp. The other commits \$100,000 in matching funds for Salt Run dredging. These agreements will be used in grant applications to FIND. A discussion then took place among commissioners as to whether the City should ask for more money. It was decided to approve these requests without increase because the county will be requesting funds to repair the Vilano Fishing Pier.

A motion by Commissioner Rippe to approve the interlocal agreements with the City of St. Augustine for a total of \$130,000, seconded by Commissioner Benjamin, was unanimously approved.

8.B. Moved to engineering report.

8.C. Discussion by Commissioners regarding future projects - All Commissioners

Commissioner Rippe asked for comments from members of the Board as to goals for the District's future. He listed his own goals as follows: red navigation lights for the inlet; expanding the District's boundaries; dredging the San Sebastian River and Salt Run; improving public access to local waters; and, increasing coordination with other agencies on dredging projects to enhance outcomes.

Commissioner Hennessey said he would like to see the District coordinate the restoration and maintenance of the Summer Haven River with ACOE and FIND. He said both agencies perform regular maintenance dredging in the Matanzas Inlet area and the District should take advantage of this to assure the Summer Haven River remains open. He would also like to see some of the sand clogging Matanzas Inlet removed.

Commissioner Bliss said he would like to develop a contingency plan for safe mooring of local vessels in the event of a tropical storm. The plan should provide for all vessels, including those anchored south of the 312 Bridge. He said a severe storm could create many derelicts unless all vessels are safely moored during such an event.

Commissioner Dixon said he would like to see water access improved for the public by the addition of another boat ramp in the St. Augustine area. Commissioner Benjamin agreed with this goal and said improving public access should be a priority for the Board.

Commissioner Rippe said he would summarize these goals in writing and present them for more discussion at a future meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Linda Ginn, 9051 Gene Johnson Road, thanked the Board and the Friends of Summer Haven River for their help in obtaining the permit for restoration, which will preserve history and restore a pristine habitat for many species.

Lt. Steve Zukowski, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioner (FWC), said Matanzas inlet began to silt up in 2008 after the breach of the Summer Haven River and has gotten worse each year. More rescues in the inlet are necessary each year as boats ground on the building shoals. At low tide, no FWC vessel can transit the inlet. This hampers access to the ocean for rescues. **He said the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office in Jacksonville is reviewing the permit for the restoration project, and that he would contact them and report back to the Board.**

He said FWC is now referring all derelict vessel investigations to its regular investigative staff rather than patrol officers because the investigations take too much time. He said FWC officer Pedonti will finish the cases he has but will not be assigned any more derelict vessels.

Commissioner Rippe asked about a boat which is anchored in North River. Lt. Zukowski said FWC is watching the boat to assure it does become derelict.

Jay Ginn, 9051 Gene Johnson Road, said he supports Commissioner Hennessey's ideas regarding the Summer Haven River restoration. He added he believes opening up the river will help open up Matanzas Inlet without further intervention or dredging.

Dave Ringer, 258 Barrataria Island, president of their homeowner's association, said Matanzas Inlet is so completely shoaled up that it may need dredging to restore the flow of water. The water is too shallow for a kayak in some places.

Wil Smith, St. Johns County Recreation Department, said the Butler Beach Boat Ramp will be closed during the dredging of canals in Treasure Beach subdivision. The ramp will become the temporary deposit site for dredge spoil. Upon questioning by Commissioner Bliss, Mr. Smith explained the dredging will be financed by taxes on homeowners in Treasure Beach and by grants from FIND. He said repair of the Vilano Fishing Pier will cost the county \$800,000, half of which it hopes to obtain from FIND.

COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Bliss said the San Sebastian River has not been dredged since 1956 because it has a tidal flow which naturally scours the river. In contrast, Salt Run has no tidal flow and silts heavily as a result. He suggested that Commissioner Rippe attend meetings of the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Reserve held several times a year. Lastly, he suggested the Board change its practice of confining public comment to one portion of each meeting. He said the public should be able to speak at the beginning of each meeting and as topics arise. He said allowing more periods for public comment would not cause a problem.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Rippe announced that there will be a workshop held on February 27, 2014, and that the next regular meeting will be Tuesday, March 18, 2014 at 3:00 p.m. in the same location.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business, Chairman Rippe adjourned the meeting at 4:40 p.m.

Secretary-Treasurer

Chairman

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Secretary-Treasurer Elyse Kemper will amend future treasurer's reports to indicate committed dredge funds of \$370,917 instead of \$610,000.
2. Dr. Schropp and Mr. Bedsole will attend the Department of Administrative Hearings meeting scheduled for March 18, 2014 at 9:00 A.M. in Tallahassee, on Clements v. FWC, Case No. 14-00199.

3. Lt. Steve Zukowski, FWC, will contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Jacksonville regarding its review of the permit for restoration of the Summer Haven River, and will report back to the Board.
4. Commissioner Rippe will summarize in writing the goals chosen by commissioners in ITEM 8.C and present them for further discussion at a future meeting.

wk/rg/port/minutes-2014/2-18-14 meeting