

ST. AUGUSTINE PORT, WATERWAY & BEACH DISTRICT

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, March 19, 2013

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, March 19, 2013

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jerry Dixon called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

ROLL CALL

Chairman Jerry Dixon, Vice-Chairman Barry Benjamin, Commissioners Herb Rippe and Jay Bliss were in attendance. Commissioner Chuck Hennessey arrived at 3:02 p.m. The meeting was also attended by Dr. Steve Schropp of Taylor Engineering, District Counsel James Bedsole and Secretary-Treasurer Elyse Kemper.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer's report was delivered by Secretary-Treasurer, Elyse Kemper. Ms. Kemper said the only committed funds spent this fiscal year have been \$585 for the St. Augustine Police overtime, \$2,776 for Sheriff's Department overtime and \$4,170 for Summer Haven River permitting. The State Board of Administration Fund A contains \$5,574, Fund B thereof contains \$32,243, the BB&T Operating Account contains \$265,937 and the BB&T Money Market Account contains \$1,704,575. Of \$370,155 in expected tax revenue, \$321,570 has been received. As of March 15, 2013, the District's Operating Account contained \$249,623.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion by Vice-Chairman Barry Benjamin, seconded by Commissioner Jay Bliss, to approve the minutes of the February 19, 2013 regular meeting, was unanimously passed.

ENGINEERING REPORT

Dr. Steve Schropp delivered the engineering report on behalf of Taylor Engineering. He said the warning sign for the remnant concrete piling in Salt Run has been ordered and will be installed soon. The claim by USACE for funds due on the Salt Run Feasibility Study has been paid and USACE has requested further documentation which is being provided. This documentation should conclude the matter. In the matter of the Summer Haven River restoration project, Commissioner Benjamin and Dr. Schropp will be meeting with officials from FDEP and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) within the week to address issues regarding birds, and it is hoped this meeting will finish the permit process. In response to a question by Chairman Dixon, Dr. Schropp said all of the downed markers in Salt Run have been repaired.

OLD BUSINESS

Inlet Management Plan.

Dr. Steve Schropp opened discussion of the draft Inlet Management Plan (IMP) by pointing out the IMP was originated in 1996. Dr. Schropp introduced Ken Craig and Jim Marino from Taylor Engineering. Danielle Irwin, Deputy Director of Water Resource Management, introduced herself and Bob Brantly, Ralph Clark and William "Guy" Weeks, all from the FDEP. Ms. Irwin discussed generally the causes for beach erosion and the statutory law affecting beach renourishment efforts. In response to questions by Commissioner Rippe, Ms. Irwin said FDEP is able to prioritize projects each year and devote ten percent of its erosion and renourishment budget to the top three projects. Under current rules, the state is able to fund up to seventy-five percent (75%) of local matching funds for chosen projects.

Bob Brantly and Ralph Clark then presented the draft IMP to the Board. The original IMP calls for by-passing 510,000 cubic yards of sand per year to beaches south of the inlet. This sand is to be taken from the ebb shoal, the flood shoal and the inlet for beach and dune renourishment south of the inlet. He said dredging between 2005 and 2012 averaged about 600,000 cubic yards per year with most of the material being taken from the ebb shoal. He acknowledged certain private land owners north of the inlet contend that over-dredging of the ebb shoal caused beach erosion north of the inlet. In response to this claim, USACE did an extensive study the results of which Mr. Brantly graphically displayed to the Board. The USACE data showed the trends of erosion over the entire area from the south end of Guana to the south end of St. Augustine Beach.

Commissioner Rippe asked how FDEP had determined to send one-third of future beach sand transfers to the north beaches. Mr. Brantly said the theory is that sand trapped by the inlet is starving adjacent beaches. Therefore, erosion rates should reflect the relative extent to which beaches are affected by the inlet. By comparing erosion rates, a ratio of one-third to two-thirds was established from the north and south beaches, respectively. This results in a recommendation for placement of at least 92,000 cubic yards per year on selected areas north of the inlet, and 187,000 cubic yards to the south. Areas having the highest erosion rates are treated as critically in need and should be the first to receive sand deliveries. Three

such areas are designated between “R” markers R84 to R94, R109 to R117, and R132 to R152. Mr. Brantley said some future sand should go north by hydraulic pipeline. This would be most easily done using sand from the inlet channel. Chairman Dixon pointed out that dredging of the inlet last year was part of the beach renourishment project and that federal funds have paid for the bulk of all dredging as a part of beach renourishment. He said he is concerned that USACE will choose not to shift sand north and that the cost will fall upon the Port District or the county. He said the Port would never be able to pay for it from its own tax revenue.

In response, Mr. Brantly said seven years would be a long time to wait for dredging and that some local governments pool resources to fund dredging themselves. He said the recommended minimum bypass amount in the draft IMP is intended to be an annual average and does not mean FDEP expects dredging to occur each year. In response to further questions from Commissioners Bliss, Rippe and Dixon, Mr. Brantly acknowledged funding for inlet dredging is the responsibility of the USACE and the Port District, but that the amount of such funding is obviously variable and infrequent. However, whatever dredging is finally done will need to accommodate the north to south proportion set out in the draft IMP. Mr. Brantly went on to say that no state funds would be available for navigation dredging, but that FDEP may possibly fund up to seventy-five percent (75%) of bypass costs under other circumstances such as during beach renourishment. In that event, sand taken from the ebb shoal or the navigation channel could qualify for state assistance, if available.

Commissioner Bliss questioned Dr. Schropp as to whether the Port District was responsible to fund inlet projects. Dr. Schropp said the District is the local sponsor of the inlet but that USACE is responsible for inlet maintenance. Ms. Irwin added that USACE could refuse to alter their usual plans and ask to place sand to the south only. In that event, the District could request the permit. Jason Engle, USACE, added that USACE could vary deposits of sand from the draft IMP during navigation projects, but that renourishment projects would need to comply with the draft IMP to obtain a permit.

Mr. Brantly said FDEP wants the primary donor site for the next cycle of beach renourishment to be the large relic shoal south of the inlet. In response to a question by Commissioner Hennessey, Mr. Brantly said the proposed yearly bypass amount of 279,000 cubic yards is a minimum, only, and that there is no maximum amount stated in the draft IMP. Mr. Brantly said another strategy for controlling erosion would be to modify the north jetty of the inlet. He said further studies are planned to monitor erosion over the next few years and that the results of these may lead to modification of the bypass amounts now in the draft IMP.

Commissioner Carl Blow and Assistant Executive Director Mark Crosley appeared on behalf of the Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND). Mr. Blow said FIND cannot split sand delivery in one project and that he is concerned that the existing north jetty will simply leak sand transported north back onto the flood shoal, which is in FIND’s jurisdiction. He also said use of hopper dredges for emergency maintenance of the inlet navigation channel should be improved by allowing the deposit of sand on the ebb shoal instead of on St. Augustine Beach. This would save time and money. Mr. Brantly said the ebb shoal could be considered an advance maintenance area for storage of beach-quality sand. Mr. Crosley said

FIND had no permit to haul sand north of the inlet and that it would be seeking more local funds if that were required.

Commissioner Rippe asked if the District's matching share of any project might qualify for partial payment by the state and Mr. Brantly said it potentially could. Ms. Irwin pointed out shore protection projects can be cost-shared with FDEP up to fifty percent, while inlet projects which rank in the top three in priority may receive up to seventy-five percent but this is not guaranteed. FDEP's erosion budget for this year is 25 million dollars, ten percent of which will be devoted to the top three inlet projects by priority ranking. In response to a question by Chairman Dixon, she said many factors affect funding priorities such as public access, severity of erosion and the length of the project, among others.

Andy Ames, St. Johns County Engineering, said sand grain size is an important factor for the north beaches and planning may need to include locating a source for the right kind of sand. Mr. Tom Turner, South Ponte Vedra Association, said the draft IMP is a good start and that he appreciated the more balanced attention given to the north beach erosion issue. In response to a question by Commissioner Rippe, Mr. Turner said his organization supports the plan. Chairman Dixon said the Board needed to schedule a workshop prior to the next regular meeting to discuss the Board's possible responses to the draft IMP. Ms. Irwin said FDEP wants a response soon but that the Board should have time to workshop the issue.

NEW BUSINESS None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lt. Commander Robert Butts, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), introduced Kyle Moore from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Mr. Moore said NOAA is now performing a hydrographic survey of the inlet and the bay up to the S.R. 312 Bridge, and that the information collected may enable the inlet's chart classification to be changed. He said the survey will include the San Sebastian River and part of the ocean shoreline. He said NOAA's short-term goal is to accurately plot the inlet's buoys on the navigation chart. Commissioner Bliss asked if USCG would consider using larger buoys in some areas of the inlet because the smaller buoys tend to move off-station. Commander Butts said his unit now has access to its large buoy tender that could handle such a job.

Sgt. Jay Bucher, St. Johns County Sheriff's Office (SJSO), said reserve officer Chris Bonnevier has been providing his recent plots of the inlet and bay on his own time. SJSO performed three water rescues this month and will be participating in the blessing of the fleet on Easter.

Jim Piggott, City of St. Augustine, said only one responsive bid has been received for the removal of the derelict vessel Tiger Lily, for \$6,000.00. Chairman Dixon asked Mr. Piggott to report next month on other bids he may receive. Mr. Piggott said the new breakwater at the City Marina has been installed and will be completed by the end of April.

Lt. Steve Zukowski, FWC, said the owner of the vessel Tiger Lily was indigent and disabled so they did not charge him with a violation. He said the vessel is high and dry near the Shore Drive ramp and can be considered a littering case now. He said many agencies will have boats helping manage traffic at the blessing of the fleet on Easter but that the main hazard is the tight maneuvering area created by the City's new breakwater. Two elderly sailors inadvertently beached their sailboat in Ponte Vedra after falling asleep offshore. The boat has been removed with minor damage. He also reported a commercial oysterman was jailed due to repeated events of harvesting in a closed Salt Run oyster bed. Lt. Zukowski said the bed was closed for health reasons and that harvesting there created a serious risk to the public.

COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Dixon said the District had just received and paid an invoice from FWC for a new boatlift which was installed at the City Marina almost two years ago.

Commissioner Rippe said he met with the new website company and wants the site to be of use to boaters and mariners. He asked for any links or artwork anyone wants to submit for use on the site.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Dixon announced the next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 16, 2013, at 3:00 p.m. in the same location.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business, Chairman Dixon adjourned the meeting at 5:22 p.m.

Secretary-Treasurer

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Chairman