

**ST. AUGUSTINE PORT, WATERWAY & BEACH DISTRICT**  
**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**  
**Tuesday, June 18, 2019**

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, June 18, 2019.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Barry Benjamin called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

**3. ROLL CALL**

Chairman Barry Benjamin, and Commissioners Matt Brown, Sandy Flowers and Chris Way were in attendance. Vice-Chairman Tom Rivers 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 May 31, 2019, the District has collected \$526,341 in taxes for Fiscal Year 2018-2019. Of this, \$262,465 has been spent on projects and \$107,475 has been spent in operating expenses since October 1, 2018. As of May 31, the District had \$2,244,654 on deposit in its accounts and an additional \$118,839 in a separate account for the Summer Haven River restoration project which includes a payment from the Florida Department of Emergency Management in the amount of \$92,800 in reimbursement for emergency repairs to the restoration project after Hurricane Irma. However, other communications from the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) have indicated the payment may have been made in error. Clarification from FEMA will be requested.

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A motion by Chairman Benjamin to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of May 21, 2019, was seconded by Commissioner Brown and passed unanimously.**

**6. ENGINEERING REPORT**

Mike Trudnak delivered the engineering report on behalf of Taylor Engineering. He reported that the cost of installing blinking lights on the thirteen marker pilings from the inlet to the Conch House will cost thirteen thousand dollars and will require a permit application to the U.S. Coast Guard which will take a half-day for him to complete. In response to questions from Commissioner Flowers and Commissioner Brown, Mr. Trudnak said the remaining five

markers beyond the Conch House can be placed at the same price per light. He said the Coast Guard application is mainly to document the light pattern intended to be used. Chairman Benjamin said the board would consider installing lights on all the pilings.

Mr. Trudnak then said the contractor at Summer Haven was nearly done and all that remains is grading the beach berm and completing the as-built survey. Commissioner Flowers commented that there appears to be a great deal of sand remaining in the river channel, so much so that the river is nearly dry in places at low tide. Chairman Benjamin said he agreed with Commissioner Flowers' assessment and that the channel needs a lot of work to bring it back to its original contour and depth. Mr. Trudnak said the contractor will not leave until the an as-built survey has been completed.

Commissioner Flowers then displayed photographs taken in the river a few days prior to the meeting showing only a few inches of water remaining in many areas at low tide. She said the dredging did not go all the way to the private docks along the river and that there are many areas of high sand bottom between dredged areas. Chairman Benjamin said the job was obviously not compete in its current state.

Mr. Trudnak said the tolerance allowed for dredge depth is plus or minus one foot and that the amount of excess sand remaining in the river will not be known precisely until the survey is done. He said Taylor's engineers had calculated more than six hundred thousand dollars would have been needed to repair the damage from hurricanes Matthew and Irma but that only \$450,000 was appropriated by the Legislature, so there may not have been enough money to actually complete the job.

In response to questions from commissioners, Mr. Trudnak said the surveyor performing the as-built survey is a sub-contractor of Turnbull Engineering and that Taylor would verify the survey's accuracy by comparing key portions of its data to data from previous surveys of the same area. He said the survey will require about two weeks to complete. Commissioners asked Mr. Trudnak to see that the dredge does not leave the project site and that no final payment will be issued until the project is complete.

The chairman then recognized Ellis Zahra of the Friends of the Summer Haven River. Mr. Zahra said he was concerned because the depth of the river in certain areas appears to be too shallow to navigate at low tide and that he understands from the comments made in the meeting that there may be no money remaining to remove more sand. He said the local representatives who sponsored the legislative grant for the restoration are anxious to see the results of the project. He added that the beach berm still needs sand fencing. He asked the board to release the ninety-two thousand dollars received from FEMA. He said stopping the work will increase all of the costs because of mobilization expenses.

In response to questions from the board, Mr. Trudnak said the job can continue under the same contractor and the same permit. He said the permit and work plan projected a four to six foot depth at low tide. However, the permit allows up to a two-foot buffer of sand on the bottom and a one-foot tolerance, plus or minus, for dredging accuracy.

Commissioner Way said the board should spend the FEMA money and, if FEMA asks for the money back, repay it from District reserves.

**Chairman Benjamin then moved to provide an additional \$92,800 for the project from District reserves if FEMA demands repayment of the funds recently received. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Way and passed unanimously.**

Commissioner Flowers then asked Mr. Trudnak if the \$118,000 remaining in the fund for the restoration would finish the work satisfactorily. He said Turnbull would get \$98,000, monitoring the mitigation area would cost another \$6,000, the USDA contract for predator control would cost another \$10,000, leaving a balance of about \$4,000 remaining in the fund. He said the original plan does not call for a sand fence on the berm.

Linda Ginn, FOSHR, said she believed planting the remaining portion of the berm should be a priority as well as clearing the main channel of the river. Mr. Trudnak said the same contractor, including the dredge operator, could finish the work without any permit change or bidding.

In response to questions by the board, Mr. Trudnak said the previous dredge operator was a sub-contractor for Turnbull and could be difficult to obtain. Mr. Zahra said his organization would like to have a contact person appointed by the board to help coordinate the completion of the work.

**7. OLD BUSINESS:**

**A. May Street Boat Landing - Commissioner Flowers**

Commissioner Flowers reported she spoke with a technician at the Property Appraiser's Office who told her there is no Department of Transportation easement on the road right-of-way at May Street. Mr. Trudnak said the road is owned by the State and that DOT approval is needed to develop a ramp there. He said DOT will allow the use but will not maintain whatever is finally approved. He said the next step is to contact DOT by letter with preliminary plans and wait for its response.

**A motion by Commissioner Flowers to authorize Taylor Engineering to proceed with a letter of inquiry was seconded by Commissioner Brown and passed unanimously.**

Jim Piggott, Director of General Services for the City of St. Augustine, reminded the board that the site is within city limits and is also subject to city review. He said DOT must approve it first, then the city.

**B. Discuss recurrent shoaling at entrance to Comache Marina - Commissioner Flowers**

Commissioner Flowers said a dredge could be used to improve the situation at Comache Cove where a recurring shoal has to be dredged periodically.

Pete Sabo, representing Comache Cove, said the Cove has hired a private company to clean

up the shoal. He said the shoal is caused by erosion of their channel berm and that most of the affected area is private land.

**C. Discuss Summer Haven Projects - Commissioner Flowers**

This was discussed during the Engineering Report.

**8. NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. Vilano Beach Project - Jason Harrah, US Corps of Engineers**

Jason Harrah, Project Manager for the Corps of Engineers inlet and beach projects in St. Johns County, said the Corps surveys the Intracoastal and St. Augustine Inlet yearly to measure their depth and width, and uses federal funds to maintain the required dimensions. He said the sand removed from them is placed on local beaches as renourishment. He said the Corps also maintains the San Sebastian River at a depth of the 10 feet and a width of 100 feet from the Intracoastal Waterway to the King Street Bridge, with a turn-around at the end. He said the federal inlet channel is maintained at a depth of 16 feet and 200 feet wide, and is dredged as needed. He said currently authorized projects include a flood study of the City of St. Augustine, the Vilano-North Beaches Shore Protection Project, and a drainage project for Porpoise Point.

He said money was appropriated this year for the first phase of the Vilano Shore Protection Project which will begin next year. Sand will be removed from the inlet and inner harbor and will be pumped north of the inlet to a severely-eroded three-mile area between monuments 102 and 117. There will be staging areas at the Reef Restaurant, North Beach Park, and Surfside Park. He said 1,300,000 cubic yards of sand will be placed on the beach to protect homes and Highway A1A, and the resulting dune is designed to be 19 feet in height and should be finished by the end of 2020.

In response to questions by Commissioners Flowers and Brown, Mr. Harrah said problems with the San Sebastian River may be addressed first by a letter from the District to the Corps. Then a design and study phase would follow with construction last. The process takes from 3 to 5 years and the cost would be shared 35% local, 65% federal. He said the flood study for the City of St. Augustine will need 50% local funding.

**B. Presentation on Dredger/Driver - Commissioner Flowers**

Commissioner Flowers said a dredge would help with the many shoaling problems in the District's area. She introduced a dredge manufacturer, Eric Curtiss, who presented technical information on a dredge his company sells. He said a dredge costs about one million dollars, takes less than a year to build, and lasts thirty years.

Commissioner Way said owning a machine such as he described would be entering the marine contracting business and that it is an unworkable proposition for the board.

**9. GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE COMMENTS**

Teddy Meyer, St. Johns County Parks and Recreation, said the county had presented grant requests to the Florida Inland Navigation District, including various boat ramp improvements. He then renewed the county's request for financial assistance from the District in the amount of seventy-five thousand dollars for improvements to the Doug Crane Boat Ramp.

**A motion by Commissioner Flowers to award St. Johns County a grant of \$75,000.00 for improvements to the Doug Crane Boat Ramp was seconded by Commissioner Way and passed unanimously.**

Josh Underwood, SJSO Marine Unit, said his agency had spent 125 hours on the water last month and responded to 152 calls for assistance, performed 76 inspections, wrote 21 warnings and 12 citations, seven of which went to commercial shrimpers for violation of night light regulations, and performed 18 marine sanitation checks. One 34-foot sailboat grounded in the inlet and broke its keel, destroying the boat. Five people on board were rescued.

Lt. Steve Zukowski, FWC, reported no new derelict vessels. Eight are now awaiting removal by the City, five of those are at Doug Crane Park. One BUI occurred near Devil's Elbow during the month. Commercial shrimping is open at night during June, July and August.

**10. PUBLIC COMMENT: NONE**

**11. COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS:**

Commissioner Way said the board should allow government representatives to speak first at board meetings. Chairman Benjamin said he was in favor of that. Commissioner Flowers said the board should meet at a time when the County Commission was not also having a meeting.

**12. NEXT MEETING:**

Chairman Benjamin announced the next regular meeting of the board will be held at 3:00 PM on Tuesday, July 16, 2019, in the St. Augustine Beach City Commission Room, and that a special meeting would be set at a separate time for a discussion of the Summer Haven River restoration project.

**13. ADJOURN**

There being no further business, Chairman Benjamin adjourned the meeting at 5:30 PM.

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Secretary-Treasurer

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Chairman

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