

ST. AUGUSTINE PORT, WATERWAY & BEACH DISTRICT

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, June 21, 2011

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 21, 2011.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jerry Dixon 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 Jerry Dixon, Tom Rivers, Jay Bliss and Herb Rippe were in attendance. Commissioner Barry Benjamin was absent. The meeting was also attended by: Elyse Kemper, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer, District Attorney James Bedsole, and Dr. Steve Schropp of Taylor Engineering.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Elyse Kemper delivered the report. Of budgeted tax revenue, \$369,580 had been collected through May 31, 2011. Funds held by the Florida Board of Administration Fund A have been recently redeemed and \$12,000 was moved into the District's operating account at Bank of St. Augustine. Funds available as of May 31, 2011 total \$1,809,320. Of \$25,000 allocated for the St. Augustine Police Department maritime unit, \$3,135 has been spent. Of the same allocation for the St. Johns County Sheriff, \$4,579 has been spent. None of the funds budgeted for the Flagler County artificial reef have been spent. The next regular meeting will see the beginning of TRIM season, and a tentative tax rate will need to be set.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion by Commissioner Bliss, seconded by Commissioner Rippe, to approve the minutes for the regular meeting of May 17, 2011, as presented, was unanimously passed.

ENGINEERING REPORT

Dr. Steve Schropp delivered the engineering report on behalf of Taylor Engineering. Terns have begun to nest in the Summer Haven River boring area and the work will be delayed until nesting activity ceases in July. Commissioner Bliss asked if turtle season would also present a delay. Dr. Schropp said they can easily work around turtle nests, but that it will be easier to delay the test borings until tern nesting is finished.

OLD BUSINESS

Jim Bedsole updated the Board on the status of the real property research. He explained that inquiries of several title underwriters have revealed the cost of the title exam of all potential real property interests of the District will probably exceed four thousand dollars. This is a much greater figure than Mr. Bedsole had originally predicted, and he needed the Board's permission to engage an underwriter at the higher expense.

A motion by Commissioner Rivers, seconded by Commissioner Rippe, to approve the expenditure of up to \$4,500.00 to research the real property interests held by the District was unanimously passed.

Commissioner Rippe commented he had attended the recent Marine Association boat show and that the event was very poorly attended. Commissioner Dixon agreed and said he regretted the Board had approved the expenditure.

Commissioner Rippe then said the South Ponte Vedra group had obtained an extension of time in which to object to the revised inlet dredging plan. Members of that group want only the inlet dredged and not the ebb shoal. Commissioner Dixon said down-sizing the project may lead to a loss of funding and may threaten St. Augustine Beach because of the absence of renourishment sand. Commissioner Rippe requested the Board delay beginning the revision of the Inlet Management Plan until the issue of a possible objection to the dredging is resolved. A consensus of the Board agreed to wait and see whether a formal objection is filed.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Artificial Reef.

Wil Smith, St. Johns County Recreation and Parks, and Carl Blow, Florida Inland Navigation District, appeared to discuss artificial reefs. As a preliminary matter, Mr. Smith explained a refund of funds donated by the District for the Fort Mose kayak launch site, and the use of funds at the COA/St. Johns County River House project.

FIND Commissioner Blow talked about the upcoming transport of bridge concrete from the storage site at St. Augustine Airport to the Flagler County Grady Prather Reef. He said the project had been down-sized from 1,000 to 500 tons. Also, the Airport Authority is taking bids on the construction of a road from U.S. 1 to its proposed barge terminal on the Intracoastal Waterway. Commissioner Blow said the new U.S. 1 bridge at the San Sebastian River will yield an additional 6,000 tons of concrete for artificial reefs. Many Florida

counties have recently had problems getting concrete for reefs because of the high value of recyclable concrete.

Wil Smith said St. Johns County needs a \$25,000 commitment from the District in case the county gets a grant for the construction of more artificial reefs. Artificial reefs create very, very high dollar returns for the community over time because of the extensive fishing and diving associated with them. Commissioner Blow said studies by FSU and UF confirm that artificial reefs are economic generators creating hundreds of dollars in business for each dollar invested. He suggested the Board place a line item of \$25,000 in its 2011-2012 budget for artificial reef investment. Commissioner Dixon said he believes the Board will place a line item in the next budget as requested.

Commissioner Dixon brought up the need for dredging or redesign of the channel from the Vilano Boat Ramp. He said the exit from the channel leads boaters directly onto a shoal and that boaters need to exit north or south, but not east. Commissioner Blow said FIND gets many requests for work on boat ramps and that the Vilano Ramp would probably score very well in the FIND rating system used to award grants.

James Manucy appeared on behalf of the Ancient City Game Fish Association. He said ACGFA has been involved in artificial reefs since the 1980's. The Andy King reef is drawing large game fish now, and the ACGFA plans to mount a commemorative plaque there very soon.

B. Fiscal Spending.

Commissioner Rippe said his experience with business budgeting is oriented toward planning and that he finds the fiscal process of the District and this Board to be reactive rather than pro-active.

Commissioner Dixon recalled that 20 years ago, the District had only \$150,000 in the bank versus the million plus today and that the balance was gradually built up as a dredge fund. He said the District has been able to save money by operating without a permanent staff.

Commissioner Rippe suggested the Secretary-Treasurer contact agencies and groups who regularly appear to request donations and ask them to estimate their needs for the coming year. In this way, the District may be able to prepare a more reliable budget.

Commissioner Dixon said the budget for the next year would be set next month and will include the regular items of law enforcement, artificial reefs, design projects, dredge projects, perhaps some funds for the Summer Haven River restoration, and events like Nights of Lights and the boat show. He said some items may only appear occasionally and that the Board needs to be able to respond to needs as they arise.

Commissioner Bliss said the District has had little to expend money on for many years. By contrast, most government agencies expend all of their income every year. He believes the District should do the same. He then suggested the physical boundaries of the District should be expanded to the entire county.

Commissioner Rippe reiterated the District is no longer anonymous and that its donees should help prioritize budgeted spending to assure that nothing of importance is overlooked.

Commissioner Rivers suggested using additional advertising for the District's budget meetings. Assistant Secretary-Treasure Kemper said advertising budget meetings is regulated in form and content by "TRIM" rules and may not vary from the requirements in law.

C. USCG Red Lighted Buoys St. Augustine Inlet Channel.

Commissioner Bliss discussed the lack of lighting on red buoys along the northern side of the St. Augustine Inlet channel.

A motion by Commissioner Bliss, seconded by Commissioner Rivers, to request the United States Coast Guard to add lighting to the red buoys in the St. Augustine Inlet was unanimously passed.

The Chairman then asked Mr. Bedsole to draft a letter to the USCG for Chairman Dixon's signature.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Gladys Humphreys, 2 C Street, St. Augustine Beach, spoke in favor of dredging the ebb shoal for the benefit of St. Augustine Beach. She said the recent ACOE report states dredging has no effect on beaches north of the inlet. She suggested allocating some dredge sand to the north beaches would help the situation there. Commissioner Dixon said federal funding for inlet dredging and beach renourishment will eventually disappear if the project is delayed long enough by litigation.

Linda Ginn, 9051 Gene Johnson Road, spoke about the Summer Haven River. She thanked the Board for its support of the restoration project and said the Friends of the Summer Haven River organization now has a website. Commissioner Dixon asked Dr. Schropp what would happen after core boring. Dr. Schropp said devising a design for the project would follow collection of adequate geotechnical information. After the design phase, finding a funding source would follow.

Commander Michelle Perry, St. Augustine Police Department, said they have four derelict vessels awaiting destruction at this time. One owner gave the City title to his vessel to expedite disposal. She talked about the confusion surrounding the treatment of USCG documented vessels versus those registered in Florida. She said the derelict vessel program here is one of the best in the state.

Commissioner Rippe thanked SAPD for its timely response to a recent call about trespassers on a dock. Commissioner Dixon recalled the police department used to have no marine presence but now has a full-time boat and crew as well as a fire boat.

Jim Piggott, City of St. Augustine, said the city operates a pump-out boat which services any boat anchored in city waters or docked at the city marina. Boats in the mooring field or at the city marina are pumped free of charge. Boats at private docks are not serviced.

Mike Pedonti, FWC, said the “at risk” placarding program has been working well with owners who regularly visit their boats, and that most owners have been contacted. He hopes this will lead to fewer derelict vessels.

Steve Zukowski, FWC, said the fireboat that grounded on Porpoise Point last year had only electronic charts and was operated imprudently. The accident was not necessarily because of lack of lighted buoys in the inlet. He also said the new boatlift at the city marina was progressing and may be completed this month. Officer Zukowski related that a sailboat which recently beached in South Ponte Vedra had been intentionally grounded by its operators after they became seasick. He also kept the Board abreast of developments after a woman was injured in a jet ski accident in the ICW.

Sgt. Jay McGruder, St. Johns County Sheriff’s Office, said SJSO assisted FWC in a safety check in April that found only 3 violations among 65 boats examined. In response to questions from commissioners, law enforcement officers reminded all present that vessels must contain personal floatation devices for all passengers, and that those under 6 years must wear PFDs at all times.

COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Rippe said the District website needs updating with the Mission Statement. He has also been contacted about District assistance in establishing a kayak ramp near Locust Street and he is in favor of such a project.

Commissioner Bliss said he favors development of a barge terminal at the airport but would oppose any effort to unload fuel from barges. He added that the half million dollars the Board committed for dredging on Porpoise Point is extravagant and unnecessary, and that the District’s boundaries should be expanded to all of the county.

NEXT MEETING

The Chairman announced the next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 19, 2011, at 3:00 p.m. in the same location.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business, Chairman Dixon adjourned the meeting at 5:35 p.m.

Secretary-Treasurer

Chairman