

ST. AUGUSTINE PORT, WATERWAY & BEACH DISTRICT
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, March 19 , 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, March 19, 2019.

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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**

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

4. **SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT**

Secretary-Treasurer Kemper delivered the financial report. As of February 28, 2019, the District had spent a total of \$331,456 for projects and operating expenses, and received a total of \$456,195 in tax revenue in fiscal year 2018-2019, with \$70,146 more expected. As of that date, the District's accounts contained total funds of \$2,237,408. A separate account established for the Summer Haven River restoration project contained \$70,146.

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion by Vice-Chairman Rivers to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of February 19, 2019, was seconded by Commissioner Brown and passed unanimously.

6. **ENGINEERING REPORT**

Mike Trudnak delivered the engineering report on behalf of Taylor Engineering. Mr. Trudnak reported that downed Channel Marker No. 6 in Salt Run has been repaired. He also discussed the recent breach of the beach berm at the south end of Summer Haven. He said the breach was about seventy-five feet wide and occurred in the same area as the Hurricane Matthew breach in 2017. He said Turnbull Engineering had spent a day closing the actual breach and four more days reinforcing the area at the request of administrators for the county. He said the combination of bad weather and the breach had delayed final completion of the

river restoration project until the end of April, 2019. Bird monitoring has begun already and no nesting activity is expected in the immediate area of the work as long as machinery remains active on the site. Most of the nesting activity is on the mitigation site to the west of the restoration project, and some is expected on the completed berm on the north end of Summer Haven's beach.

In response to questions from Commissioner Flowers, Mr. Trudnak explained the project location and the area of the Matthew breach. He said the latest delay is a debris blockage in the dredge pipeline caused by building debris imbedded in the sand clogging the river. He said many homes and outdoor structures were demolished in the storm and bits and pieces of this are often pulled in by the dredge, causing clogs. As a result, the contractor has had to use more land-based dredging to compensate. No additional expense to the district will be caused by these delays.

7. **OLD BUSINESS:** NONE

8. **NEW BUSINESS:**

A. **Briefing Army Corp. of Engineers Inlet Study - Mike Cullum, City of St. Augustine**

Mike Cullum, Public Works Director, City of St. Augustine, discussed a proposed Corps of Engineers study of areas of the city affected by the recent hurricane-related floods. He said the Corps may soon have funds available to perform a feasibility study of repetitively flooded areas to determine what, if anything, can be done to mitigate the damage from future flood events. He said the proposed study would require three years and cost three million dollars, fifty percent of which cost is required to be local matching funds. The city is not eligible for the study this year, but city commissioners have decided to apply next year and are looking for additional matching funds from the county and the District. Mr. Cullum said the study will eventually provide alternatives for mitigating flood damages. According to Mr. Cullum, alternatives could include temporarily closing St. Augustine Inlet by means of a giant gate or wall, or simply constructing higher sea walls throughout the affected inland areas. He said that in order to qualify for construction funds from the federal government, the projected economic impact of the mitigation measures must be greater than the projected cost of the mitigation construction.

Chairman Benjamin said he was not certain if the District's charter would allow it to participate in such a project and that he would seek an opinion from the District's attorney. Commissioner Flowers said the project sounds exciting.

In response, Mr. Cullum discussed programs recently initiated by several local governments in south Florida to begin flood mitigation planning. He said City of St. Augustine personnel have begun to talk with county staff about the same issues, but no substantial action has resulted. He added that the answer may ultimately be to seek funding for any such projects from the Florida Legislature. In response to questions by Commissioner Brown, Mr. Cullum said the results of the study are at least three years away and the completion of any construction would be many years from now.

In response to questions by Vice-Chairman Rivers, Mr. Cullum said designs for a mechanism to close the inlet might resemble some already built in the Netherlands. Those consist of moveable horizontal gates or underwater structures which will rise to the surface to block water flow. Mr. Cullum said money would be needed each year of the three-year study. Chairman Benjamin said it sounded too expensive for the District budget. Commissioner Flowers said the board would need to determine by vote at a later time whether the cost is acceptable, but that a study is definitely needed. Mr. Cullum reiterated the study would require a 50% local match and construction would probably require a 25% local match. In response to a question by Commissioner Brown, Mr. Cullum said the city commission had already approved the expense of the study.

9. GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE COMMENTS

Sgt. Josh Underwood, SJSO Marine Unit, said his agency spent 175 hours on the water last month, responded to 72 calls for assistance, performed 26 vessel inspections, and wrote 5 citations. He said they had found no new derelict vessels, but FWC is now working on three new ones near Doug Crane Park. He said his agency had a booth at the recent Kids Fishing Fair at the Vilano Pier and that about 200 children attended.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Carl Blow, St. Johns County's representative to the Florida Inland Navigation District, discussed updating the map or chart of the Matanzas Bay area, as planned by the District. He said the original map was intended to assist mariners locate local resources such as food, fuel, lodging and entertainment from the water, and that it was printed at a cost of \$5.00 per chart. The charts were very durable and were not intended for distribution to the general public other than those with marine interests, such as retailers and boaters. He suggested that a modern replacement for the printed map could be one posted online which would be accessible through a mobile telephone. He said most boaters use their phones for navigation now, anyway, and that providing and updating an online map would be easier and less expensive than a print version. Commissioner Way suggested placing the map within a phone application which could be provided at no cost to users. The District could then sell advertising on the app thereby contributing to its cost and maintenance expense.

Local FIND grant applications must be filed with that agency by March 28, 2019. Mr. Blow said the county has applied for assistance with improvements to the Palmetto Avenue boat ramp, the Doug Crane Park boat ramp, the Trout Creek boat ramp and the Vilano boat ramp. So far, only \$473,000 in requests have been made from agencies in St. Johns County although \$600,000 is available from FIND.

Mr. Blow went on to explain that forty million dollars of federal hurricane relief funds were taken back from FIND in January, 2019, because of restraints on the federal budget. He said FIND was forced to cancel almost all of its hurricane repair projects this year except for those projects intended to eliminate hazardous navigation conditions, such as the project near

Matanzas Inlet. FIND will pay for that project out of its own budget and the sand removed from the affected portion of the Intracoastal Waterway will be placed on the beach at Summer Haven.

In response to questions by Commissioner Flowers, Mike Trudnak said renourishment of the beach berm at Summer Haven is the easiest and least expensive method to prevent continuing breaches. He added that obtaining a permit to place a rock revetment or rip-rap on that beach would be very difficult and would also be extremely expensive. He said the county faces the same problem on Vilano Beach and that the expense is so great the county is considering raising or re-allocating the tourist bed-tax to help pay for it.

11. COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS:

Vice Chairman Rivers reminded the board that St. Johns County is part of two federal congressional districts, and that any request for assistance from Representative John Rutherford should also be addressed to Representative Michael Waltz, who represents southern St. Johns County.

12. NEXT MEETING:

Chairman Benjamin announced the next regular meeting of the board will be held at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 16, 2019, in the St. Augustine Beach City Commission Room.

13. ADJOURN

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

Secretary-Treasurer

Chairman