

ST. AUGUSTINE PORT, WATERWAY & BEACH DISTRICT

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, June 17, 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, June 17, 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, Commissioners Chuck Hennessey, Jerry Dixon and Jay Bliss were in attendance. Commissioner Barry Benjamin was absent. The meeting was also attended by Steve Schropp of Taylor Engineering, Secretary-Treasurer Elyse Kemper and District Counsel Jim Bedsole.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

Secretary-Treasurer Elyse Kemper delivered the report. The District collected slightly more taxes this year than expected because of taxes paid in from prior years. A total of \$376,774 has been collected this fiscal year. Of \$130,330 committed for projects, \$79,681 has been spent for law enforcement overtime and artificial reef construction. Net funds available as of June 11, 2014 equaled \$1,549,353. In response to a question by Chairman Rippe, Ms. Kemper stated the dredge projects on the San Sebastian and Salt Run are under way and that the \$370,000 budgeted for those items will probably be spent by the end of the fiscal year.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Bliss moved to approve the minutes of the regular meetings of April 15, 2014 and May 20, 2014. Commissioner Hennessey seconded the motion and it passed by a unanimous vote.

Chairman Rippe asked why there were no action items for the May minutes. Mr. Bedsole said there were no action items created during the meeting.

ENGINEERING REPORT

Dr. Steve Schropp of Taylor Engineering delivered the engineering report. Dr. Schropp said a recommendation should be available soon from the administrative law judge handling the Summer Haven River restoration issue. He added that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is reviewing the restoration plan and giving it top priority. Chairman Rippe asked if it would be possible for someone from Taylor Engineering to research whether funds are available from the government to help maintain a recreational inlet like St. Augustine's. Dr. Schropp said he would check into the matter and report at the next meeting.

Chairman Rippe said he had been contacted by a county commissioner from a south Florida county who had questions about the Inlet Management Plan for St. Augustine Inlet. That county has been sued to compel it to place sand from their inlet on certain local beaches, and their county has no inlet management plan.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Real estate for water access - Chairman Rippe.

Chairman Rippe discussed two pieces of waterfront property for sale on the San Sebastian River. The first is a former boat yard on Nix Boat Yard Road containing three acres of land and a large metal building. Chairman Rippe said he was not sure the site would be useful. The second site is behind Target department store and is fourteen acres with frontage directly on the San Sebastian River. He said the site is large enough to offer multiple uses and accommodate parking for boat trailers and other vehicles. Commissioner Dixon said he agreed it sounded good but that the District does not have the funds or the tax revenue to purchase, develop and maintain such a site. He asked Dr. Schropp to find out about funding sources. Dr. Schropp said the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has a program to help fund water access projects, but that the funds were for design, permitting or construction, only. None are available for land acquisition, and the program is a competitive cost-sharing arrangement which funds according to a formula. He also said FIND may provide funds for ramps and other access facilities.

Wil Smith, County Recreation and Parks Director, said the best funding option for such a project is the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program, which gives priority to public access projects. In response to a question by Chairman Rippe, Mr. Smith said the cost of installing a two-lane boat ramp with the related paving and parking is approximately one hundred thousand dollars. He said finding money for acquisition is the most difficult problem. In response to questions by Commissioner Bliss, Mr. Smith said the location of a boat ramp has little effect on its level of use because demand for water access is high.

In response to questions by commissioners, Mr. Bedsole said he would report to the Board at the next meeting on possible methods to fund a purchase of land. Chairman Rippe said he would contact the county regarding the site and whether the county commission would be willing to join the District in acquiring a site.

Commissioner Bliss said he favors the District acquiring a site for public access to water and asked whether the Board should meet more often to keep up with the information the Board is seeking.

Commissioner Bliss made a motion to have a meeting on July 8, 2014 at 5:00 p.m. for the purpose of receiving reports on land acquisition.

Chairman Rippe said the next regular meeting would only be a week after that date. Ms. Kemper added that the first discussion of next year's tax rate will take place at the next regular meeting.

Chairman Rippe called for a second of Commissioner Bliss' motion. There was no second and the motion died.

Mr. Smith went on to request the Board to allocate another \$25,000 from reserves for funding artificial reefs. He said the money is needed for matching funds for the coming year. He reminded the Board that he and FIND Commissioner Carl Blow appeared last year and the Board agreed to keep \$50,000 in its budget for the current fiscal year. However, \$25,000 was given to Flagler County earlier out of this year's budget, leaving that item \$25,000 short.

A motion by Commissioner Dixon, seconded by Commissioner Hennessey, to fund the artificial reef budget line item with an additional \$25,000, was approved by a unanimous vote.

A second motion by Commissioner Dixon, seconded by Commissioner Hennessey, to amend the budget to move \$25,000 from reserves to funds committed for artificial reefs, was approved by unanimous vote.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion regarding switching banks from BB&T to Harbor Community Bank

Jeff Bell and Brianne Strange appeared on behalf of Harbor Community Bank to discuss how the bank could improve services to the District. Mr. Bell explained the bank is a qualified public depository. Ms. Strange discussed interest rates for certificates of deposit. In response to questions by Chairman Rippe, Mr. Bell said that the bank would agree to waive early withdrawal penalties, although if it was less than one year from issuance, there might be a small penalty.

A motion by Commissioner Dixon, seconded by Chairman Rippe, to transfer all of the District's bank accounts to Harbor Community Bank, was approved by unanimous vote.

8.B. Trim Timetable - Secretary/Treasurer Kemper.

Ms. Kemper discussed this year's Truth in Millage procedures. She said the Board will need to set a tentative rate at the July 15, 2014 meeting. She reminded commissioners that the rate

can be lowered in later meetings but cannot be raised. Ms. Kemper said she will provide a tentative budget for the 2014-2015 fiscal year prior to the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lt. Steve Zukowski, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, said officer Pedonti had transferred to the St. Johns County Sheriff’s Department and that another officer had moved into service with federal authorities. As a result, FWC is temporarily short-staffed in our area and may run a bit behind on non-emergency issues like derelict vessels.

He said the owner of a seventeen-foot boat aground on Porpoise Point has been located and advised to remove the vessel but has failed to do so. A warrant has been issued for his arrest. There also has been a sailboat aground in Ponte Vedra Beach since March, 2014, but the owner has begun to saw the boat up and remove it.

COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Hennessey asked Mr. Bedsole to have a bond attorney appear at the next meeting to inform commissioners about the process of issuing bonds. Chairman Rippe said the debt service on two million dollars would outstrip the District’s budget. Commissioner Dixon said seller financing would be a better idea. Chairman Rippe said he believes FIND would fund twenty-five percent (25%) of the acquisition cost of a site for use as a transfer site for dredge spoil.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Rippe announced the next regular meeting will be held on July 15, 2014 in the same location.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business, Chairman Rippe adjourned the meeting at 5:02 p.m.

Secretary-Treasurer

Chairman

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Dr. Schropp from Taylor Engineering will research the availability of funds to help maintain St. Augustine Inlet and will report his findings at the next meeting.
2. Dr. Schropp will research funding available to purchase, develop and maintain a site for public water access.
3. Mr. Bedsole will report to the Board at the next meeting on possible methods to fund a purchase of land.

4. Chairman Rippe will contact the county regarding the San Sebastian River site and whether the county commission would be willing to join the District in acquiring the site.
5. Ms. Kemper will provide a tentative budget for the 2014-2015 fiscal year prior to the next meeting.
6. Mr. Bedsole will have a bond attorney appear at the next meeting to inform commissioners about the process of issuing bonds for land acquisition.

wk/rg/port/minutes-2014/6-17-14 meeting