

ST. AUGUSTINE PORT, WATERWAY & BEACH DISTRICT

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, September 20, 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, September 20, 2011.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chairman Tom Rivers called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

ROLL CALL

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

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

Elyse Kemper delivered the Treasurer's report. As of August 31, 2011, \$5,700 has been spent by the St. Augustine Police Department for overtime pay and the St. Johns county Sheriff's Office has spent \$16,360.00. These agencies were allocated \$25,000 apiece in the fiscal year 2010-2011 budget. Net funds available as of that date were \$1,561,741.00.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion by Commissioner Bliss seconded by Commissioner Benjamin, the Board unanimously approved the Minutes of the July 19, 2011 regular meeting.

On a motion by Commissioner Benjamin seconded by Commissioner Bliss, the Board unanimously approved the Minutes of the August 16, 2011 regular meeting.

ENGINEERING REPORT

Dr. Steve Schropp and Dr. Rajesh Srinivas delivered the engineering report on behalf of Taylor Engineering. Dr. Schropp announced the new President of Taylor Engineering is Jim Marino. He then reported that the new Marker 15 is in place in Salt Run and that the invoice for the work has been forwarded to the Secretary for payment.

Dr. Schropp then shared the results of the geotechnical report on Summer Haven River. The sand in the river is suitable for beach placement and the project to rehabilitate the river is technically feasible. Dr. Schropp said the next steps are to locate sponsors for the project and complete the design.

Chairman Dixon arrived at 3:10 p.m.

Commissioner Bliss asked about the total cost of the project. Dr. Schropp said construction costs could approach 2.5 million dollars based on the removal or relocation of 250,000 cubic yards of sand at \$10 per yard.

Chairman Dixon asked what the combined design/permit phase would cost and how long it would require. Dr. Schropp said the design and permitting phase could cost as much as \$150,000 depending on the extent of testing demanded by the permitting agency.

Commissioner Benjamin asked how the project would find a sponsor. According to Dr. Schropp, a project such as this is normally sponsored by the County, the Water Management District, the Port District or NERR. Chairman Dixon and Commissioner Benjamin agreed that the logical sponsor would be St. Johns County.

Dr. Srinivas then addressed the Board and provided depth survey information for the St. Augustine Inlet. He compared information from surveys completed in 1974, 1994 and 2011 and noted the deepest portion of the inlet channel has gradually moved to the south as sand has accreted on Porpoise Point. Chairman Dixon said the information vindicates his belief that dredging the north side of the Inlet will reduce scouring along the south jetty.

Vice-Chairman Rivers commented that the gradual buildup of sand on the north side of the Inlet has almost completely covered up the jetty there. In response to a question by Commissioner Bliss, Dr. Srinivas said the data shows little change in the contour of the Inlet channel from 1994 to 2011. This indicates the Inlet reached an equilibrium but it could be upset by an event such as a storm which could cause the collapse of the south jetty.

In response to further questioning from Commissioner Bliss and Chairman Dixon, Dr. Srinivas added that current dredging, when completed, will further relieve pressure on the south jetty and may yield another decade of safety for that structure.

Joe Stephenson, St. Johns County Public Works Director, said the controversy surrounding dredging plans for the Inlet have been settled and that all parties have joined in an agreement allowing the immediate removal of 2.1 million cubic yards of sand from the Inlet, Porpoise Point and the south ebb shoal. He added that the agreement calls for an updated

Inlet Management Plan but does not specifically require the District to fund such an update. Andy Ames, St. Johns County Engineer, added if the District updates the IMP, much more information will be available after the next round of dredging and it may be more cost-effective to wait for that project to be completed before beginning a revision of the IMP.

In response to questioning by Commissioner Bliss, Mr. Ames said the total dredging project cost is in excess of 20 million dollars, with most of the funding coming from federal sources.

Commissioners then discussed comments associated with Commissioner Bliss which appeared on a maritime internet blog known as Cruisers Net. Commissioner Bliss explained that he had provided some Inlet data to Cruisers Net and that comments which appeared along with the data on the internet had been added by the editor of the website. The editorial comments could be interpreted as negatively portraying conditions in St. Augustine Inlet and other members of the Board complained to Commissioner Bliss.

Commissioner Dixon also mentioned a letter he received from FIND Commissioner Carl Blow complaining Commissioner Bliss had interposed himself in the relationship between FIND, St. Johns County, and the ACOE. Commissioner Bliss said his effort was not meant to intervene in any way but only to keep a channel of communication open between the Board and those agencies. Commissioner Rivers said no commissioner should be trying to represent the interests of the Board without having been delegated the authority to do so. Commissioner Benjamin said Board members should be certain to clarify whether their comments to the public are made as individual citizens or whether they actually represent the Board. Commissioner Bliss said he reserves the right to responsibly speak and advocate for local maritime interests. Commissioner Dixon said the District probably needs a policy to help guide commissioners in making public comments.

Commissioner Bliss then discussed the events leading to the discovery of the shoaling of St. Augustine Inlet, which is now very evident to informed mariners. He said the Coast Guard's Notice to Mariners now describes the Inlet as prone to "shoaling" instead of its previous description as "dangerous shoaling". He said part of the District's responsibilities include monitoring the Inlet and that there was no system in place to do so.

Commissioner Dixon said the Coast Guard has the responsibility for marking and monitoring the Inlet and that the District should not try to step into that role. He added that there is no substitute for prudent navigation skills and cited the intercoastal waterway as an example of a shallow water body that most mariners manage to safely navigate.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business was discussed.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion regarding District Projects for the Upcoming Fiscal Year.

Elyse Kemper opened discussion of the District's budget by informing the Board they needed to decide which items to keep on the list of special projects for the coming year. Commissioner Rivers said he did not believe the Regatta of Lights should be on the list. Commissioner Benjamin agreed. Chairman Dixon then directed Ms. Kemper to move the money allocated for the Regatta of Lights to the overtime pay budget for the St. Augustine Police Department.

Commissioner Benjamin then directed discussion to the funds budgeted for the Summer Haven River project. He questioned whether any agency had agreed to sponsor the project. Chairman Dixon reported a meeting he had with St. Johns County Commissioner Mark Minor. He said the County may be willing to allow the use of its beach and dune permit for the placement of sand from the river. Dr. Schropp agreed and said the County has indicated it would expect the District to bear the cost of design and permitting, regardless of how construction costs are paid.

Linda Ginn, 9051 Gene Johnson Road, addressed the Board and said she agrees with Chairman Dixon that the County will probably sponsor the project and allow use of its permit if the Port will take care of design and permitting costs.

B. Trash Buster Program.

No one appeared to discuss this item.

PUBLIC COMMENT

B.J. Kalaidi advised the Board to use District funds for Inlet maintenance or updating the IMP and to avoid giving the City of St. Augustine any financial help to rebuild its seawall. She said the City has already found sources for funds and does not need District funds. Commissioner Dixon said the City has not asked for any funds but that the District's charter authorizes it to build or contribute to the construction of marine improvements such as seawalls and bulkheads.

Officer Steve Zukowski, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation, reported that no new derelict vessels have appeared in the last month and that those which remain will soon be removed. He then related the harrowing tale of two men who, despite being warned against it, took a 9-foot dingy into the intercoastal in tropical storm conditions. The results thankfully were not fatal, but did cost the taxpayers a lot of money. The boaters were not issued citations.

Officer Zukowski also reported the new FWC boatlift at the City Marina is operating well and that the newly-replaced navigation aids in Salt Run are appreciated.

Chairman Dixon recessed the meeting at 5:05 p.m. The meeting was reconvened at 5:15 p.m.

COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Bliss stated he was pleased to represent his constituency on the Board and that he would continue to bring maritime issues to its meetings

Commissioner Benjamin said the Coast Guard may have a buoy tender from Charleston, South Carolina available to work in St. Augustine Inlet soon. Commissioner Bliss said a large tender is needed because of the powerful flow through St. Augustine Inlet.

NEXT MEETING

The Chairman announced the next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 18, 2011, at 3:00 p.m. in the same location.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business, Chairman Dixon adjourned the meeting at 5:20 p.m.

Secretary-Treasurer

Chairman