

ST. AUGUSTINE PORT, WATERWAY & BEACH DISTRICT
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, November 20, 2018

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, November 20, 2018.

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, Commissioners Chris Way, Matt Brown, Sandy Flowers and Tom Rivers were in attendance. 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 October 31, 2018, the District had spent \$23,306 of funds committed for special projects in the 2018-2019 fiscal year, and \$200,000 for the Connectivity/Seawall project for the City of St. Augustine, which funds had been designated for this purpose prior to the current fiscal year. As of October 31, 2018, the District had a total of \$1,871,447 on deposit, with an additional \$317,338 in the separate fund for the Summer Haven River restoration project. Expected tax revenue for the year is \$526,341, of which \$9,049 has been received to date.

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion by Commissioner Rivers to approve the minutes of the September 11, 2018 regular meeting was seconded by Commissioner Way and passed unanimously.

A motion by Chairman Benjamin to approve the minutes of the first public hearing on the millage and budget for fiscal year 2018-2019 held on September 11, 2018 was seconded by Commissioner Rivers and passed unanimously.

A motion by Chairman Benjamin to approve the minutes of the final public hearing on the millage and budget for fiscal year 2018-2019 held on October 2, 2018 was seconded by Commissioner Rivers and passed unanimously.

A motion by Chairman Benjamin to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of October 16, 2018 was seconded by Commissioner Rivers and passed unanimously.

6. ENGINEERING REPORT

Mike Trudnak delivered the engineering report for Taylor Engineering. He said the only item is the completion phase of the Summer Haven River restoration which will commence after Thanksgiving. He said all of the equipment and supplies required to finish the job are now on site and ready.

7. OLD BUSINESS

A. Police Boat - Jim Piggott

Jim Piggott, Director of General Services for the City of St. Augustine explained the city's police boat is old and in need of constant maintenance, thus hampering the city's ability to patrol local waters. He recounted that FIND had previously committed funds for a new motor, and the District had committed money for a kayak launch which was never used because the grant was shifted to hurricane repairs. The city still has FIND grants available and will pay for the kayak launch itself, but wants the District to contribute half the cost of a replacement police boat. The District's share will be about \$60,000.

Commissioner Flowers asked Mr. Piggott what kind of boat the city had in mind. Mr. Piggott said he did not have that information. In response to questions by Commissioner Way, Mr. Piggott said he did not know whether the boat would be new or used. Commissioner Way told Mr. Piggott to come back to the board when they had identified the boat they want to buy. Mr. Piggott said FIND had approved a grant for half the cost up to \$60,000 the previous year. FIND Commissioner Carl Blow appeared and stated FIND had approved the city for up to \$60,000 in funds for one-half the cost of a boat for inshore use.

Commissioner Flowers asked if there was a way to get a free go-fast boat from the State of Florida. Mr. Piggott said seized boats are sometimes available but usually require so much work that it is not economically feasible to accept them.

A motion by Commissioner Rivers to approve up to \$60,000 in matching funds for the purchase of a boat for the St. Augustine Police Department was seconded by Chairman Benjamin and passed by a unanimous roll-call vote.

In response to questions by Commissioner Flowers, Mr. Piggott said the old boat will be sold and that the city would return with documentation when the new boat is purchased.

B. Salt Run FIND Grant - Jim Piggott

Mr. Piggott said the city has a FIND grant for dredging Salt Run and needs a matching local grant of \$50,000. Commissioner Flowers asked whether the channel will be dredged all the way up to the Lighthouse Boat Ramp and how deep. Mr. Piggott said it is eleven feet deep all the way to the boat ramp because it silts in quickly. Commissioner Flowers said the area is primarily for recreational use and does not need eleven feet of depth. She said the commercial channel on the San Sebastian River is not that deep.

Carl Blow commented that the turns in the channel of the San Sebastian River have been dredged in the last few years because those were the only shallow spots. The San Sebastian contains the only areas of working waterfront in St. Johns County. He said Lighthouse Park contains the only boat ramp inside the city limits. Salt Run serves many recreational power boaters, kayakers, and others, and serves as the route for FIND's discharge pipes when dredging the Intracoastal Waterway.

Commissioner Flowers said large commercial boats cannot travel up the San Sebastian to the supply houses because of the restricted depth. Mr. Blow said he has spoken with business owners on the San Sebastian and that their only complaint was regarding a shallow spot near Oyster Creek. Commissioner Flowers said she has spoken to over three thousand people who are upset with the lack of access for commercial vessels in the San Sebastian.

A motion by Commissioner Benjamin to approve \$50,000 in matching funds payable to the City of St. Augustine for dredging Salt Run was seconded by Commissioner Rivers and passed by a vote of 4 to 1.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. **FASD Workshop - Commissioner Rivers**

Commissioner Rivers reported he recently attended a workshop sponsored by the Florida Association of Special Districts. The workshop mainly covered how to propose and promote legislation. He said fifty percent of the users of facilities and waterways within the District are from outside the county and do not support the local tax base. He said expanding the District would increase the funds available to maintain and improve marine facilities in the entire county. He also spoke to St. Johns County's legislative representative, Cindy Stevenson, who asked him to attend the upcoming round table of local legislators and present his ideas. Commissioner Rivers asked the board for permission to do so. In response to questions from Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Rivers said expanding District boundaries county-wide is the only issue he would present. All commissioners voiced approval of this plan.

Commissioner Rivers then asked the board to approve the purchase of a plaque honoring Chairman Dixon's twenty years of service on the board. The request was approved by unanimous vote.

Chairman Benjamin moved to elect Commissioner Rivers Vice-Chairman of the board. The motion was approved by a 4-1 vote.

9. GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE COMMENTS

Teddy Meyer, St. Johns County Parks and Recreation Department, said his agency intends to improve existing boat ramps in the coming year and identified those as Palmetto, Vilano and Doug Crane Park, with the Doug Crane ramp planned to receive the most improvements. In response to questions from Commissioner Flowers, Mr. Meyer said the improvements will include an aluminum gangway, a floating dock, and an expanded parking area, altogether totaling about \$140,000. The county wants the District to contribute half the cost. In response to questions from Commissioner Flowers, Mr. Meyer said a survey of 700 boat ramp users indicated the most pressing problem is parking, and that will be the county's first priority.

Commissioner Flowers asked why he was asking for \$70,000 now when two months ago they requested only \$30,000. Mr. Meyer initially said he did not know the answer but later explained that the county has since found they will be losing TDC funding and that their projected costs were under-estimated. She said she has talked to members of the St. Augustine South homeowners association and that they are in favor of only a small increase in parking capacity because of the restricted access through local residential streets.

Chairman Benjamin said Mr. Meyer's request and supporting information was too ambiguous for him to support. He said he would like to see more evidence of support from residents near the ramp and more details on the planned improvements. Commissioner Way agreed that more details are necessary, such as specific line items and plans. Commissioner Flowers asked for information on the number of parking places proposed. She said she has spoken to over three thousand people about this and the neighbors are tired of all the trailers coming down their streets. She asked why the county is not building ramps in other places. Mr. Meyer said land is too expensive to build new ramps. Carl Blow appeared on behalf of the Florida Inland Navigation District, and added to Mr. Meyers' comments about boat ramps by saying permits for boat ramps are often difficult or impossible to obtain.

Mr. Blow continued, saying the St. Augustine Inlet and the Intracoastal Waterway near Matanzas Inlet are the two most often dredged areas of the Florida ICW. He said Congress recently funded the removal of 30,000 cubic yards of sand from St. Augustine Inlet and 50,000 cubic yards from near Matanzas Inlet. The sand will be placed on Anastasia State Park beaches and the beach at Summer Haven. These projects will occur in 2019. He said the location of the placement of sand on Summer Haven's beach is still an open question. Currently, the sand is slated to be deposited between Markers R204 and R208, which is the

south end of the beach.

The other primary mission of FIND is to assist the Corps of Engineers in maintaining the ICW and ensuring adequate public access. The Florida Legislature in the 1980's wanted to improve public access to the ICW, and FIND was created for that purpose.

FIND has an annual grant program for local waterway projects which grants are required to be matched by local funds. Distribution of grants depends on the tax revenue from each of FIND's twelve counties. St. Johns County's limit this year is \$650,000, and Mr. Blow encouraged all local agencies to make requests by April 1 each year for funds up to the entire limit available.

In response to questions from Commissioner Flowers, Mr. Blow said all grant applications need to be filed with FIND by the end of March, each year. He said the Port District has been of critical importance in providing matching funds for important local projects, such as dredging Salt Run and expanding public access. He said grants may be extended for three years after they are awarded, so the money does not have to be used immediately. In response to questions from Commissioner Way, Mr. Blow said the highest ranking projects are usually dredging, boat ramps, working waterfront, and public access. Projects sited away from the ICW are automatically lower priority, and FIND will provide up to 25% of the cost of acquiring land for new boat ramps. In response to questions from Commissioner Flowers, Mr. Blow said installing a boat ramp beside the May Street Bridge would be problematic because of environmental permitting, even for non-motorized craft like kayaks.

Cpl. Josh Underwood, SJSO Marine Unit, reported his agency spent 175 hours on the water last month, answered 65 calls for service, performed 19 vessel inspections, wrote 12 warnings, issued 6 citations, performed 14 marine sanitation inspections, and cited 4 shrimpers for turtle device violations. He said their main focus has been marine sanitation and that many live-aboards now use composting toilets. He said many transients anchor near Crane Park because of access, and that the county is considering establishing a mooring field there. He said 14 boats regularly anchor there and 11 are live-aboards. Commissioner Flowers said the area needs a pump-out boat to prevent pollution from human waste.

Chris Pacetti, St. Augustine Fire Department, said his agency responded to 11 calls last month and 10 requests for assistance. His agency also trained with FWC, SJSO, and the Coast Guard.

Lt. Steve Zukowski and Officer Bill Miller, FWC, reported on local marine topics including derelict vessels, events, accidents, agency matters, and fisheries. They said the derelict trimaran near Marineland had floated into the marsh and will now be removed by the University of Florida at its expense. New low speed zone buoys for area bridges have arrived but still await permits from the Corps of Engineers prior to installation. The Regatta of Lights will take place December 8, 2018, at the bayfront and FWC will be there, along with

SJSO's Marine Unit. There were several accidents during the month, one involving a boat which lost control under the Vilano Bridge and struck the anchor line of another boat causing an occupant to fall overboard without injury. Another accident occurred in the ICW at Palm Valley when a transiting cabin cruiser hit a submerged log and sustained heavy hull damage. The FWC boat lift at the City Marina is back in working order and two boats are located there. Eventually, two more will be located at Comache Cove.

Officer Miller reported an oyster harvester was cited for transporting untagged oysters. He explained that tagging oysters' source areas is a public health requirement. They also pointed out that many cast netters have been violating the limited access work area around Guana Dam to catch undersized game fish, which are illegal to keep, and shrimp, which are legal. Finger mullet are plentiful now, and catches of trout and redfish are good as a result.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT: NONE

11. COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Flowers said she wants an official email address associated with the District so she can avoid doing official business on her private email. She also asked for records of the District's payments to the Conch House in 2008 for the services of their pump-out boat. Chairman Benjamin said the records are so old they are irrelevant to current District business and he did not want to allow further discussion of the topic.

12. NEXT MEETING:

Chairman Benjamin announced the next regular meeting of the board will be held at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 18, 2018, in the St. Augustine Beach City Commission Room.

13. ADJOURN

There being no further business, Chairman Benjamin adjourned the meeting at 4:40 p.m.

Secretary-Treasurer

Chairman