

ST. AUGUSTINE PORT, WATERWAY & BEACH DISTRICT
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, December 15, 2015

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, December 15, 2015.

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, Vice-Chairman Barry Benjamin, Commissioners Mark Helman, Chuck Hennessey and Tom Rivers were in attendance. The meeting was also attended by Ken Craig of Taylor Engineering, District Counsel Jim Bedsole, and Secretary-Treasurer Elyse Kemper.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

Secretary-Treasurer Kemper delivered the financial report to the Board. As of November 30, 2015, \$5,895 in committed funds had been spent for Sheriff Department overtime pay and \$2,828 for the City of St. Augustine's pump-out boat repairs. In the first two months of fiscal year 2015-2016, \$48,748 in operating expenses have been spent. As of November 30, 2015, the District had a total of \$1,948,444 on deposit of which \$1,581,601 was available for use. Of taxes, \$200,678 has been received with \$219,836 more expected this fiscal year.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Rivers moved to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2015 regular meeting, which motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Benjamin. The motion passed unanimously.

ENGINEERING REPORT

Ken Craig delivered the engineering report on behalf of Taylor Engineering. He said the permit application for the South Ponte Vedra/Vilano Beach project will be completed and ready to submit to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection next week. Taylor is also working on a request for a permit modification to extend dredging to the shoal which is developing in the mouth of the Summer Haven River. They are also coordinating with the Army Corps of Engineers as it prepares to dredge the Intracoastal Waterway near Fort Matanzas. Sand from that project will be placed on the beach at Summer Haven and may

have some effect on the area available for later use by the District in the river restoration project.

Chairman Dixon asked about the progress of the contract between the District and FDEP for distribution of the legislative grant made earlier in 2015 for the restoration of the Summer Haven River. He said he knew that Taylor Engineering had not been paid yet for any of its work on the project. Mr. Bedsole said FDEP had revised its process for drafting and approving such contracts, but that the District, the Friends of Summer Haven, and Taylor Engineering were all working to assure the process was progressing as quickly as possible.

Commissioner Helms asked Mr. Craig whether it was likely the Coast Guard could place lights on all the buoys marking the inlet channel. Mr. Craig said the buoys are completely within Coast Guard jurisdiction and are administered by their Boating and Waterways office in Jacksonville. Chairman Dixon said entry at night is very confusing because the vehicle lights and other lights in the background make navigation lights difficult to identify.

OLD BUSINESS: NONE

NEW BUSINESS:

A) Port of Call Grant Request - Sandy Flowers

Sandy Flowers of 29 Mulberry Street, St. Augustine, appeared on behalf of Port of Call, LLC to discuss its application for assistance with Cruisers' Shuttle, a transportation service operated by Port of Call. This service offers local transportation to cruising sailors for provisioning and errands while they are anchored in St. Augustine. She said the city marina in Charleston, South Carolina and the local government in Vero Beach, Florida each operate shuttle services for cruisers visiting their cities and that they compete with St. Augustine as a favored cruising destination. According to Ms. Flowers, cruisers stopping here are usually retired, have an average age of 58, and travel aboard boats averaging 47 feet in length. Cruisers originate from countries all over the world. She said that cruisers spend a lot when they stop here and that local government should support services like her shuttle. Chairman Dixon said he supports the idea and thinks the city and the county should be providing support for the service.

Commissioner Helman said there was a need for the shuttle because of the lack of public transportation in St. Augustine. Ms. Flowers said local marine businesses can pay to advertise on the shuttle and she will stop at those business as a regular part of her route.

Chairman Dixon said he was very interested in supporting the shuttle but is concerned about the legal aspects and the fact that no other local taxing authority is assisting. Commissioner Benjamin said the District should simply buy advertising from Port of Call. Chairman Dixon said the application should be reviewed again at the next meeting.

B) Application for FIND grant for Summer Haven River - Ellis Zahra

Ellis Zahra appeared on behalf of the Friends of the Summer Haven River to discuss the application schedule for grants from the Florida Inland Navigation District. He said funds

may be available if the District applies to FIND. Up to \$500,000 will be available in 2016 for use in St. Johns County. He said Taylor Engineering has agreed to assist with the application and added that FOSHR recently received two thousand dollars in a garage sale. The National Park Service has also given them a grant of technical assistance to pursue additional funding from the Florida Legislature in 2016.

Chairman Dixon said the District, the St. Augustine Airport and the City of St. Augustine usually make requests for most or all of the money from FIND each year. Mr. Zahra said he wants to make sure the Summer Haven River restoration project is considered in the process.

Carl Blow, FIND Commissioner from St. Johns County, said he would like to see St. Johns County get all of the money available for projects here. He said asking for grants in excess of the funds potentially available is not a problem because all grant applications are graded separately, and each will have a different rating. This could mean some are funded and some are not, but it is important for county organizations to absorb all of the available money, if possible. Additionally, an application may be withdrawn if the result of the ranking process is unacceptable.

Jim Piggott, City of St. Augustine, said the city will be asking FIND for a \$10,000 match for markers for the sand bar south of the City Marina and a \$210,000 match for dredging Salt Run. This will leave \$280,000 in FIND funds available for St. Johns County. Mr. Blow recommended asking FIND to award the remaining funds to the Summer Haven River restoration project. Alternatively, he said the District could ask FIND for the entire \$500,000 as matching funds and simply control the grant by offering a different matching amount.

Mr. Zahra asked for clarification as to whether FOSHR should move ahead with the grant request. Chairman Dixon said the board will take up the question again at the January, 2016 meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lt. Steve Zukowski, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), said the derelict vessel case against the owner of the boat overturned east of Crane Park will be going to trial soon and that the court has appointed a public defender for the owner, who has refused to take any action to remove the vessel. Another boat washed ashore on Guana Beach. The boat is registered to a North Carolina owner who sold it some time ago. The boat poses no hazard and is scheduled to be removed by Guana State Park personnel.

Another vessel from North Carolina has been abandoned in the Intracoastal Waterway near Mellon Park. The owner, a Belgian national, was issued a Notice to Appear, but he has since disappeared and cannot be located.

On safety matters, Zukowski said the Regatta of Lights and the Ponte Vedra Christmas Parade of Boats were held on the same night, but there were no problems. Also, many complaints have been filed in the past month about transient boat wakes. FWC responded by writing a number of citations for excessive speed.

The Coast Guard recently cooperated with officers from the National Marine Fisheries Service to inspect shrimp boats operating in local waters. Several violations of federal inspection requirements were found, but nothing serious.

Deputy Sid Mickler, SJSO Marine Unit, said they have been active lately in tracking down derelict boat owners. One was arrested, one voluntarily removed a boat, and the third is now being sought. SJSO has received seventy calls in the last three months and made 39 vessel stops resulting in 34 warnings and 5 citations.

COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Helman reported he received a letter from a Maine boater who had been stopped by St. Johns County Sheriff's Office for a compliance inspection. The letter praised the officers conducting the inspection and suggested the county give an award each year to its most outstanding marine officers. Chairman Dixon said the Regatta of Lights is a good example of the expertise of local marine law enforcement. The parade was well-organized on the water and afforded thousands of spectators with an entertaining event. Commissioner Rivers said he enjoyed serving as a judge for the event but he would like to see a greater value for the District from its advertising dollars spent at the event.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Dixon announced the next regular meeting will be held at 3:00 p.m. on January 19, 2016 in the same location.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business, Chairman Dixon adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Secretary-Treasurer

Chairman

wk/rg/port/minutes-2015/Minutes 12-15-15 meeting