

**ST. AUGUSTINE PORT, WATERWAY & BEACH DISTRICT**  
**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**  
**Tuesday, February 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, February 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 and Sandy Flowers were in attendance. Commissioner Chris Way was absent. 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 January 31, 2019, the District had total funds of \$2,153,786, of which \$235,068 was committed to projects and \$1,000,000 was held in reserve. As of that date, the District had spent \$63,742 for operating expenses and \$227,531 for projects and committed grants, making a sum total of \$291,273 spent so far in fiscal year 2018-2019. A separate fund for the Summer Haven River restoration project contained \$1,731 on that date. Tax revenue received to date is \$372,232, with an additional \$154,109 expected during the fiscal year. A temporary shortage in funds of for the Summer Haven River account resulted in the need to use \$33,520 from District funds to pay the contractor for the project. These funds will be reimbursed to the District later from the Summer Haven account.

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A motion by Chairman Benjamin to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of January 18, 2019, was seconded by Vice-Chairman Rivers and unanimously passed.**

**6. ENGINEERING REPORT**

Mike Trudnak delivered the engineering report on behalf of Taylor Engineering. Mr. Trudnak explained that 2019 is the final year of the predator control contract required for the

protection of the least tern nesting mitigation site on the west side of the Intracoastal Waterway. In response to a question from Commissioner Flowers, Mr. Trudnak said the USDA provides professional shooters to patrol the site several times a week to eliminate any animals which threaten least terns or their nests. Chairman Benjamin consented to sign the contract without a vote as the District is already bound to the conditions of the contract by the project permit.

Discussion then moved to plans by St. Johns County to use dredge sand from the south end of the Summer Haven River to repair the adjacent roadbed and beach berm. Mr. Trudnak said the county will pay to have the District's permit modified to include the road and the south end of the river in the project template. He said the county has agreed to bear the entire cost and that the board only needs to approve and consent to the modification of the permit. In response to questions from Commissioners Flowers and Brown, Mr. Trudnak said the permit deadline for completion of the restoration work is March, 2019, but that the deadline can easily be extended. After completion, turtle and bird monitoring will be paid for by the contractor and the county, and an as-built survey will document the work.

**A motion by Chairman Benjamin to approve an application by the county to modify the Summer Haven River restoration permit to allow dredging of the south portion of the Summer Haven River and placement of the sand on the adjacent county road and beach berm, with the understanding St. Johns County will bear all the costs related to the application for modification of the permit, the construction work, and any other compliance costs, was seconded by Commissioner Brown and passed unanimously.**

Mr. Trudnak said he had solicited bids from five separate contractors for replacing the downed marker and sign in Salt Run, and that the only response he received was from Bacon Marine Construction, St. Augustine, for \$6,500.

**A motion by Chairman Benjamin to approve a payment of \$6,500.00 to Bacon Marine Construction for the replacement of the marker piling and sign in Salt Run was seconded by Commissioner Flowers and unanimously approved.**

## **7. OLD BUSINESS:**

Commissioner Flowers said she had intended to present information regarding purchase by the District of a dredge or other equipment. However, in the interest of presenting a complete report, she requested the item be tabled until a later date when she has finished compiling all of the information for review by the board. The Chairman then tabled the item.

## **8. NEW BUSINESS:**

Vice-Chairman Rivers took the floor and offered the board's thanks and appreciation to former commissioner and chairman of the District, Jerry Dixon. Chairman Dixon served as a board member from 1998 until 2018. Mr. Rivers, who has also served many years, recounted the prominent place Chairman Dixon has had in developing the District into a more active participant in local marine activities. Mr. Dixon also received thanks and congratulations from Linda Ginn of the Friends of the Summer Haven River. She presented

Chairman Dixon with a painting of the river by artist Jean Fitzpatrick and thanked him for being a prominent and vocal supporter of their efforts to restore the river.

## **9. GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE COMMENTS**

Jim Piggott, Director of General Services for the City of Saint Augustine, reported a new derelict vessel in an area of marsh on the San Sebastian River. He said the owner abandoned the vessel at a private dock but it eventually broke loose and now needs to be removed and broken up. He said responsibility for the vessel rests with the owner but the city does not yet have legal authority to take the vessel. Another vessel is in the marsh on the west side of the river across from St. Augustine Marine but is still under investigation by law enforcement.

Mr. Piggott said the city is rebidding the contract for dredging Salt Run because the only bid in response to the bid invitation was twice as expensive per yard as the previous contract. The price escalation appears to be the result of a policy change by FDEP which requires dredge material to be trucked to a special disposal site in Georgia rather than to a local landfill.

Sgt. Josh Underwood, SJSO Marine Unit, reported that last month his agency spent 121 hours on the water, responded to 56 calls, and performed 25 safety inspections. He said the owner of a sunken derelict vessel previously identified by SJSO is going to a jury trial soon on charges related to the abandonment, but the vessel will eventually need to be removed at a cost of about \$25,000. He said wake zone violations have been more numerous lately because the no-wake zones are now properly marked by buoys, and signs on local bridge fenders.

In response to a question by Commissioner Flowers, Sgt. Underwood said Hospital Creek is under FWC jurisdiction and anyone wishing to have a no-wake zone there must contact FWC with the request.

Sydney Lindblad, SJC Parks and Recreation Department, said her department will be asking the Board of County Commissioners to approve a proposed maritime facilities improvement program grant application to FIND for boat ramps on both the east and west sides of the Palm Valley Bridge. In response to questions from Commissioner Flowers, Ms. Lindblad said launching fees for county boat ramps are still the subject of a feasibility study and will not be imposed until the study is completed and approved by the county board.

Carl Blow, St. Johns County's representative to the Florida Inland Navigation District, said the Corps of Engineers had planned two local projects this year using one-half federal funds and one-half funds from FIND. However, recent changes in the allocation of federal funds have caused FIND to postpone the work scheduled for St. Augustine Inlet. Intracoastal dredging near Matanzas Inlet will continue as scheduled with FIND spending 2.5 million for the removal of 150,000 cubic yards of sand from the ICW. In response to questions from Commissioner Flowers, Mr. Blow stressed that no dredging of any kind has ever been planned for Matanzas Inlet itself. He said the project is scheduled to begin in June, 2019. The sand will be deposited on the beach between Summer Haven and Marineland.

Mr. Blow said there is now more support on the St. Johns County Commission for artificial reefs. Two reefs have already been funded with money from the District and the Tourist Development Council. The District has committed another \$25,000 from reserves and he hopes to get more funding this year from the TDC. Mr. Blow then provided information from an economic impact study released several years ago which showed the impact of salt water sport fishing in northeast Florida is in excess of four hundred million dollars per year and provides over five thousand full-time local jobs.

If TDC will assist with funding this year, Mr. Blow said the county will be able to deploy some of the concrete now stored on St. Augustine Airport Authority property. He said concrete is the material of choice for artificial reefs and that changes in the industry have made donated concrete more difficult to obtain.

#### **10. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Linda Ginn, Friends of Summer Haven River, thanked the board for voting to allow the county to dredge the south end of the river utilizing the existing District permit. She said the problem did not exist at the time the permit was approved by FWC. She added that repairing the road will increase the size of the beach berm and aid in the protection of the river and Highway A1A.

She said birds and fish are returning to the river and that opening the south end of it will help restore the natural flow to Matanzas Inlet. She also displayed public information panels which will be installed in a kiosk at Mellon Park providing historical information about the river. The panels will also credit the District for its assistance in sponsoring the project.

At this point, Mike Trudnak, Taylor Engineering, announced the Federal Emergency Management Agency has provided a grant agreement which will award the District \$92,799.73 as reimbursement for some of the emergency repairs the District performed after Hurricane Irma in September, 2017. Mr. Trudnak requested the board approve the agreement.

**A motion by Chairman Benjamin to approve the agreement for the District to receive \$92,799.73 from FEMA as reimbursement for emergency work done after Hurricane Irma was seconded by Vice-Chairman Rivers and passed unanimously.**

#### **11. COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS:**

Commissioner Brown said he would like to focus his individual efforts as a commissioner on becoming familiar with all of the local public works providers and having them regularly appear to address the board on the activities of their agencies.

Commissioner Flowers asked Vice-Chairman Rivers if he had any news regarding the expansion of District jurisdiction to encompass all of St. Johns County. Vice-Chairman Rivers said he had no news at this time, but hoped to have more information for the next meeting.

Commissioner Flowers then asked Mr. Piggott when the marina site on the north end of the San Sebastian River near Riberia Street might finally open. Mr. Piggott said the marina site is currently for sale and that no development is expected in the near future.

Commissioner Flowers also asked about when the proposed updated harbor map will be available. Ms. Kemper said the project has been stalled for several years and that it will need to be started again from scratch. Mr. Blow said the content of the prior map was developed by the University of Florida Sea Grant Program at no charge but that printing the maps was expensive because the special paper used is very heavy and water-resistant.

Chairman Benjamin said that Commissioner Flowers is welcome to research the map issue and report back to the board. He said the map was very popular with boaters and that the District still receives frequent requests for maps.

**12. NEXT MEETING:**

Chairman Benjamin announced the next regular meeting of the board will be held at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 19, 2019, in the St. Augustine Beach City Commission Room.

**13. ADJOURN**

There being no further business, Chairman Benjamin adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

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Secretary-Treasurer

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Chairman