

**ST. AUGUSTINE PORT, WATERWAY & BEACH DISTRICT**

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**

**Tuesday, April 16, 2013**

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, April 16, 2013

**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 Herb Rippe and Jay Bliss were in attendance. Commissioner Chuck Hennessey arrived at 3:15 p.m. The meeting was also attended by Dr. Steve Schropp of Taylor Engineering, District Counsel James Bedsole and Secretary-Treasurer Elyse Kemper.

**SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT**

Elyse Kemper, Secretary-Treasurer, delivered the report. Year-to-date, committed funds have been spent as follows: \$585 to St. Augustine Police Department; \$2,776 to St. Johns County Sheriff's Office; and \$7,219 toward permitting the Summer Haven River restoration project. From non-committed funds, the District has spent \$11,140 for the FFWCC boatlift at the City Marina, \$9,473 for repairs to markers in Salt Run, and \$24,333 to St. Augustine Police Department for boat repairs. Funds available total \$1,994,633 with expected further tax revenue this year of \$32,897. As of April 11, 2015, the District's available funds totaled \$1,932,869.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A motion by Vice-Chairman Barry Benjamin, seconded by Commissioner Herb Rippe, to approve the minutes of the March 19, 2013 regular meeting, was unanimously passed.**

**ENGINEERING REPORT**

Dr. Steve Schropp and Dr. Jim Marino delivered the engineering report on behalf of Taylor Engineering. Dr. Schropp said discussions regarding the Summer Haven River permit had wrapped up with FDEP but issues remain with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation

Commission (FWC) regarding least tern nesting habitat. Representatives of FWC have suggested creating a habitat on an existing spoil island west of the Intracoastal Waterway as a mitigation measure. However, the island is owned by the State of Florida and is encumbered by an easement in favor of the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND). He said FIND may also want to use the island for mitigation. He will meet with Friends of Summer Haven River next week to discuss it further.

In response to questions from Commissioner Bliss and Chairman Dixon, Dr. Schropp said the island has existed since the 1970's and making a tern habitat would require flattening, fencing, monitoring and maintaining the habitat.

Dr. Schropp then discussed a letter to FDEP he drafted for Chairman Dixon's signature. The letter addresses the Board's concerns about the draft Inlet Management Plan (IMP) presented by officials from FDEP at the March 19, 2013 meeting. Chairman Dixon said the letter needs to mention the use of a hopper dredge. Dr. Schropp said specification of the means of dredging was deliberately omitted from the letter, as any economical means should be allowed. Commissioner Bliss said he wanted to consider the matter until next month and asked if there were any particular deadline for the Board's response. Dr. Schropp said there was not.

Commissioner Rippe said FDEP officials have had many internal discussions about the District's role in inlet management. He said they want the District to assume a much larger role than has historically been the case. Specifically, they believe the Board should act to expand the tax base of the District by making it cover the entire county. Chairman Dixon said USACE is accountable for maintaining the inlet because it is a federal inlet and that raising more taxes locally would make no difference in the District's responsibilities.

Commissioner Hennessey questioned why the IMP attributed beach erosion eight miles north of the inlet to its influence. He said the data FDEP relies on to come to that conclusion is incomplete, at best. Jim Marino, President of Taylor Engineering, explained there are many causes for beach erosion, the influence of coastal inlets being only one such cause, and that the amount of influence St. Augustine Inlet has eight miles north is unknown. Commissioner Hennessey reiterated his concern the draft IMP states the District is the responsible local entity for inlet maintenance and that the IMP then links all beach erosion to inlet maintenance. Commissioner Rippe said this IMP relates only to St. Augustine Inlet and that the IMP seems to make the District responsible for the inlet. Mr. Marino said the difference in the position of the District and the USACE vis-à-vis inlet maintenance is that USACE is accountable for funding inlet maintenance while the District is merely a local sponsor for some inlet projects and is not accountable for funding inlet projects.

Commissioner Hennessey went on to say that the IMP combines the navigation issue of the inlet channel with the shore protection issue of moving sand to the beaches. He said moving sand north could be excessively expensive, especially the requirement to truck-haul sand northward. Commissioner Rippe said directions regarding how sand should be moved northward should be removed from the IMP. Mr. Marino said the recommendation to FDEP should be to strike any specification of means or methods of accomplishing the required transfers of sand. Mr. Marino said the requirement for IMPs at the state level is usually a

hindrance to effective inlet maintenance because USACE is bound to follow IMPs which are old and not regularly updated.

In response to questions by Commissioner Rippe, Dr. Schropp said the effort now should be to have the IMP reflect issues FDEP will consider when permits are requested for shore protection or navigation projects involving the inlet. Mr. Marino added that USACE will deposit sand anywhere FDEP will allow. Commissioner Rippe asked that the IMP be clarified to indicate that annual sand transfer minimums are averages only, not annual requirements. Chairman Dixon said the IMP should make clear that USACE is the “accountable” entity for inlet maintenance funding and that the District is far too small to ever assume responsibility for funding. Dr. Schropp said he would revise the letter to FDEP and provide it prior to the next regular meeting.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Eric Hellstrom appeared on behalf of St. Johns County Fire and Rescue (SJCFR) to thank the Board for their continuing support. St. Johns County Fire and Rescue is the first northern Florida county ever to receive the Marine Rescue Excellence award given each year by the Florida Beach Patrol Chief’s Association. Equipment purchased through grants provided by the District has enabled SJCFR to improve their effectiveness to a level recognized as the highest in Florida.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

A. St. Johns County Sheriff. Sgt. Jay Bucher, St. Johns County Sheriff’s Office (SJSO) said their marine unit, which consists of two vessels, needs equipment costing approximately \$4,200. This equipment consists of three (3) personal EPIRB transmitters and ten (10) inflatable life jackets. A consensus of Board members advised Sgt. Bucher to provide a detailed written proposal for consideration by the Board at the next regular meeting.

B. Election of Officers. An election was held by secret ballot. Barry Benjamin was elected Chairman and Herb Rippe was elected Vice-Chairman.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Lt. Steve Zukowsky, FWC, said the Blessing of the Fleet was cancelled on Easter because of the weather. The county intends to impose an idle-speed zone around the new Vilano Floating Dock. He also reported accidents and incidents at St. Augustine Inlet, Doug Crane Park and St. Augustine Shores.

Commander Steve Fricke, St. Augustine Police Department, said the city has received only one bid to salvage the derelict vessel Tiger Lily for \$6,000. He said that a grant of \$20,000 is available from FIND but that the grant requires existing bids and is offered once per year. According to Fricke, only one likely derelict vessel will remain in District waters after Tiger Lily is removed.

Commissioner Bliss questioned whether funds might be available to remove the sunken vessel north of the Vilano Bridge. Lt. Zukowsky said the vessel is so deep it presents no

hazard to navigation, but that it would be useful to have a diver look at it to be sure. Commander Fricke offered to find out if one of the county's divers could do it.

Commander Robert Butts, United States Coast Guard (USCG), Jacksonville, provided an updated map of buoy positions 1 to 8 in St. Augustine Inlet. He said a USCG tender had recently worked the inlet and repositioned or replaced many buoys. He also revealed that new federal funding is available for dredging the inlet as part of disaster relief for Hurricane Sandy. The work may begin as early as July, according to sources at USACE, and would involve clearing the entire federal channel to a depth of 16 feet. Chairman Dixon thanked USCG for its assistance with the inlet.

Ed Slavin, St. Augustine, asked the Board to entertain the possibility of turning the St. Johns County coastline into a National Seashore under the National Park Service. He said national park status would protect the area for ecological and historic tourism and that he would like to make a full presentation at some future time.

### **COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS**

Chairman Dixon said SJC Commissioner Bennett is sponsoring a no-wake ordinance for an extended area south of the Vilano bridge to protect the new floating dock. A concensus of the Board agreed Chairman Dixon should write a letter of support for the ordinance.

Commissioner Rippe reported the new website is substantially complete but needs content. He asked the Secretary to send web designers the Vision Statement and Mission Statement of the District for inclusion on the site. He also asked anyone with appropriate links or photos to provide them as soon as possible. He said the website should be made useful to boaters and mariners by linking to information and service sites.

Commissioner Bliss asked whether the District should be subsidizing other agencies of government with limited District funds. For instance, SJSO has a huge budget compared to the District, yet the District donates money to the Sheriff's Office for overtime pay and equipment, and just bought the City of St. Augustine a new motor for its only patrol boat even though District revenue has fallen in recent years.

### **NEXT MEETING**

Chairman Dixon announced the next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 21, 2013, at 3:00 p.m. in the same location.

### **ADJOURN:**

There being no further business, Chairman Dixon adjourned the meeting at 5:25 p.m.

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Secretary-Treasurer  
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Chairman