

ST. AUGUSTINE PORT, WATERWAY & BEACH DISTRICT

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, September 16, 2014

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 16, 2014.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Herb Rippe 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 Herb Rippe, Commissioners Barry Benjamin, Chuck Hennessey and Jay Bliss were in attendance. Commissioner Jerry Dixon arrived at 3:54 p.m. The meeting was also attended by Ken Craig of Taylor Engineering, Secretary-Treasurer Elyse Kemper and District Counsel Jim Bedsole.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

Secretary-Treasurer Elyse Kemper delivered the report. Of \$618,931 in committed funds, only \$86,828 have been spent in this fiscal year. However, a dredging bill from the City of St. Augustine for \$320,000 will be delivered within a week. \$104,330 has also been spent on operating expenses. All of the expected tax revenue of \$376,762 has been received. As of September 15, 2014, the District had \$2,063,516 in total funds and, after subtracting funds still committed, net funds available totaled \$1,444,585.

In response to questions by Commissioner Bliss, Ms. Kemper explained the dredge bill is for work which has been done during the past two years on both the San Sebastian River and Salt Run. Chairman Rippe said the District's expenditures this year will exceed its income but that money has been budgeted for it over the past two years.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Hennessey moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of July 17, 2014. Commissioner Benjamin seconded the motion and it passed by a unanimous vote.

ENGINEERING REPORT

Ken Craig of Taylor Engineering delivered the engineering report. He said he and Dr. Steve Schropp had performed a site assessment of the signage in Salt Run on August 8, 2014. He provided a written report with photographs of all of the markers and an estimate of the cost to have new signs made. No estimate of installation cost was available at the time of the meeting. He recommends replacing all of the red and green signs. A warning sign is missing from a submerged jetty across from the Conch House. It appeared from the photographs that at least one piling needs to be replaced or reset.

Chairman Rippe asked Mr. Craig to provide the District with an estimate of the cost of obtaining permits for moving sand to beaches north of the inlet. Mr. Craig agreed to do so. He said a recent meeting with a group from the north beaches was held with Taylor and representatives of St. Johns County. He said Taylor's estimate to obtain permits was about \$150,000 because nothing has ever been done before and the work would all be new. He reported the county does not seem interested in participating in the permit process. Chairman Rippe said he also met with some owners from the north beaches and that their strategy has been to confer with County commissioners individually regarding funding for a permit application. With a permit in place, it would be possible for the north beaches to accept sand from any dredging done around the inlet area.

In response to questions from Commissioners Bliss and Hennessey, Mr. Craig said his discussions with the county and the Corps of Engineers indicate they intend to use the south lobe of the ebb shoal as the next likely donor site for beach renourishment sand. Using another source more suited to transport to the north, such as the flood shoal inside the inlet, will depend on many factors, not simply the presence of a quantity of beach-quality sand.

Chairman Rippe said he spoke with ACOE engineers about repairing the north jetty, which has mostly collapsed and allows huge amounts of sand to pass onto Porpoise Point. He said the ACOE budget allows for repairs but not replacement of the jetty. Commissioner Bliss asked if it might be less expensive to simply continue pumping sand out of the inlet rather than repairing the jetty. Mr. Craig said the cost of repairing the north jetty is so extremely high that dredging the inlet and the channel will probably continue.

Chairman Rippe said that without a permit to move sand to the north beaches, none will be available even though the inlet management plan requires sand go to the north. This will inevitably lead to conflict in the future unless a permit is obtained.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Summer Haven Update - Linda Ginn

Mr. Craig reported the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service finally responded to the request to review the Summer Haven restoration project permit after a nearly two year delay. The USFWS permit reviewer has begun working on the project and may need some assistance in order to expedite the process. He said Dr. Schropp could complete a package for use by the USFWS reviewer in two or three working days. This assistance would possibly gain one to two weeks on the review.

Linda Ginn appeared on behalf of Friends of Summer Haven River. She said the Board of County Commissioners has placed the restoration project on their agenda for a statement of support and approval. She also read a letter from the director of the St. Johns County School District Summer Science Program. The letter stated certain classes studying salt marshes had to be moved from the Summer Haven River because of the sand intrusion problem. She also read a letter from Jake Varn who represented FOSHR in the recent administrative hearing. Mr. Varn said his representation had been a very gratifying experience and was one of the high points of his career.

In response to comments by Chairman Rippe, Ellis Zahra, of FOSHR, said he is concerned because the clock is running on the DEP permit. He said Dr. Schropp's assistance could speed up the USFWS review process by several weeks. He reminded Commissioners that Friends has paid all the permit fees, the release fees for the spoil island, the Phase I environmental survey for the new habitat, and all the expert witness fees for the administrative hearing. He said everyone involved has spent a lot of time and a lot of money and that having Dr. Schropp prepare a start-up package for the USFWS review would assure the prompt attention of the reviewer.

Commissioner Bliss said he was in favor of having Dr. Schropp's assistance. Commissioner Hennessey agreed, saying it was a small price when Dr. Schropp estimated the cost at \$3,500 maximum.

A motion by Commissioner Hennessey to approve the expenditure of up to \$3,500 for Dr. Schropp's assistance with the USFWS review, seconded by Commissioner Bliss, was passed by unanimous vote.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Repositioning of Inlet Buoys - Commissioner Bliss

Commissioner Bliss said he did not have enough information to offer a report this month and that he would be prepared by the next meeting. Commissioner Dixon said that Buoy Number 5 is still out of position and does not correctly mark the dogleg there.

B. Discussion regarding North Jetty report ACOE - Chairman Rippe

Quoting a recent Corps of Engineers inspection report as of April, 2014, Mr. Craig said the north "jetty" is actually referred to as a "groin" because it is a sand barrier intended originally to trap sand to the north of the inlet. He said the seaward 200 feet of the structure is gone and that the remainder has almost entirely collapsed and submerged, allowing the free movement of sand around the groin onto Porpoise Point. The report says tightening the groin would reduce the amount of sand going to Porpoise Point and may reduce erosion to the north of the inlet. The report recommends not repairing the groin.

Chairman Rippe said the inspection was a result of his informal request to Corps representatives to "replace" the north jetty. He said their response was that there were no funds available to "replace" the jetty, but that it could be repaired at Corps expense.

Commissioner Dixon said the report may have recommended no repair simply because of the great expense. Commissioner Hennessey said the Board should send a letter to the Corps disputing the report's conclusion that no repair is needed.

Chairman Rippe said he would like Mr. Craig to prepare a response saying the District favors having the Corps commit to either repairing the groin or regularly pumping the sand from the federal navigation channel, as it is the failure of the groin which allows the sand to accumulate there.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim Piggott, City of St. Augustine, announced the Boating Advisory Council of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will meet September 18, 2014, at 2:00 p.m. in the Alcazar Room of St. Augustine City Hall. Commissioner Dixon said the City's grant application to FIND for more work on the Lighthouse Ramp and Salt Run had scored highly in the FIND review process. He said both projects are likely to receive funding although probably not as much as requested.

Lt. Steve Zukowski, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, said his agency has begun issuing citations and court dates instead of demanding that owners of derelict vessels move their boats. He said the formal judicial process seems to obtain better compliance.

He said the speed limit sign at the mouth of the San Sebastian River is gone and that a new slow speed sign is also needed in the area of Hurricane Patty's. During Labor Day weekend, FWC officers made many safe boating stops but did not need to issue any "BUI's" as most boats had designated operators. He said this is a very positive development as this practice creates a safer boating environment for all users of our waterways.

COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Bliss said he was initially critical of the City's harbor management plan because it included restrictions on anchoring in other areas of the city that should remain open to anchoring out. Commissioner Dixon said Commissioner Bliss kept the City from implementing the more restrictive anchoring rules which have led to litigation and ill feelings among boaters in other pilot programs.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Rippe announced the next regular meeting will be held on October 21, 2014 in the same location.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business, Chairman Rippe adjourned the meeting at 4:45 p.m.

Secretary-Treasurer

Chairman

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Mr. Craig will provide the District with an estimate of the cost of obtaining permits for moving sand to beaches north of the inlet.
2. Commissioner Bliss will report on the repositioning of inlet buoys at the October, 2014 meeting.
3. Ken Craig will prepare a response to the Army Corps of Engineers regarding the North Jetty, indicating that the District favors either the repair of the jetty or regular pumping of accumulated sand from the federal navigation channel.

wk/rg/port/minutes-2014/9-16-14 meeting