

ST. AUGUSTINE PORT, WATERWAY & BEACH DISTRICT

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, January 17, 2012

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, January 17, 2012.

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 Tom Rivers, Commissioners Barry Benjamin, Herb Rippe and Jay Bliss were in attendance. The meeting was also attended by: District Counsel Jim Bedsole, Dr. Steve Schropp of Taylor Engineering and Assistant Secretary-Treasurer, Elyse Kemper.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer's Report was delivered by Elyse Kemper. As of December 31, 2011, the District had received \$278,385 of expected tax revenue of \$368,164, \$45,795 was invested with the Florida State Board of Administration, and net funds available totaled \$1,815,216. For fiscal year 2011-2012, \$167,124 has been spent from committed funds of \$254,450.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Rippe moved to approve the minutes for the November 15, 2012 meeting, seconded by Commissioner Bliss. The Board unanimously approved the November 15, 2012 minutes. Commissioner Rippe moved to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2012, seconded by Commissioner Benjamin. The Board unanimously approved the December 13, 2012 minutes.

ENGINEERING REPORT

Dr. Steve Schropp delivered the engineering report on behalf of Taylor Engineering. He said the District would soon receive replacement signs for the downed marker near the Lighthouse boat ramp and that those would be provided to the contractor for installation.

In response to questioning by Commissioners Bliss, Dixon and Rippe, Dr. Schropp said inlet dredging should begin in February, 2012, and will remove about 2.1 million cubic yards of sand consisting of 400 thousand yards from Vilano Point, one million from the inlet channel and about 700 thousand from the ebb shoal. He added that FIND has been delayed in its plans to dredge the Intracoastal Waterway because of concerns over buried power lines near the Vilano Bridge.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Individual Correspondence - Ken Krauter

Consultant Ken Krauter presented a written report as a continuation of the Board's discussion at the December, 2011 meeting regarding commissioners' communications with the public and other government agencies. He said the Board faces an unusual situation because the District employs no staff, instead relying upon contractors and consultants to do business. This has sometimes led the staff of other agencies to assume that individual commissioners with whom they may interact represent the entire Board. He said the District would derive a benefit from having a simple, written policy advising commissioners how to represent themselves to the public when discussing District business. Commissioners then directed Mr. Krauter to create a table of contents for a handbook or policy manual and present it for further discussion at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commander Steve Fricke, St. Augustine Police Department said he expected FWC to declare two more vessels derelict soon. He said FWC and SAPD have been notifying the public about the new mooring field rules and have investigated several complaints of thefts from boats moored south of the city limits.

Commissioner Bliss said the change represented by the construction of the mooring fields and the adoption of the pilot program is a big change in local boating culture which will take a long time to catch on.

Jim Piggott, City of St. Augustine, said the city has tried to be proactive by mailing out brochures about the changes to all local boat owners.

Mr. Piggott then discussed the grant application the City of St. Augustine intends to submit to FIND for work in both Salt Run and the San Sebastian River. Grant applications need to be filed by the end of March, 2012 for presentation before FIND in June.

Chairman Dixon said one of the FIND applications will propose dredging to deepen Salt Run. He said FIND would be able to provide \$210,000 if the District matches it with \$70,000. He then added that FIND would also provide \$210,000 for dredging the San Sebastian River if the District matches it with \$210,000.

Commissioner Rippe said he was in favor of these projects but was concerned because there was no participation in the funding by the public, businesses or local government. He said this commitment represents two-thirds of the District's annual income and that the Board should give the issue more consideration before agreeing to do it. Commissioner Benjamin said the District receives tax revenues for this purpose and that it should be spent in this manner. Commissioner Dixon said the money available from FIND would be lost without matching funds from the District.

Commissioner Rivers moved to commit \$280,000 in matching funds over the next year to dredge Salt Run and the San Sebastian River, conditioned upon matching funding from Florida Inland Navigation District in the amount of \$420,000. Commissioner Benjamin seconded the motion.

Commissioner Benjamin said the District has been talking about and working toward dredging the San Sebastian River for eight years and that a lot of money has already been spent obtaining permits for the work. Commissioner Rippe said he was not opposed to the projects but did not believe enough consideration had been given to other sources of funding. Commissioner Bliss said he was surprised by the request for these funds and would like to consider it further before voting. Chairman Dixon said the City of St. Augustine needed to know now whether the District would support the grant requests so that the applications could proceed.

On a roll-call vote, the motion to approve matching funds of up to \$280,000 for dredging Salt Run and the San Sebastian River, conditioned upon participation from the Florida Inland Navigation District in the amount of \$420,000, passed by 3 to 2, with Commissioners Rippe and Bliss voting against.

Linda Ginn, Summer Haven, said St. Johns County had declined to act as the applicant for the permit for the restoration of the Summer Haven River and that a non-profit corporation, Friends of the Summer Haven River, Inc., would be applying instead. She said she hopes the District will continue to fund the permit application process. Dr. Schropp said the county backed out because the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had objected to placing sand in the area of the breach, so the county had removed that area from its application for beach and shore restoration along Old A1A. He said the county has promised to make all of its information available for the permit application for the Summer Haven River.

Dr. Schropp said he would create a detailed scope of work and cost report regarding the restoration permit application for review by the Board at the next meeting.

COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Rippe expressed concern about whether Commissioner Benjamin may have had a conflict of interest which would have precluded him from voting to approve funds to be spent for dredging the San Sebastian River. He requested District Counsel to research the question and furnish a written report at the earliest opportunity. Mr. Bedsole agreed to do so.

Commissioner Rivers said he believes the District should be expanded to encompass all of St. Johns County. He asked the Board for permission to contact all Florida legislators representing St. Johns County to ask for their support of such a measure. Chairman Dixon agreed with the proposal and reminded Commissioner Rivers to contact local FIND Commissioner Carl Blow.

Commissioner Bliss distributed written information about local derelict vessels and said he is concerned the District has no formal process to remove these vessels. He discussed several examples and said it takes too long, is too expensive and too difficult to remove derelicts. He believes the process would be quicker and cheaper if the Board had a policy and was able to directly control removal throughout the District.

Commander Fricke said the city is authorized to remove derelicts from the entire District area once they have been declared derelict by FWC. Commissioner Rippe said getting the vessels declared derelict is the slowest part of the process. Commander Fricke said removal contractors are sometimes delayed by weather or tidal conditions, or because scheduling considerations can affect costs. He added that vessels sunken in deep water can cost much more to remove and may not even constitute a hazard to navigation if they are in very deep water.

NEXT MEETING

The Chairman announced the next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 21, 2012, at 3:00 p.m. in the same location.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business, Chairman Dixon adjourned the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

Secretary-Treasurer

Chairman