

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

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**

**Tuesday, May 21, 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, May 21, 2013

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Barry Benjamin 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 Barry Benjamin, Commissioners Herb Rippe and Chuck Hennessey were in attendance. Commissioner Jerry Dixon arrived at 3:15 p.m. Commissioner Jay Bliss was absent. The meeting was also attended by Ken Craig of Taylor Engineering, District Counsel James Bedsole and Secretary-Treasurer Elyse Kemper.

**SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT**

Elyse Kemper, Secretary-Treasurer, delivered the Treasurer's report. As of April 30, 2013, net funds available to the District totaled \$1,726,237. Of overtime pay budgeted for the City of St. Augustine Police, \$585 has been spent. Of overtime pay budgeted for the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, \$4,005 has been spent. \$7,219 has been spent for Summer Haven permitting. As of May 16, 2013, net funds available equaled \$1,714,441. Taxes received to date total \$354,877 with a balance of \$15,278 expected.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**On a motion by Chairman Barry Benjamin, seconded by Commissioner Chuck Hennessey, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the April 9, 2013 workshop and the April 16, 2013 regular meeting.**

## **ENGINEERING REPORT**

Ken Craig delivered the engineering report on behalf of Taylor Engineering. Mr. Craig said the FIND board has approved the use of the spoil island near Matanzas Inlet for the mitigation demanded by biologists from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). He said comments from FIND were very positive towards the restoration project. The next step in preparing the legal groundwork for the use of the island as a least tern habitat will be to obtain from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) a release of its easement for spoil deposits.

Bids for continued dredge work in Salt Run have been solicited by the City of St. Augustine and will be opened in early June. He said a contract should be awarded and work begun in Salt Run by late July, 2013.

Chairman Benjamin then asked Mr. Craig to address the issue of the Board's letter to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) regarding the proposed revision of the Inlet Management Plan (IMP) for St. Augustine Inlet (agenda item 7.B.) All commissioners had previously been provided a copy of the letter drafted by Dr. Steve Schropp and reviewed by District Counsel Jim Bedsole. The concensus of the Board was the letter should be sent to FDEP. Commissioner Rippe said the IMP may cause some confusion for USACE as it begins dredging the inlet channel in July and disposing of sand, but that he agreed with sending the letter now. Mr. Craig said the letter is likely to prompt another round of questions from FDEP and that it is unlikely the revised IMP would be in place by July. Commissioner Rippe asked Mr. Craig to find out what USACE defines as the "inlet", which they intend to dredge, and whether that includes, for example, the entire length of the designated federal channel all the way from the Intracoastal Waterway (IW) to the sea buoy.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **A. Website - Jennifer Reed from Avid Design**

Jennifer Reed, Avid Design Group, presented the results of their work for the past two months in designing a new website for the District. She said the new site is nearly complete except for some of the content areas. She displayed the home page and the various drop-down content areas. She said most of the information on the site now is in the "About Us" section and the "Minutes and Agendas". Minutes and agendas back through 2011 have been posted. The site needs current biographies and pictures of Commissioners.

Commissioner Rippe said the District gets very little credit for what it does and that there should be information about all of its past and current projects. He said the former website designer had filled in most of that information for the Board but that no one has been designated to do so in the future. Commissioner Dixon said current projects should be the focus of attention and that past ones need only a mention and a short description. Ms. Reed said Avid's contract calls only for updating minutes, agendas and meeting times but that they could add photos and news as needed on a time-and-material basis. Commissioner Hennessey suggested the Board have a regular agenda item for updating the website.

Consultant Ken Krauter said he could provide Avid with historical information about projects from the past five years with data in the form of charts. Commissioners agreed that Mr. Krauter should assist Avid where possible. Mr. Krauter said he would do so.

Commissioners suggested that information for St. Augustine Inlet include a link to Deputy Chris Bonnevier's navigation website and that information about inlet history also be displayed. Mr. Craig suggested the existing IMP has a good history section for the inlet.

Discussion then turned to marinas, and Commissioner Rippe said he wants the site to be useful to mariners, and to link to any maritime resource that will reciprocate by displaying the District's link. He said this would drive up traffic to the District's site. Ms. Reed said the area of "fishing and boating" needed information like helpful tips on boating. Wil Smith, St. Johns County Parks and Recreation, said he would like to see GPS coordinates for all artificial reefs and other bottom features listed. Commissioner Rippe said all boat ramps should be listed and Commissioner Hennessey suggested linking to charter boat businesses, as well. Mr. Smith suggested linking to a good source for tidal information like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Commissioner Rippe suggested the website was sufficiently complete to begin using it now. Commissioners agreed and Ms. Reed was directed to shut down the old site and begin to use the new one, even though more content is to be added.

**B. Funding for boat equipment - St. Johns County Sheriff**

Sgt. Jay Bucher, St. Johns County Sheriff's Office (SJSO), renewed his organization's request for \$4,200 for three personal EPIRB transmitter units and ten (10) new personal floatation devices. Commissioners Rippe and Hennessey said they were uncomfortable giving the SJSO any more money because the SJSO's budget is so large compared to the District's budget. Chairman Benjamin suggested the money be taken from the District's line-item for SJSO overtime pay. A consensus of the Board agreed to this approach, but Sgt. Bucher said he was unable to agree without speaking to his supervisors at SJSO. Chairman Benjamin asked to have the matter placed on the agenda for the next meeting and asked Sgt. Bucher to remember that a written proposal is needed from SJSO describing their request.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Funding for small projects - Commissioners**

Commissioner Dixon said he wants the Board to develop a procedure for handling requests for small amounts of funding similar to the process FIND uses to determine its grants each year. He said commissioners are often confronted with donation requests face-to-face at meetings under emotionally-charged circumstances and without the benefit of any documentation. He said he would like to see some sort of controls in place to help commissioners prioritize and analyze each request.

Commissioner Rippe said a process should be in place for all projects, not just small ones. He said a good structure is needed to handle requests each year because the District has so

little revenue. He said having such a structure would not prevent commissioners from considering exceptional requests if they choose.

Commissioner Hennessey said he is crafting an application process based on that used by FIND and that he may have it ready for review by next month. He said the FIND process is very long and detailed but that any process adopted by the Board should be simple and clear, with a calendar for review of applications at set dates each year. Chairman Benjamin agreed that the application and review process should take at least ninety (90) days to assure commissioners have adequate time to consider each request and are not influenced by emotional appeals, alone. Consultant Ken Krauter said he could provide the Board with a sample process which would help commissioners with budgeting, prioritizing and analyzing grant requests.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Wil Smith, St. Johns County Parks and Recreation (SJC), discussed the county's plan to extend the no-wake zone south of the Vilano Bridge another two hundred feet to protect the new floating dock. He said the safety of boats and crews at the dock has been jeopardized by the wakes of passing vessels. Commissioner Rippe questioned where the marker buoys for the existing no wake zone have been placed until now. Mr. Smith and commissioners then viewed a map prepared by the county which detailed the zone changes.

Commissioner Dixon said he prepared a letter of support for the county's request but never sent it because he was unsure of the position of the Board. A consensus of commissioners eventually agreed with sending the letter of support.

Lt. Steve Zukowski, FWC, explained Matanzas Inlet is shoaling-in so completely his boats have difficulty getting in or out of it. He said he discussed FWC's demand for the creation of a least tern habitat with the biologist responsible for the demand. The biologist complained the applicant, Friends of Summer Haven River (FOSHR), had no avian expert on its staff.

Linda Ginn, FOSHR, said they recently went to the FIND board and asked to use the spoil island west of the Intracoastal Waterway for a least tern habitat, which request was approved by FIND. FWC is now asking to have the USACE easement for placing spoil there terminated and released. Commissioner Dixon said the habitat the terns now enjoy on the Summer Haven River did not exist five years ago and will be abandoned by the birds as soon as the vegetation in the area increases. He also added FWC wants an electric fence and monitoring on the site, among other things.

Sgt. Jay Bucher, SJSO, thanked everyone who participated in the Safe Boating Week event last week at the Vilano ramp. He also reported the discovery of several large containers on the sea bottom in about 20 feet of water off Vilano Beach. SJSO plans to send divers to examine the containers in the near future.

**COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS**

Commissioner Rippe announced he will not attend the June, 2013 meeting.

**NEXT MEETING**

Chairman Benjamin announced the next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 18, 2013, at 3:00 p.m. in the same location.

**ADJOURN:**

There being no further business, Chairman Benjamin adjourned the meeting at 5:02 p.m.

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Secretary-Treasurer

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Chairman

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