

ST. AUGUSTINE PORT, WATERWAY & BEACH DISTRICT

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, August 16, 2011

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, August 16, 2011.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chairman Tom Rivers called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America followed.

ROLL CALL

Vice-Chairman Tom Rivers, Commissioners Barry Benjamin, Jay Bliss and Herb Rippe were in attendance. Chairman Jerry Dixon was absent. The meeting was also attended by: Dennis Bell, Secretary-Treasurer, District Attorney James Bedsole, and Dr. Steve Schropp of Taylor Engineering.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

Dennis Bell delivered the Treasurer's report. As of July 31, 2011, the Port had total available funds of \$1,777,470.00. Approximately \$149,000.00 in committed funds remained unspent as of that date and Florida State Board of Administration Fund B contained \$43,707.00, making net funds available \$1,571,267.00 as of August 11, 2011.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Due to a technical problem in the transmission of draft minutes to commissioners, the approval of minutes from the regular meeting of July 19, 2011 was tabled until the September meeting.

ENGINEERING REPORT

Dr. Steve Schropp delivered the engineering report on behalf of Taylor Engineering. He said the geotechnical data from the Summer Haven River was not available but should be finished within a week. He said bids had been collected for repair of the markers in Salt Run

and that the low bidder would be released to begin repairs as soon as new signage is available.

At 3:08 p.m., Chairman Dixon arrived. Chairman Dixon said the captain of the boat involved had written a letter claiming he had nothing to do with the damage.

Commissioner Bliss asked if any report on inlet scouring was available. Dr. Schropp said Dr. Srinivas is gathering the requested information and will provide it to commissioners prior to the next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Dixon said he had a conference call with Dr. Schropp and Jim Piggott of the City of St. Augustine regarding emergency dredging. Dr. Schropp said the Currituck had removed 4,500 cubic yards from the inlet channel in two days. The Currituck worked slowly because of the massive shoaling which prevented it from approaching the inlet channel directly and the fact it had to travel two miles to the drop site at St. Augustine Beach.

The memorandum of agreement provided to the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) for continued inlet dredging is still under consideration by that agency. He said the ACOE is also beginning a new inlet survey which should provide new data as to the shoaling problem.

Commissioner Rippe questioned Dr. Schropp about his comment that the inlet was only one foot deep in places near the official channel. Dr. Schropp confirmed that the shoaling was so severe in places the Currituck could only cut around the shoals and could not get to the area designated as channel.

Commissioner Bliss commented he believes marker 5A has disappeared and wanted to know whether ACOE would replace it. Dr. Schropp said only the Coast Guard is authorized to replace inlet markers. Chairman Dixon said the USCG has refused to light the red markers on the north side of the inlet but that lighting the green markers on the south side, especially 5 and 5A, would be helpful. Commissioner Bliss said 5 and 5A lead around the worst shoal.

Commissioner Bliss said funding inlet dredging now and in the future is a problem for the Port. Chairman Dixon said the current permit will be in force for a few years and the Port can add a little money now to temporarily assist in dredging, but the long-term health of the inlet will require federal funds. Commissioner Bliss then asked why the USCG funded the Currituck's work for two weeks at Ponce Inlet while St. Augustine Inlet only got the dredge for two days.

Commissioner Rippe said all of the sand used to renourish St. Augustine Beach should be coming out of the inlet and that the Port needs to be proactive in obtaining assistance for the inlet. Commissioner Bliss said the City, the County and the Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) should be funding inlet dredging.

Commissioner Rivers said the best way to generate extra funds for the inlet is to expand the District's boundaries to all of St. Johns County. Commissioner Dixon and Commissioner Rippe said they support the concept.

Commissioner Bliss said the District should not be trying to fund any dredging on its own but should be soliciting and matching funds from other agencies of government. He said future funding is uncertain, the channel is unprotected by a jetty, and the inlet survives only because of a huge tidal flow and needs to be marked better.

Chairman Dixon said the District's main job is to take care of the inlet and that it has never been saddled with the entire cost because of FIND. He said other states such as North and South Carolina have no agency like FIND and that their inlets are in terrible condition because of that fact.

Commissioner Bliss moved to have the District request funding participation from the City of St. Augustine and St. Johns County, and that the District match their contributions instead of attempting to fund dredging by itself.

The motion died for lack of a second.

Commissioner Rippe asked whether the other commissioners had received copies of his budget worksheet. Commissioner Bliss said he would like the District to budget funds for purchasing depth information on the inlet from local commercial operators so that it could be shared with boaters. Chairman Dixon said boat captains are responsible for their own safety.

Linda Ginn, 9051 Gene Johnson Road, reported she met with representatives of St. Johns County and that the County has agreed to act as permittee for the Summer Haven River rehabilitation project. Dr. Schropp said the only information needed to use sand from the river for beach placement is proof regarding sand quality.

Ellis Zahre, 9167 Old A1A, thanked the Board for taking action on the rehabilitation of the Summer Haven River. He said he appreciated the Board's willingness to help the citizens of Summer Haven even though he is frustrated by the slow pace of the entire process. Chairman Dixon said the current national debt has made money for projects like this one difficult to obtain.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Locust Street Non-motorized Boat Launch.

Commissioner Rippe discussed the possibility of placing some sort of small boat launching area on the road right-of-way at the east end of Locust Street in the City of St. Augustine. No one attended to speak on behalf of the initiative and Commissioner Rippe said he believed it to be a dead issue. Chairman Dixon said the land involved is under City jurisdiction and the proponents must convince the City to allow such a facility before the District could consider funding.

B.J. Kalaidi, St. Augustine, said the Board should not fund something as unnecessary and controversial as this boat launch. No one in the neighborhood wants it and the City has not approved it.

B. Funding Request for Artifact Restoration and Conservation.

Dr. Sam Turner, Director of Archeology for the St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum presented information to the Board regarding a wreck LAMP excavated offshore from the Inlet. Dr. Turner said many refugee vessels carrying loyalists from Charleston at the end of the Revolutionary War wrecked offshore from St. Augustine. Their vessels carried many household items not normally found on seagoing vessels of that era. LAMP is in the process of conserving many artifacts found on the recent site and Dr. Turner displayed photographs of many items as well as encrusted samples.

Commissioners then discussed with Dr. Turner whether the District's charter would permit the District to contribute to LAMP's conservation efforts. Dr. Turner agreed to provide more information on their work.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Dudley Barringer, 50 Water Street, said he lives in the Locust Street area and is against any boat launch there because there is no parking. He also said people can already access the water and nothing else is needed.

Commander Michelle Perry, St. Augustine Police Department, reported there are four boats in Salt Run without registrations which have received warnings. She said the only derelict vessel in the area, south of the south mooring field, will be removed soon.

Lt. Steve Zukowski, FFWCC, said the new boatlift at the City Marina is operational. The new boat is designed to make it easier to board vessels, especially moving vessels.

Sgt. Jay Bucher, SJSO, reported his agency had arrested a suspect in a number of recent boat burglaries and had recovered a large amount of stolen property.

Jim Piggott, City of St. Augustine, said the City Commission passed a draft ordinance for harbor management pursuant to the plan by FFWCC to adopt a model ordinance statewide.

COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Rippe announced he will miss the September meeting and will return in October. Chairman Dixon said the litigating property owners north of the Inlet have sent a letter to the Department of the Interior in support of dredging the Inlet. He also said he had been contacted by Comanche Cove regarding the dredging of their entrance channel.

Commissioner Bliss said he was disappointed the Coast Guard had refused to consider lighting the red markers in the Inlet as it is a very challenging navigation problem. Commissioner Rippe agreed.

NEXT MEETING

The Chairman announced the next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 20, 2011, at 3:00 p.m. in the same location.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business, Chairman Dixon adjourned the meeting at 4:43p.m.

Secretary-Treasurer

Chairman

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