

ST. AUGUSTINE PORT, WATERWAY & BEACH DISTRICT

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, May 20, 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, May 20, 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, Jerry Dixon and Jay Bliss were in attendance. The meeting was also attended by Ken Craig of Taylor Engineering and District Counsel Jim Bedsole.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

Secretary-Treasurer Elyse Kemper was absent. District Counsel Jim Bedsole delivered the report. As of April 30, 2014, the District has spent \$29,832 of its budget for committed funds, and \$82,133 for operating expenses. Of total funds on deposit of \$2,155,959, net funds available for use are \$1,555,862. Expected additional tax revenues for the year are \$11,270. As of May 14, 2014, net funds available were \$1,555,862.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

This item was tabled until the next regular meeting.

ENGINEERING REPORT

Ken Craig of Taylor Engineering delivered the engineering report. Mr. Craig announced that the requested surveys of the San Sebastian River and Salt Run are not quite finished but results should be available by the next meeting. The current Salt Run dredge project is now under way.

The Army Corps of Engineers has released the Corp's easement for spoil deposit rights on the spoil island to be used for the new least tern nesting site near the Summer Haven River project. On April 8, 2014, Taylor provided the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission with a revised least tern mitigation plan to which FWC provided comments. The plan was then revised accordingly and resubmitted. FWC issued its revised least tern indirect take permit on April 24, 2014. This permit will allow dredging to begin on the Summer Haven River as soon as the administrative appeal of the permit is resolved. Mr. Bedsole gave the Board a status update on the proceeding which is in the final stages of trial before an administrative law judge.

Commissioner Rippe asked Mr. Craig about the purpose of the county-wide feasibility study being conducted by the Corps of Engineers. Commissioner Rippe said he is concerned that the study will overlook beneficial sources for beach sand, such as the Intracoastal Waterway and the large flood shoal in Matanzas Bay. Mr. Craig said he is maintaining contact with the Corps and St. Johns County to assure the District's position on sand transfers is understood. Commissioner Rippe said his aim is to avoid having the Corps simply take all sand from the ebb shoal and ignore inlet and Intracoastal Waterway sources.

Commissioner Hennessey asked whether it is possible to obtain permission from the Florida Department of Transportation to place sand transmission lines across Highway A1A. Mr. Craig said it is often done. Commissioner Rippe said there are several properties north of the inlet where an easement could be obtained to move sand from the Intracoastal to the beach. Mr. Craig said more studies would be necessary before that would actually be determined.

United States Coast Guard Officer Mike Tomas discussed the relocation of buoys in the St. Augustine Inlet. He said USCG intends to line the buoys up with the federal channel where possible. He said he hopes to be able to properly align buoys prior to the next channel dredging, whenever that may occur.

Commissioner Rippe asked whether any lighted buoys were available. Officer Tomas said USCG has plans to place a lighted buoy at Number 10 as soon as a large buoy tender is available. Commissioner Bliss asked if there were demands from other areas for lighted buoys. Officer Tomas said his office is responsible for sixty buoys from Ponce Inlet up to South Carolina and that priority is given to the replacement of missing buoys. He said their constraint is the availability of boats capable of handling the larger buoys.

Commissioner Bliss asked whether Ponce Inlet has red and green lights and Officer Tomas said it does, extending out into the ocean. Commissioner Bliss said that was interesting because Ponce Inlet is non-commercial as is St. Augustine Inlet. In response to comments by Commissioner Dixon, Officer Tomas said Ponce is given no greater priority than St. Augustine Inlet even though a Coast Guard station is located there.

In response to questions from various commissioners, Officer Tomas said the official mariner's chart for St. Augustine Inlet does not show the location of buoys because the inlet has rapidly-shifting shoals. He said annual dredging of the federal channel may be the only solution to this problem.

OLD BUSINESS

A. SJCFR Application for funding - Captain Eric Hellstrom.

Captain Eric Hellstrom of the St. Johns County Fire and Rescue Marine Unit appeared, as requested by commissioners at the last meeting, to request funds for the purchase of two new jet skis for use in marine rescues. Commissioners discussed the fact that the county should be funding this. Captain Hellstrom said beach and salt water operations age his vehicles quickly, and that funding from the county does not cover all of their needs. He said he understood this was a large request from the District's relatively small budget, but that the jet skis would offer a huge return in lives and property saved over the next few years.

Commissioner Benjamin said this money is worthwhile if it will save lives and promote tourism by offering the assurance of a safe environment to visitors. Chairman Rippe said he agreed with Commissioner Benjamin and called for a vote.

The Board voted unanimously to approve the request by St. Johns County Fire and Rescue Marine Unit for \$29,000 to purchase two new personal watercrafts and related equipment for use by the marine and beach units.

B. Safe Harbor Liability Issues - District Counsel Jim Bedsole.

Mr. Bedsole discussed liability issues involved with a proposal by Commissioner Bliss to provide emergency mooring for vessels moored outside of the City's mooring fields in the event of a tropical storm. Mr. Bedsole said the District has the benefit of limited immunity given to government agencies by state law, but that using the City mooring fields would require the full cooperation and participation of the City in any plan. He said it was likely that insurance carriers for both the District and the City would require endorsements to all applicable policies and probably an added premium. The City requires private coverage for every boat moored in its fields and some vessels may not qualify, even if such coverage was provided free of charge. Also, the City's plan for hurricanes includes emptying the mooring fields if such a storm approaches and this would defeat the purpose of the proposal.

In discussion, commissioners were concerned that transient or absent owners would simply leave their vessels in the city mooring fields after such an event without paying rent or maintaining insurance coverage. A consensus of commissioners, including Commissioner Bliss, agreed to table the concept for the present.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion regarding potential water access - Chairman Herb Rippe.

Commissioner Rippe opened the discussion by introducing Kevin Downey of McGuinnis Commercial Properties with whom he has had discussions about acquiring a suitable public access site for the San Sebastian River. Chairman Rippe said Mr. Downey had provided a retainer agreement which stipulates any fee for services will be paid from a seller's proceeds and not by the District.

On a motion by Chairman Rippe, seconded by Commissioner Benjamin, the Board voted unanimously to retain Mr. Downey pursuant to the contract with McGuiness Commercial Properties.

Chairman Rippe said locating property and developing it into a suitable site for all of the District needs, such as dredge spoil off-loading, and public needs, such as launching boats and parking vehicles and trailers, would be a full-time job and that he favors hiring someone to do it. He said there are also opportunities for grants to assist in purchasing and developing land for such needs. Commissioners then discussed ideas for funding, ownership, maintenance, use of such a site, and possible locations.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

None.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Rippe announced the next regular meeting will be held on June 17, 2014 in the same location.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business, Chairman Rippe adjourned the meeting at 4:40 p.m.

Secretary-Treasurer

Chairman

ACTION ITEMS: None

wk/rg/port/minutes-2014/5-20--14 meeting