

**FORT MYERS BEACH  
TOWN COUNCIL – SPECIAL SESSION  
Town Hall – Council Chambers  
2523 Estero Boulevard  
Ft. Myers Beach, FL 33931  
October 21, 2005**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Bill Van Duzer called a special session of the Town Council to order at 11:00 AM on Friday, October 21, 2005.

Vice Mayor Rynearson was not present, but all other Councilmen were.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INVOCATION**

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance and the invocation.

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No one came forward.

**IV. STAFF REPORT – HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS UPDATE**

Deputy Town Manager John Gucciardo reported that during a conference call with all the fire chiefs and emergency operations at nine o'clock, it had been predicted that Hurricane Wilma would make landfall between noon and 6 PM on Monday, October 24<sup>th</sup>. He said the models indicated that landfall would be south of Marco Island, potentially as a Category 2 or 3 storm. He reported an additional weather factor that could come into play, in that a cold front predicted to be as far south as Sarasota by that time on Monday could interact with the storm to produce especially disturbed weather, producing sustained winds of 40 mph for approximately ten hours continuously.

Mr. Gucciardo said the recommendation that came from John Wilson at the EOC was for the barrier islands, mobile home communities and low-lying areas south of the Caloosahatchie River, be put under mandatory evacuation as of noon Saturday. He said the same types of communities north of the Caloosahatchie River would be put under mandatory evacuation on Sunday at noon, which would create a phased-in approach. He noted that Bonita, Cape Coral and Sanibel had all indicated that they would be declaring mandatory evacuation on Saturday as suggested by the EOC.

Mr. Gucciardo said that, while everyone was reluctant to issue a mandatory evacuation order, it was Staff's recommendation that Council consider doing so. He added that shelter openings and LeeTran evacuation services would also be phased in accordingly.

Ms. Segal-George said that, additionally, Staff recommended that the off-Island site be opened at noon on Saturday, if a mandatory evacuation order was declared by Council, in alignment with EOC's recommendation. She announced that the Masonic

Temple at 17671 Pine Ridge Road would go into operation at noon on Saturday if that were the case.

Mayor Van Duzer asked that Jerry Murphy enter his part of the report. Mr. Murphy, the Community Development Director, said that in conjunction with a mandatory evacuation order set for noon on Saturday, the Town would make a sweep to remove all real estate and political signs, but asked that the candidates and real estate people remove the signs voluntarily themselves before the evacuation if possible.

Mr. Gucciardo suggested that the regularly scheduled Town Council meeting on Monday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, be cancelled, which he felt would be appropriate.

For the sake of clarity with regard to a possible mandatory evacuation on Saturday, Mayor Van Duzer said he had spoken with Capt. Matt Powell of the Sheriff's Department, who had told him that no one would be denied access on and off the Island after the declaration, but if the weather deteriorated greatly, they may stop people approaching the Bridge and ask them what their intentions were for coming onto the Island.

Mayor Van Duzer brought the discussion to Council at this time.

Councilman Massucco asked Mr. Gucciardo to briefly talk about where the shelters were located and where someone could get transportation if they were unable to take themselves.

Mr. Gucciardo said there were 9 shelters that would be run by Lee County, but was not sure the order in which order their openings would occur. He thought, in terms of the Islanders, that the Alico Arena would probably be the closest and largest. He said it was expected that people would have access to television and radio through Monday morning, and that the shelters' openings would be announced in those outlets. Mr. Gucciardo said public transportation available on the regular trolley and bus routes, at specially marked stops, of which there were four on the Island – Santini Plaza, Mound Road, Publix and Donora. He said this was a free service that would take people directly to the shelters.

Councilman Massucco asked if the scheduled swim meet had been cancelled, and Ms. Segal-George indicated that all activities in the area had been cancelled.

Councilman Massucco asked if there would be Council meetings on Saturday and Sunday. Mayor Van Duzer said they would decide that at this meeting.

Councilman Reynolds said it was a tough decision to declare mandatory evacuation at this point because the media was currently playing down the storm. He asked Mr. Gucciardo asked if the surrounding towns were going to follow through on the recommendation from EOC. Mr. Gucciardo reiterated that the Town Staff had spoken with the surrounding communities, and that they had indicated that they

would follow the recommendation of EOC and declare mandatory evacuations at noon on Saturday.

Ms. Segal-George said she had spoken with John Wilson at the EOC that morning, and that they were concerned about waiting until Sunday to declare a mandatory evacuation to tell everyone to go, and preferred doing it in phases, with the barrier islands, mobile home communities and low-lying areas going first. She said if the Island residents evacuated, and subsequently learned that the weather was going to clear, they could simply return. She mentioned that Collier County had already declared mandatory evacuation for everyone west of Route 41 on this day, and would be going to mandatory evacuation for everyone east of Route 41 on Saturday. She said that meant there were going to be a lot of cars on the road, and that 24 hours was needed for evacuation so that everyone could get far enough away from the wind field.

Councilman Reynolds said he didn't believe Council had a choice but to go along with the recommendation. He said Lee County was calling the shots south of the Caloosahatchie River, which he said included San Carlos Island. He felt if the residents of that island could come and go as they pleased, he didn't see any reason why the same rule couldn't be applied to FMB residents as well. He felt the Town should cooperate and go along with the EOC's recommendation.

Councilman Katcko agreed, and didn't think 48 hours was too soon to call a mandatory evacuation if expected landfall was from noon to 6 PM Monday. He asked about the list of volunteers that had been gathered by the PSTF. Mr. Gucciardo said they had been contacted through the PSTF members, and were set to help out at the off-Island site to assist the Town Staff. Councilman Katcko asked what the best way would be for elderly people to get help if they were not able to board up their homes themselves. Mr. Gucciardo explained that that was not the purpose of that volunteer group, and that the Town typically did not offer that sort of service, although the free trolley service to the shelters would be available. Ms. Segal-George said that the Town had on occasion tarped over properties that had the potential for flying debris at the request of the neighbors, but that was all. Councilman Katcko acknowledged that, and then offered his home phone number (463-1457) and asked people to call him if they needed his help, and said he would do whatever he could.

At this point, Mr. Gucciardo circulated a picture of the signage that denoted an evacuation pick-up stop on the Island. Councilman Massucco asked that the picture be circulated around the room so that the public present could see it. That was done. In response to a question about the trolley schedule, Mr. Gucciardo said the free service would run on a continual basis.

Mayor Van Duzer remarked that it appeared there was a consensus in Council that a mandatory evacuation order would be issued at noon on Saturday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**MOTION:** Ken Katcko made a motion to follow Lee County's recommendation to declare a mandatory evacuation at noon on Saturday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>. Councilman Massucco seconded the motion.

**VOTE:** The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Van Duzer asked if Staff had any other issues for which they needed Council's direction. Mr. Gucciardo indicated a decision needed to be made about the Monday Council meeting, as well as a decision as to when Council wanted to meet next. Ms. Segal-George added that they needed to know if Council agreed with the recommendation that the off-Island site at the Masonic Temple be opened concurrent with the declaration of mandatory evacuation at noon on Saturday.

There was clear consensus in Council that the off-site location be opened as recommended by Staff.

Regarding when to meet again, Mayor Van Duzer suggested that Council meet on a daily basis, and suggested continuing this meeting until the next day. Ms. Segal-George asked if it would be held at the same time, and Mayor Van Duzer answered affirmatively – 11:00 AM.

Ms. Segal-George asked if Council wished to cancel the Monday meeting at this time, or wait. Attorney Dalton said they could wait until the following day to make that determination, and Mayor Van Duzer thought that was a good idea. Both Ms. Segal-George and Mr. Gucciardo mentioned that whether the timeline for landfall moved up to Tuesday or not, everyone would be off the Island by Monday night. Mayor Van Duzer said that was a very good point, and said he hadn't even seen what was on the agenda for that meeting. He then suggested that the meeting be cancelled at this time. Councilman Massucco agreed. Both Councilman Katcko and Councilman Reynolds said they also agreed. The regularly scheduled Monday night meeting of Town Council was cancelled by consensus.

Mr. Gucciardo reminded everyone that televised updates would be aired on television at 5 PM, and that the website and hotline would be continuously updated. He said those could be done from remote locations as long as they had power. He added that the Pine Ridge Road location would not come into play as a place to obtain information unless, post-storm, there was no access to the Beach.

## **V. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mayor Van Duzer said that things had gotten a bit out of hand during Public Comments at the previous meeting, and that comments would be restricted to the current hurricane issues.

Pat Smith came forward and asked where meetings would be held after the mandatory evacuation.

Mayor Van Duzer said the meeting on Saturday at 11:00 AM would be held in Council Chambers, and that where off-site meetings would be held would be determined at that time if necessary.

Bill Kilberg came forward. He asked what the hotline was.

John Gucciardo explained it was a recording, which was updated periodically. He gave the number 765-0919 ext. 140. Mr. Kilberg asked if there were enough lines to get through, and Mr. Gucciardo said there were. Mr. Kilberg asked what would happen when power was lost. Mr. Gucciardo explained that as soon as a generator was up and running, the phone would be operational.

Janeen Palauskas, on Town Staff, announced that there would be phone lines at the Masonic Temple and that the numbers would be publicized on television and radio.

Ken Smith, manager of the Publix on the Island, came forward. He asked at what point the businesses would be told to shut down and get off the Island. He said there would be a two-day window between the evacuation order and the arrival of the storm, and he wanted to continue to serve the community during that time.

John Gucciardo said the order applied to both residents and businesses, which meant everyone should put their plans into operation at that time, so as to get everyone off the Island safely. He said he understood that Publix would probably stay open until sometime Sunday, but at that point, especially if the weather was still expected to be threatening, it would be expected that everyone would shut down and get off the Island.

Mr. Smith understood that they would not be forced to leave on Saturday, but at some point he would have to make the call as to when to shut down. Mr. Gucciardo, Ms. Segal-George and Mayor Van Duzer all agreed that that was the case.

## **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Van Duzer adjourned the meeting at 11:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo List  
Transcribing Secretary