

**FORT MYERS BEACH
TOWN COUNCIL – SPECIAL SESSION
Masonic Temple – Ft. Myers Blue Lodge No. 362
17625 Pine Ridge Road
Ft. Myers, FL
October 23, 2005**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Bill Van Duzer called a special session of the Town Council to order at 11:00 AM on Sunday, October 23, 2005.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INVOCATION

All present stood for the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance and the invocation, given by the Mayor.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

No one came forward.

IV. UPDATE ON HURRICANE WILMA STATUS – TOWN PREPAREDNESS

Deputy Town Manager John Gucciardo came forward to give the update information.

First, Mr. Gucciardo related information he had received during a conference call that morning with, among others, the EOC. He reported that the expectation was for the storm to follow a southerly track, which he said was encouraging from the point of view of the Town. He said the projected landfall was for Monday morning near the city of Naples, although the EOC's consultant had mentioned landfall occurring at Marco Island at approximately 7:00 AM. He felt this showed some consensus that the storm would take a southerly track. However, he said the EOC had warned that there was a 60-mile +/- window in terms of exact landfall, which meant it could make landfall closer to the Island, and he felt Islanders should keep close watch on the reports.

Mr. Gucciardo said that if the storm stayed on the projected southerly track, then tropical storm-force winds would start to reach the Island area at about 10 PM Sunday night, and that the worst of the wind would occur between 4 AM and 10 AM Monday morning. He said by late afternoon/early evening, the storm should be exiting the East Coast of Florida, which he said meant it would be a rapidly moving storm once it reached the area. He said the storm had a large wind field, but those people who experienced hurricane-force winds should only do so for a short time.

Mr. Gucciardo explained that if the storm did maintain its projected path, it was estimated that tides in this area would run 3 to 5 feet above normal, which he said the

Island had had before and could handle. He said south of the Island, where the storm was expected to hit, it was estimated that tides would run between 8 and 13 feet above normal, which he said was a much more dangerous situation. He said if the storm tracked north of the Island, it could be very damaging.

In terms of the Town's preparations, Staff had already met that morning, and were fully coordinated with both the Sheriff's and Fire Departments. He said that there was not much left to do in terms of preparation. He said the Staff was geared up for response once the storm had passed by. He said the first priority would be the initial impact assessment. He assumed, if the track of the storm stayed as predicted, there would be some damages, but that they could be handled relatively quickly so that residents could return to the Beach relatively quickly.

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

Councilman Massucco asked when the Bridge would be closed. Mr. Gucciardo explained, as he had in all the previous emergency Council meetings, that the Bridge would not be closed, but when weather conditions deteriorated to the point where it would be dangerous, people would be advised not to cross over them. He said that during sustained winds of 40 mph or higher, traffic should cease on all roads, including the Bridge and all bridges in Lee County. He stated travel to and from the Island would not be prohibited up until it became dangerous.

Councilman Katcko asked Mr. Gucciardo to compare the winds from Hurricane Charley to the winds that could be expected if the storm kept to its southerly track. He thought that would give the residents some comparative data so as to know what sort of damage to expect. He also asked Mr. Gucciardo to clarify what tropical force winds were, in terms of speed.

Mr. Gucciardo said he was not a meteorologist, but did have some data that had been sent to Town Hall. He said if one used the Naples landfall as an example – as opposed to a Marco Island landfall – one could expect 39+ mph winds, which was tropical storm force, to begin sometime between 10 PM Sunday and 3 AM Monday morning. He said the worst wind field projected for the Island's area was 58+mph winds, starting at around 6 AM Monday morning and lasting for about 5 hours.

In comparison to Charley, Mr. Gucciardo had been told that during Charley, while the duration of the event had been shorter than five hours, there had been 100+ mph winds on some portions of the Island.

Mr. Gucciardo said if the Naples landfall scenario held true, the Island could expect to sustain tree damage and power outages, but he felt it wouldn't be anything the Town couldn't handle. He cautioned once again that there were no guarantees as to how the storm would actually behave.

Councilman Katcko commented that even in the best case scenario – where the storm made landfall at Naples or south of that – the Island could still have downed power lines and debris blocking the roads, and that there was still the possibility that the residents may not be allowed back on the Island until the debris was cleared. He commented that this was one of THE biggest concerns of the residents.

Mr. Gucciardo explained what the game plan was, in terms of re-entry to the Island after the storm. He said as soon as the winds had subsided to allow safe travel, arrangements were already in place with the Town's internal crews and the contractors to be on the Island to do the initial impact assessment. He said Councilman Katcko was correct, in that road blockages and power outages could be anticipated. They were anticipating that power outages would be relatively isolated, and that they and road blockages could be handled in a relatively short period of time. He pointed out that, after Hurricane Charley, crews with heavy equipment had had the road cleared within a number of hours after that event, and said Staff anticipated that it could be done quickly after the pending storm. He said once the road was clear to allow free passage of emergency and repair vehicles, the Island would be opened for re-entry, as long as there was no problem with the water and sewer systems.

Councilman Reynolds thanked Mr. Gucciardo for his excellent updates and explanations of the situation regarding the storm and the Town's preparedness. He believed Mr. Gucciardo had answered just about any question that anyone could have regarding the storm and the Town's plan. He hoped the Town would maintain the same open-door policy with its residents as it did with the San Carlos Island residents, and believed that was basically what was planned.

Mayor Van Duzer said that the other day, by declaration of the emergency ordinance, the Council had set in place a 72-hour building permit moratorium which was going to expire that day, and that the Council needed to extend it, and that a resolution had been formulated to cover that extension. He asked for a motion to adopt that resolution.

MOTION: Councilman Massucco made a motion to adopt Resolution 05-35, to extend the building permit moratorium. Councilman Katcko seconded the motion.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Van Duzer expressed his pride in the Island community, having seen the help, aid and work that had taken place. He said it looked as though the community had become very capable of handling an emergency-type situation.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

No one came forward.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Councilman Massucco made a motion to adjourn the meeting.
Councilman Katcko seconded the motion.

No vote was taken.

Mayor Van Duzer adjourned the meeting at 11:19 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo List
Transcribing Secretary