

Verbatim Transcript

**FORT MYERS BEACH
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
AUGUST 18, 2004
Town Hall-Council Chambers
2523 Estero Boulevard
FORT MYERS BEACH, FLORIDA**

I. CALL TO ORDER: A special meeting of the Fort Myers Beach Town Council was called to order on Wednesday, August 18, 2004 by Mayor Bill Thomas.

Members present at the meeting: Mayor Bill Thomas, Vice Mayor Garr Reynolds, Councilman Bill Van Duzer, Councilman Howard Rynearson.

Excused absence from the meeting: Councilman Don Massucco.

Staff present at the meeting: Town Manager Marsha Segal-George, Deputy Town Manager John Gucciardo.

(This is a verbatim transcript as requested. The tape recording began with the following statement)

Mayor Thomas: "Fort Myers Beach Town Council is holding an emergency meeting. We will salute the flag."

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: All those present assembled and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Mayor Thomas: "This meeting was called because we're going to have some emergency resolutions, and I'm gonna turn this over to the Town Manager and the Assistant Town Manager."

Mr. Gucciardo: "Thank you. The purpose of this meeting is ... um ...for ... to ask the Council to give us an extension of declaration of a local state of emergency. We passed a declaration last week, and pursuant to State Statute, those declarations are only valid for a 7-day period unless they are extended and renewed. At this point we are requesting that that extension ... that that extension be granted so that we can continue to operate in the emergency recovery mode that we have been ever since Charlie hit.

MOTION: Councilman Van Duzer: "I move a 7-day extension to that emergency declaration."

Vice Mayor Reynolds: "I second that."

Mayor Thomas: "Discussion? All in favor?"

VOTE: All: "Aye."
Mayor Thomas: "Motion passes unanimously."

Mr. Gucciardo: "That's the only order of business that I had other than to give you a ... a brief update on a couple of just operational items, if you'd like at this time. It's up to you. We also want to hear from our ... Captain Greiner, if that's ... if that's acceptable."

Mayor Thomas: "Yes."

Mr. Gucciardo: "Terry ..."

Captain Greiner: "Just to let you know, when Councilman Reynolds, Vice Mayor Reynolds, I'm sorry was up at the checkpoint it went incredibly smooth. Um ... the people coming on the Island were excited and happy, we found very few negative results, and uh, so it's all been a good thing. We've got our ... ah ... National Guard place and our deputies on place on the

Island, we'll keep everybody as safe as possible. That's about the extent of the update unless you have any questions."

Mr. Reynolds: "I'd like to fill in something with that. I think, Captain Greiner, you saw a little bit (inaudible) so ... so they had gone down the lines and pre-qualified people and (inaudible) boy did that ever speed things up. Good move, Captain Greiner."

Captain Greiner: "Thank you very much."

Mr. Gucciardo: "Okay, and other than that, again we can bring you up to date on a couple of operational items if you ..."

Mayor Thomas: "Yeah, let's ... let's get all the updates since we're all here."

(Transcriber's note: In the summary transcript submitted on Aug 25, 2004 it was inferred from this statement that all Council members were present, when in fact Councilman Massucco was absent.)

Ms. Segal-George: "Okay. We ... um, we had hoped to get tarps and some building supplies from Emergency Operations, but they're just not coming quick enough. Um, so Dave Pascal talked to Lowe's. We should have within 2 hours, um trucks coming on the Island carrying plywood, 2 X 4's, nails, ropes, and visqueen. They could not get tarps. I have Ed trying to get tarps in other places. We're going to put ... we're going to create a secure ... hopefully temporary fencing is coming, too ... we're gonna try and create a secure location under the bridge ... um ... is where we're gonna store things, and we're gonna be passing this stuff out, we're gonna put it on the Town's card, we're going to be ... it's too hard to try and ... you know, like sell it, or ... I don't ... so anyway, this stuff's going to be available, hopefully by this afternoon so that people who need these kinds of items ... um ... uh ... will be able to come and get it. We'll have to have some kind of list 'cause we don't want to be taken advantage of, but so that ... you know ... people are getting stuff for their own personal repairs. Um, we've also put out a call, Buzz and Ed have been calling trying to find roofers. Um, as of right now I haven't heard from anybody. Sanibel pretty much cornered the market on roofers, but we're hoping we can find one or two that will be available to help people on the Island. So we're still working on that. Um ... oh, let's see, what else do I have? Um, for us, our priorities right now, um have shifted a little bit. We're trying to, um, get ... getting up and operational to issue licenses for contractors on Friday morning to be ready for that. Um, we're also trying to find out how fast we can start doing an expedited building permit process. We're going to be issuing building permits in Town Hall. Um, the third piece is, is that we're also going to be putting assess ... our own assessment teams together for FEMA that ... so that we can send teams down street by street to begin that first piece of information that everyone will need to file FEMA claims, and uh, it's my understanding that if the Government does that ... ah, does that first review that is then submitted to FEMA that that will expedite all of our residents' being able to get their FEMA claims processed more quickly and put us ahead in the line. Ah, so those are the three things we're working on. Ah, we also ... I had said that our folks needed a rest this weekend and was asking not to be open. I've heard from the Staff that they want to be open this weekend, so we're gonna keep Town Hall open Saturday and Sunday, and we're going to use some volunteers and people that want to help us to kind of give some people a breather, 'cause we have people that have worked non-stop since this whole thing started, but we will stay open Saturday and Sunday also. And hopefully we'll have our ... um ... expedited building permit process in place, and we'll have our contractor list so everybody will be able to get as good .. a ... information as possible. So that's what we're doing."

Mr. Gucciardo: "I have one other bit of information I'd like to pass along from our contacts at Emergency Operations Center. We understand that FPL is sending an additional ... I don't wanna get people's hopes up 'cause I haven't seen 'em yet, but this is what they're telling us ... an additional 80 to 85 trucks coming in through the south end that'll fan out on the side streets, start working on those today. That's the latest word."

Ms. Segal-George: "We also still have Sprint problems, a number of people have lines down and don't have phones. I'm one of them. Um, ah, it's my understanding if your Sprint lines are knocked down, if you have one of those old fashioned phones you can get phone service. Um, and uh, we're also in touch now with Comcast, um trying to get cable fired up on the Island again, too. Uh, we have mail on the Island, we have 2 grocery stores operational, we have 7-11 operational and selling gas, ah, we have 2 ah ... ah ... medical clinics operational. Um, unfortunately, the movie theater is not yet operational because I really want to go to the movies, um and um, but anyway, we have at le ... I mean, we have basic services on the Island, um, ah, to ... you know, for folks when they come on the Island that, you know, they'll be able to get some

... you know, it's still not gonna be like it was before, but at least we have, you know, some basic services available."

Mr. Gucciardo: "No truth to the rumor they're going to play *A Perfect Storm* again."
(Laughter, inaudible comments)

Mayor Thomas: "Getting back to the electric. I came up here, I didn't see any FPL trucks."

Several speakers: "They're out there. They're at the south end. They're out there."

Mayor Thomas: "Where are they?"

Mr. Van Duzer: "They're on side streets right now I think, most of them."

Mr. Rynearson: "Well, they still gotta do the south end yet ..."

Mayor Thomas: "When is the estimate that we're gonna have power?"

Mr. Gucciardo: "They ... they're out there right now. I'd be very surprised if by mid-afternoon there wasn't power extended to the south end of the Island. They were already to ... below ... south of Santini."

Mayor Thomas: "So everybody should have power by this evening?"

Mr. Gucciardo: "No. No, that's Estero Blvd. And the ... the ... people that feed off of Estero Blvd. But the side streets will take considerably longer, although, if ... if these reports are true about the additional resources, ah, you know, it sounds like we'll be up and running pretty quick."

(Inaudible simultaneous speakers)

Mr. Rynearson: "You should have power ..."

Mr. Van Duzer: "I have power."

Mayor Thomas: "You have a question, Bill?"

Mr. Van Duzer: "No, I'm ... I just said to you, 'I have power.' I mean, I'm ... I got lucky. It came on at 7:00 last night."

(Inaudible)

Mr. Van Duzer: "I hate to tell you, I got Comcast and I got ... (inaudible)"

Mr. Gucciardo: "They ... they're out there, Bill."

Mayor Thomas: "Gentleman has a comment. Wanna come up?"

Ms. Segal-George: "Harold."

Mayor Thomas: "... Harold?"

Mr. Van Duzer: "Harold, I've never seen you look so informal."

(Laughter)

Harold Huber: "Good. That's the way I wanna be. Ah, back when we first started the Town, and John remembers, we had a posse, and I think we could get a group, ah, maybe 5 or 6 able bodied people, if we'd be any service to you and do the posse again."

Ms. Segal-George: "Harold. Harold, if you could get you know ... if we could just ... if you can leave me a way to contact you, and if you could start rounding up some folks, we'll take anybody that's willing to help, because it's a huge job."

Mr. Huber: "Yes, volunteer, as ... as we did before. We ... we did the streets as a posse ..."

Ms. Segal-George: "Yes. Yes. It's a hard job."

Mr. Huber: "... and ... but if you ... something that we can do ..."

Ms. Segal-George: "Yes."

Mr. Huber: "...and uh ... my phone is working."

Ms. Segal-George: "Your phone's working? Okay."

Mr. Huber: "463-5829."

Ms. Segal-George: "5289?"

Mr. Huber: "463-5829."

Mr. Gucciardo: "Now officially part of the public record forever."

(Laughter)

Mr. Huber: "And, and I have a cell phone. Cell phone is 823-7400, but I'm out of minutes. Until the ... until the 21st."

(Laughter)

Mr. Gucciardo: "I wonder if (inaudible) will reimburse if we get him some minutes."

Mr. Huber: "That would ... would we be able to do something, ah, how many would you want, like 5 people?"

Ms. Segal-George: "I'll take as many as you can get. And that's something we're gonna work on. I'm hoping to start firing that up on Friday. Okay? Okay ... (inaudible, sound of ringing cell phone over speaker)"

Mr. Huber: "Well, we can ... I ... I ... I can ... I can get a group to ..."

Ms. Segal-George: "Okay. Okay."

Mr. Huber: "And we'll do whatever you want us to do."

Ms. Segal-George: "Yes. You ... you'll hear from me probably some time tomorrow."

Mr. Huber: "We're the posse."

Ms. Segal-George: "Okay."

Mr. Huber: "Garr was on the posse."

Mr. Reynolds: "Right."

(Laughter. Inaudible comments.)

Mr. Huber: "Well, we can't do everything ... we can't ... we can't be the Sheriff, but we can be the posse."

Ms. Segal-George: "Mm hmm. Thank you, Harold."

Mayor Thomas: "Thank you. Anybody else have any comments?"

Mr. Van Duzer: "I've got some comments I wanna make if we're ... uh, when we get to that point, but ... it's a ..."

Mayor Thomas: "Okay. Any more business, uh, from the Town Manager's area over there?"

Ms. Segal-George: "No. Unless you have specific questions on, you know, any services or anything like that. I mean, we're good to go. We've got water, sewer, you know, I mean we're up, we're operational, and um ... um ... you know, I mean we're as good as ... I ... I mean, I didn't think we'd get to this point, but we're here."

Mayor Thomas: "Okay. Bill?"

Mr. Van Duzer: "What I want to say, I just want to get something on the record. I'm ... I'm absolutely amazed at what's taken place and ... and how well it's taken place. I know of areas where they had very little damage, they still don't have power and they've got sewage flowing up through the streets. And these areas are North Fort Myers, uh ... they ... they've ... and ... and what we've done here with our emergency management team, uh, with our Town Staff, with the Sheriff's Department, with the Fire Department and with our subcontractors is an absolute miracle. Uh ... everybody ... uh ... uh ... can ... can fuss about it all they want or criticize what's happened, but what's happened here is an absolute miracle. And uh, everybody should rejoice, and I hope ... uh ... the next Friday the 13th we will rejoice. Um ... I wanted to get that on the record."

Mayor Thomas: "Garr?"

Vice Mayor Reynolds: (*Transcriber's note: Very poor sound quality*) "Ah ... I wanted to say this as carefully as I can ... ah ..."

Ms. Segal-George: "If you can speak into your mike, please. We can't pick you up. Thank you."

Mr. Reynolds: "Oh. Thank you. (*Transcriber's note: The quality of Mr. Reynolds' sound did not improve.*) Ah ... I want everybody if we got ... if we have anybody out there listening in ... I don't ... especially this crew here ... and I wish the whole crew was here ... is that ... is that on here? (Sound of tapping microphone) ... I want this ... uh ... group to know I think that ... uh ... Marsha and John done a good job with this organization. Uh, there was some lack of communication which I didn't like, but you know, that goes along with the job I suppose. Aah ... I felt all along that ... uh ... the Council were a (inaudible) of this team, sometimes I didn't get that idea because (inaudible) committee. Ah ... I (inaudible) compliment Marsha or whoever (inaudible) responsible for bringing in ... ah ... this ... ah ... clearing team. The guy by the name of Buzz, you know, he ran over (inaudible) like a buzz saw, and he was cool and calm and collected, and believe me, he was in command of all those (inaudible) everybody, all the construction people underneath him (inaudible). He just did an absolutely great job (inaudible) and that includes ... I hope I don't miss somebody, but the ... ah ... Fire Department was right in there, the Chief was in there, aah, (inaudible) from (inaudible) Department, the name jumps out at me (inaudible), Captain Greiner and his crew from West District, ah ... and (inaudible) and we had ... uh ... ah ... some other good (inaudible) but there's so many people on this Is ... businesses that contribute, too. I can't begin to name those. Ah, you know, Diamond Head was a sore spot way, way back, but we accepted (inaudible) and you know something, they've been a

real asset to us in this operation on the Island. Ah, the people who are returning right now, I'm sure there's no way they can visualize our Town as it was when we came on here on Saturday. That was when we had our first meeting. Ah, it was ... it's fantastic. I went down the Island on that first day on Saturday, I had a digital camera, I don't know how many pictures I must have taken but I had ... every time ... every place I would see any damage at all I ... I got a picture of it and trying to get those organized. And I hope that people realize through their frustration how difficult ... ah ... it was for us to get this thing organized (inaudible) and how well it fell together ... ah ... thanks to the super organization of our Staff. And not only that, I want to mention about I talked with Janeen this morning upstairs, I didn't get to see her but I made a trip up there to thank her and her staff for the good job that they did. I was in and out there a number of times, and they were ... they had 6 people on the phone at a time answering phone calls. And they need to be congratulated for the good work that they did. So ... ah ... and, Bill, I ... I just appreciate all the Council and I hope that in the future that we can really get to work together as a Council to really do things for this Town, and that's where my heart is."

Mayor Thomas: "Howard?"

Mr. Rynearson: "I can't say enough to the Sheriff's Department, Fire Department, I mean ... that emergency team that John and Marsha put together is fabulous. I sat there through all the meetings, I got here at 6:00 Friday night, and we did ... we sat through all of them and watched it. You guys are fabulous, I just can't say thanks enough. And this Island is up and safely running."

Mayor Thomas: "As Mayor of this Town, I would like to thank our fellow citizens for being so patient during this inconvenience and this ... ah ... emergency that we have had. Their patience is much appreciated, and you're welcome back on the Island after ... ah ... our Staff, our Police Department, Fire Department and anyone concerned had this place ... safe ... safety, health is number one, and to ... to get our utilities going. And everyone did an excellent job. They worked many, many hours, everyone worked around the clock, including the Council. Including the town Manager and Assistant Town Manager, um, but I'm not going to go start mentioning names because I'll leave somebody out. And ... ah ... I think it was a great job, and Fort Myers Beach as a community, we're all gonna pull together and we're gonna bring this Island ... ah ... back and up and running in a very, very short time. And we all got something to be proud of. Thank you."

Mr. Reynolds: (*Very poor sound quality*) "Um, one other thing. For the benefit of the people who may or may not be seeing this, but (inaudible) ..."

Mr. Van Duzer: "It's not on TV."

Mr. Reynolds: "...this room again ... um, I want them to know just because we were here on the Island every day, our houses are no farther advanced in the cleanup than theirs are. I have a ...like, I have a... have a gapping hole about 4 foot in my building, the whole ceiling has fell down over one bedroom, all the furniture's messed up with the built-in, um, insulation all over the place, totally wet all over the bathroom and the (inaudible.) I just want everybody to know that they think that we were here doing things, taking care of our homes, we really didn't have time to get involved in that. So ... ah ... I just want you to know there (inaudible) a few and we sympathize with their problems, and ... but we've done a lot and we've really forced our hands to ... uh ... get this ... uh ... system ... this water system and sewage back in operation and electricity we're still working on it even though we've let people come back on the Island and as indicated here earlier ... ah ... in pretty short order that's going to be taken care of. So jus thanks so much for your patience and understanding of what we've had to go through with (inaudible) back to Fort Myers Beach."

Unidentified: "... (laughter) you just did."

Mayor Thomas: "Howard, you are returning ..."

Mr. Huber: "Harold."

Mayor Thomas: "Harold, you are returning."

Mr. Huber: "I'd like to make one more comment. I think there's one part of our program we can put on the side is pre- ... pre-disaster build ... buildback. We can kinda file that away."

(Laughter.)

Mr. Van Duzer: "Hey, I wrote that. What are you doing? (Laughter) You're gonna throw that away now? Okay."

Unidentified: "Anything else?"

Mayor Thomas: "I think ... ah ... we've covered everything at this meeting."

Unidentified: "Let's go."

Mayor Thomas: "And ... ah ... do I hear a motion to adjourn?"
Unidentified: "So move."
Mayor Thomas: "I hear a motion, do I hear a second?"
Unidentified: "Second."
Mayor Thomas: "All in favor."
All: "Aye."
Mayor Thomas: "Opposed? None. We're adjourned at 10:30."

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia L. Middlekauff
Transcribing Secretary