FORT MYERS BEACH
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
BUDGET WORKSHOP
SEPTEMBER 16, 1999
NationsBank, Council Chambers
2523 Estero Boulevard
FORT MYERS BEACH, FLORIDA

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Ray Murphy opened the meeting on Thursday, September 16, 1999, at 6:35 P.M.

Council members present at the meeting: Mayor Ray Murphy, Vice-Mayor John Mulholland, Daniel Hughes, Garr Reynolds and Anita Cereceda.

Town Staff present: Town Manager Marsha Segal-George, Deputy Town Manager John Gucciardo and Town Attorney Richard Roosa.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND INVOCATION

All assembled at the meeting recited the Pledge of Allegiance and the invocation was given by Councilwoman Anita Cereceda.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

A. HOWARD FREIDEN

Mr. Freiden said that as he has previously indicated to us, he represents Mr. Holland and Mr. Englim who own property on either side of the proposed trash compactor building. It was their position that the site of the trash compactor was inappropriate for the Fort Myers Beach development plan, that it violated the comp plan and that it violated zoning. It is proposed to be built in the street, which is improper. They are trying to come up now with alternate locations for meeting the trash needs. They have retained a company out of Tampa, the H, F and Trash Compactor Company, that advise cities on this kind of facility. They are going to be visiting the site on Wednesday and will be available for the city Council meeting next Monday. It is their experience with these facilities that they smell badly and that there's nothing anybody can do. Using air conditioning to keep down the smell they thought was laughable. Mr. Holland and Mr. Freiden would suggest to the Council that rather than spend $150,000-$200,000 for a facility that may or may not work and may smell and once built would be very hard to remove, that a temporary site, even if it's in that street area, be utilized and that a compactor be placed there to see if one works there before we build a large edifice that's immovable.

Mr. Freiden said that they have contacted a number of people who own vacant property that is more suitable for this kind of facility. They also believe that a compactor at the suggested location will substantially reduce the value of Mr. Holland's and Mr. Englim's properties. These gentlemen have suggested their own financial contributions for the relocation of this facility.

B. PRESENTATION BY THE REVEREND DICK TAFEL:

Mayor Ray Murphy advised that he had been requested by the Reverend Dick Tafel to speak to us this evening.

The Reverend Tafel stated that he's here on behalf of the Beach Task Force on Kids to ask the Council to consider putting in their budget a sum up to $1,000 for the printing and publication of a resource booklet. The Beach Task Force on Kids was started because a number of people in various capacities on the Beach discovered that although there are wonderful facilities here for kids, some kids are dropping through the cracks that don't know about what's available. The Beach Task Force has been pulled together with representatives from each school and after-school program to try and get as much input as they can. The pamphlet they would like to put together would show the activities and various resources that are available here on the Beach, all the way from Family Services to after-school programs. These pamphlets would be left at various places on the Beach and there would also be pamphlets in every Beach school for children to take home to their parents.

Dan Hughes would like to see something in written form showing the members of the Beach Task Force. The Reverend Tafel said he could do that and would also get a sample of

what the pamphlet is going to look like.

IV. SPECIFIC FUNDING REQUESTS

A. Request for funding for Beach Elementary media, arts and physical education

Shirley Semmer, who is working with the Fort Myers Beach Elementary School staff, stated that the Beach School does not get much funding. The education budget was cut and unfortunately the budget is figured pretty much on a student base and not so much on what the needs are. Mrs. Semmer explained that Beach Elementary has a base of about 200 students, which increases to 230-240 during the winter months. A dollar base is taken on the student count. Three Oaks Elementary has maybe 600-800 students and they will get a bigger budget. This is the first time in her nine years of working with Beach Elementary, Mrs. Semmer said, that she has seen teachers send home notes requesting $3.00 to defray costs.

Her purpose in being here is twofold, Mrs. Semmer said. She would like for the Council to consider putting aside $15,000 yearly for the Beach Elementary School. This year would be earmarked for something a little bit different than what would be in future years. Starting next year, they would like for each classroom teacher to have $1,000 for materials, programs, field trips, and projects -- whatever that teacher needs. Teachers just don't have the time to find funding and they don't have much in budgets. They would request $2,000 be budgeted to the media center, $1,000 to the physical education, music and arts programs, and $2,000 to the computer program. This year they started with nine classrooms. Next year there could be fewer classrooms and a smaller budget request.

The computer lab at Beach Elementary is way behind the times and needs to be updated. Mrs. Semmer said she doesn't even know if the computers are Y2K compliant. The school will need $50,000 for a computer lab. The School Board has agreed to give $10,000, and Mrs. Semmer would like us to give $10,000 also. Other organizations have also been contacted for funding. The Chamber of Commerce will be doing a mailing to all their members, asking them to become sponsors of the Beach School and to help raise the needed money. The Chamber has asked that 800 leaflets be printed up. Also behind them in this endeavor is The Uncommon Friends. Mrs. Semmer said she'd like to order the computers no later than February.

They are also asking for $2,500 for the Media Center to help put in new books to replace the old battered books there.

Mrs. Semmer praised the work of Judy Pisano, Chris DeMichaels, the technology specialist, and Sarah Keller, who she said does a fabulous job in the media department. To continue their writing skills, the fourth and fifth graders are now creating a newspaper, and Sarah Keller has agreed to supervise this along with her other duties.

This year, in addition to the $2,500 for the Media Center, they need $10,000 for the computer lab and $2,500 for arts, physical education and music.

Comments by Council:

Vice Mayor John Mulholland asked if the citizens or residents of the Town have access to the computers at the school after school hours. Chris DeMichaels advised that they did not have a problem with opening the school one evening a week for adults, but at this time 99% of their programming is geared for Kindergarten to fifth graders. Adults might be interested in Internet access, but she can't do that right now because of the size and age of their machines. This could be done with new machines. They don't have to access through a modem because T-1 lines have been brought into the school -- a big plus for the district. They would also have Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel and Microsoft spreadsheets in the computer, which would be something that adults would be interested in.

Mr. Mulholland said he had a problem with Town money being used just for an exclusive group.

Town Manager Marsha Segal-George asked if they had thought about trying to share resources. Bay Oaks is trying to create a computer lab and why can't the kids at Beach School use this lab? The same thing with the library. Have those things been explored? Mrs. DeMichaels spoke of the inconvenience and time consideration of getting children from Beach Elementary to Bay Oaks for only 30 minutes of class time. Mrs. Segal-George noted that those kinds of things are happening in other parts of the school system where kids are going back and forth. It's the same taxpayer dollars that are funding everything.

Sarah Keller, the Library Media Specialist at Beach School, said she has a Tubeless Tuesday family reading night every Tuesday at the Media Center and that they've had a terrific response. They've invited the community and have home school children and private school children, as well as their own children coming to their school library and utilizing their resources -- their computers and their books and even their videotapes -- because they believe in sharing. She also walks several classes a couple of times a month over to the public library, which she feels is important to do, and she and Miss Bodie have a terrific sharing policy going on. However, it eats into an incredible amount of time, which the supervisor frowns on. The media library, Mrs. Keller said, is directed toward curriculum support while the public library is directed toward pleasure reading. She has paid for accelerated reading labels herself to give to the public library, with which they have labeled their books that qualify for an accelerated program.

Sarah Keller said that the programs that they would work on in their computer lab would be curriculum support programs, or direct curriculum that would not really have a lot of meaning to a program that would be for pleasure or enjoyment at Bay Oaks. There really is room in their community for both programs. Mrs. Segal-George stated that what she is questioning is there enough money in the community for both programs. Mrs. Keller said she thought that if we talked to parents at Beach School we would find that their library program is working very well. They have parents coming at night. And she is sure that they could do the same with the computer program.

Councilwoman Anita Cereceda stated that the real question for us is whether the Town of Fort Myers Beach should involve itself in funding the Beach Elementary School regardless of what it's for. Should this government get involved in another government's business? Is this a common thing? Dan Hughes advised that it was not a common thing and that he shared Councilwoman Cereceda's concern regarding one government unit adding to their corporate tax levy funds that they will turn over to another taxing body. This is unprecedented in his experience and he's concerned about the precedent that it may establish.

Mr. Hughes asked Town Attorney Roosa if it was appropriate for us to include funds in our budget that we would then transfer to another taxing entity. Attorney Roosa advised that there is a mechanism for doing that, but it's done by interlocal agreement. The problem here is that the school board is Lee County and we don't want to make an agreement with them. We want to know that if we did this, it would only be for the benefit of the Beach Elementary School. Dan Hughes stated that it could be done that way, that those funds could be used only for the Beach Elementary School. But it depends on what we consider to be a municipal function. The Constitution of the State of Florida has divided the education function away from local government and made it a separate district. But if the Council felt that there was a facility where the general public could go and learn about Windows 98 and such things as that, then we might decide that that's a municipal purpose that could be worked in conjunction with the school board and funded. But it should be funded Town Council to school board and not Town Council to a school. When it goes to a school board it can be designated just for that school. But as somebody has pointed out, the people on Fort Myers Beach are already paying taxes for the schools, and they need to go to the school board and make sure that they're getting their fair share of the taxes. If we could develop a program that would meet a municipal need in the general public education, that could be done but it should be done by interlocal agreement with the school board.

Mayor Ray Murphy asked what schools do have state-of-the art equipment and he was told that several of the magnet schools do, which they usually get through their magnet funds. As schools are upgraded, built new or renovated is when they get a lump sum of money to redo a computer lab or media center. The Beach Elementary School was renovated six years ago and did, in fact, at that time add to their computer lab and media center. But technology is racing so incredibly quickly that a computer that is six years old is laughable.

Councilwoman Cereceda said that what the school needs is a benefactor.

Judy Michalski, the Principal of the Beach Elementary School, stated that Mr. Hughes had brought up a very good point when he said is it unprecedented, and it very well may be. But we have a golden opportunity on this island to still have our own school. There are almost no private island schools anymore. This island has been traditionally very generous to this school. If we have an opportunity

to help, she would think that a very wise place for us to put our tax dollars would be in our own future, our children. They have a very wonderful school with many super things going on. But their last big thing as far as she is concerned is their computer lab, and as we all know, technology is what our children really need for their future. Our help would be very much appreciated and she is sure that there are also others in the community who will join in that venture.

Councilwoman Cereceda expressed her annoyance with the Lee County School Board as an entity. Sarah Keller stated that the Board is treating her fairly and gives the Beach Elementary School tax dollars according to the number of students. And it wouldn't be fair if they gave the Beach School $20 per pupil and the Villas $2.00 per pupil. There has to be a formula and the Board's formula is a fair one but, unfortunately, they aren't able to give them any more.

Judy Michalski agreed with Sarah Keller, stating that in many ways the Board is extremely fair, for example with their textbook money. Sometimes they actually get more money than the big schools because they're getting a base amount.

Councilman Garr Reynolds stated that this is going to be double taxation because we're on the ballot for the schools specifically. He doesn't know why the School Board isn't taking the schools more seriously and considering their problems. He has very mixed feelings about taking the Board off the hook.

Mayor Ray Murphy said he is all for exploring possibilities on how we can raise funds for the school. Mrs. Semmer's efforts to raise money for fireworks was accomplished so easily and yet we have to struggle with finding money for education. Anita Cereceda told Shirley Semmer that she would help her find some people with money if all else fails. Mrs. Semmer said that they were going to continue in their efforts to raise money regardless of the outcome of this Council meeting tonight.

Roxie Smith also advocated the Town setting a precedent by supporting the Beach Elementary School. She has no family members in the school right now, but said that she feels so much pride and so much ownership in that school because it is our community school. This feeling was concurred by Fran Myers.

B. Request for concert funding at Villa Santini/Fish Tale Marina

Councilwoman Cereceda said that she would propose that the Town establish a policy of participating in funding cultural events and concerts up to 50% or some other number of the total cost of the project. The person requiring the money should show that they are also participating 50%.

Ms. Cereceda asked why we made a distinction between special events and cultural events. John Gucciardo explained that historically the distinction was between calendar holidays and particular events.

Vice Mayor Mulholland felt that we should put a cap on the line item, which has already been done.

C. Request or funding for Crosswalk Awareness Program

Anita Cereceda said she saw Crosswalk Awareness and Monofilament Madness falling into the category of community services. She feels that the policy could be more generous than the one for cultural events and that we could fund up to 100%.

Dr. Joe Croker said he was here to speak as a representative of the Public Safety Task Force. Our problem is that we deal with so many people in such a changing population on a biweekly, weekly and daily basis here that to simply have a Crosswalk Awareness Day on the 17th of March is not educating the people who came here on the first of March or the 27th of March. We need an ongoing method of getting the message out. Beach residents who are aware of approaching a crosswalk may put on their brakes if driving, but non-residents following them may run into their cars and cause an accident. The PSTF is concerning itself primarily with vehicular education, hoping it will filter down into pedestrian awareness also. Somehow pedestrians waiting to cross the street must let somebody know that they're not waiting for a bus at a crosswalk. The PSTF is proposing that a sticker be put in the lower left back windshield of every resident's car to alert the driver behind him of crosswalk awareness. They would also like to contact all the merchants to place a sticker on their entrance doors and cash registers. Dr.

Croker said that he went to the Chamber of Commerce and asked them to support this endeavor and they said they would. Dr. Croker said that they would also like to see the stickers on the entrance doors of condominiums. A bunch of stickers could be left at the Tourist Convention booth at the airport. They should contact auto rental companies and see if they can put a sticker in their rear windshields. In this way they could educate a lot of people on an ongoing basis. They would ask the Council to fund the printing of the stickers. Ten thousand stickers would cost $670. Anita Cereceda said that she will bring this forward at our final budget hearing and that it certainly falls into the community service category where we could fund 100% of it. Dr. Croker said that if the Council saw that by mid-season more stickers were needed, he didn't think that would cause a problem.

Councilman Dan Hughes noted that since the Town would be ordering the stickers, we would get the sales tax exemption.

Councilman Garr Reynolds said that he believes the system to be one of the best that he's heard.

Mayor Ray Murphy also liked the idea and said it was nice to be able to support our advisory groups.

D. Discussion of paver cleaner for Times Square

Town Manager Marsha Segal-George reminded everyone that this had been in front of us before. She is bringing it back because we have a problem with cleaning the Square. Ed feels that the cleaner is the kind of equipment he needs to do a better job of taking care of the Square. If we feel that this is too expensive a piece of equipment, we won't buy it. Mrs. Segal-George said she feels uncomfortable with the price for such equipment, which is in the ballpark of $30,000. Ray Murphy asked what sort of life the cleaner had and was told by Marsha Segal-George that she assumed it would last for a long time. If we leased it, Councilman Reynolds wished to know, could it be replaced? He was told by Marsha Segal-George that we could get replacement in the lease agreement. She advised that we could only use hot power washing in the Square, because the normal kind of power washing doesn't work on those pavers. It's also difficult to schedule. With this machine, the pavers could be cleaned every day, because Ed would be riding the machine. But if we're happy with how the Square is being maintained now, then we can continue the way we are with the power washing. However, if we're looking for a more optimum look, then Ed says we need this equipment.

Councilwoman Anita Cereceda said she would like to try a year's lease and see what happens. We have a line item in the budget for Times Square improvements. There's money for Times Square maintenance. Mrs. Segal-George said she didn't think we could use the tourist money that we receive for Times Square for the lease. She thought we could get a one-year lease, but Garr Reynolds felt that at $2,400 a month that would be ridiculous. We should try for at least four years, which would be $685 a month. Also, he doesn't feel that it would be necessary for Ed to run that machine every day. Wouldn't that eventually wear out the pavers? Mrs. Segal-George stated that cleaning the pavers only every four or five months causes a big dirt buildup that isn't all removed after a power washing. Washing the pavers on a more routine basis results in cleaner pavers. Only Disney World has these same pavers. Dan Hughes said that he personally feels that the pavers look awful, and if this machine would clean them on a regular basis, it would be well worth it to buy it. Mrs. Segal-George advised that the machine cleans, sweeps, swishes, and blows out water. It does a phenomenal job. The only place where Ed had problems in negotiating the machine was immediately around the wavy wall. She will bring the best lease forward to the Council for its approval if that is what we would like for her to proceed with. Ray Murphy said that he thinks this is worth looking into, and others agreed.

E. Awning for Town Hall

Mayor Ray Murphy advised that we were discussing this now because Marsha Segal-George didn't feel comfortable doing this herself, although he feels that she has the authority to do it.

Councilman Garr Reynolds advised that on hot days the building entrance gets too hot. He asked if it was possible to put a small fan in the entrance somewhere by the door.

Councilman Dan Hughes stated that we lease this property, we do not own it. And every

lease that he has been involved with required the consent of the lessor to do anything to the exterior of the property. We would be subject to the consent of Nations Bank to approve an awning and to choose the color. Mrs. Segal-George said we would speak to the Bank about it.

F. Request for Monofilament Madness

Councilwoman Cereceda felt that this could be a completely funded request and would be eligible for 100% of the requested amount. At a future date she would like to make a motion that we are a platinum sponsor of Monofilament Madness and that we are taking the stewardship role of maintaining the Back Bay. Asked what "platinum" meant, Ms. Cereceda explained that it was $1,000.

Terry Cain of the Marine Resources Task Force advised that last year we cleaned up 5,000 pounds of dirt from half of the Back Bay. Rudy Bush would like to make this a bigger event than it has been before and he would like for us to do the whole Bay this year. We still have Sam Galloway Ford giving us the barbecue down at Fish Tale Marina and we have a confirmation from Mid Island Marina. Parasail boats will be the trash barges.

The Monofilament Madness event will be held on October 24 from first light in the morning until 12 noon. It will be followed by a barbecue. This year they want to make it more of an environmental learning thing and are asking people to come and put up displays. Eve Haverfield and the Estero Bay Buddies will be there, along with others.

Councilwoman Anita Cereceda said she would suggest that Terry Cain contact Kathleen Berlick and have her send a mail out to Mrs. Cain's class, as that was their project. The idea of a class project is that it continues every year. It was a blast last year and brought good will and awareness to other parts of Lee County. Mayor Murphy said he was sure we would all be there.

G. Request for funding "Do the Right Thing"

Mayor Murphy stated that the Town in the past has supported the "Do the Right Thing" program, the Sheriff's program to honor the young people in our community who do the right thing. He tries to get to this ceremony when the kids get their awards every month. Besides the Town's sponsorship, Mayor Murphy believes that the Chamber Foundation is a sponsor as well as other organizations. He thinks this is a very worthwhile thing that we do for the kids and he'd like to see it continue again this year.

Fran Myers advised that we have sponsored the program for two years now and have split with the Chamber Foundation. They give $500 and we give $500. In the spring they had several kids from the Beach School who didn't make the finals, but they were presented with T-shirts and plaques. She would like to see more Beach kids in this program.

Anita Cereceda feels that this program would fall under community services.

H. Utility Tax

Jodi Hester, a four-year resident of Fort Myers Beach, said she would challenge the Council to think of more creative ways to come up with the $500,000 that will be needed yearly for this capital improvement budget. She personally feels that the utility tax will impose a greater burden on the full year residents of our town and that it is an unfair tax. It will be a higher tax than the ad valorem tax. Unfortunately, it appears that there are only two taxes that make any sense -- the utility tax and the ad valorem tax. According to what she's been told, the sales tax and the tourist tax are unavailable to us even though they do appear to be the most logical. She would personally choose an ad valorem tax over a utility tax even though an increase in millage of 40% sounds outrageous, and yet, in reality, it's less. Jodi Hester described how she arrived at her conclusions. She asks if there will also be a tax on phone bills: long distance charges, cell phones, beepers; cables and water. She thinks it's extremely unpopular politically to increase our millage rate, but she urges us to consider the consequences of the utility tax, which is a tax through the back door and not obvious to anyone unless they do some calculations.

Mrs. Hester passed out her calculations.

Councilman Garr Reynolds said that the other day he had asked how much money it would take to add to the millage to get the equivalent amount. Forty percent seems ridiculous when you think about it. Jodi Hester advised that according to her calculations the millage rate that we have right now is 1.0961. We're going to have to have a millage rate of 1.5155. But we should remember that our total Fort Myers Beach tax on our total trim notice is a very small figure

compared to the overall tax that we pay. And she thinks that's what people aren't looking at.

Councilwoman Anita Cereceda asked how do you take someone who isn't familiar with the budget and doesn't know what is going on and educate him so that he can come to the same conclusion that she has come to? Councilman Dan Hughes said that you talk in terms of dollars and not percentages.

Dan Hughes said that he agreed with Jodi Hester's assessment and conclusion. He has never seen a utility tax that was put on for a specific purpose and for a specific period of time ever removed. Some town council ten years from now is going to find a reason why they think they are going to continue to need those funds, and they're not going to want to bite the bullet and levy the millage. If we don't do it now, they're not going to want to do it either. It's not tax deductible, and so you are losing anywhere from 15% to 33% or whatever by it not being an ad valorem tax. And he believes Jodi's calculations would clearly not favor full time residents.

Vice Mayor Mulholland stated that he has the greatest respect for Jodi Hester's analysis and presentation. He would, however, like to get the money from a different source. It doesn't look like the Town will get any more money out of the TDC. The MPO study shows that 37% of Lee County comes down here to the Beach for various reasons as well as tourists. We are serving almost half of the people who are using our services and our roads and they're not sharing in these costs. He would like to propose a bed tax to get the tourist development funds. Anita Cereceda stated that TDC is going to pay about $850,000 a year to the beach renourishment project, a significant amount of money.

According to Marsha Segal-George, tourist development dollars by state statutes are given to the counties to control. That's the law in the State of Florida. So you could be talking about someone lobbying the State Legislature to change the law, or talking abut the local tourist development council to give you more money. Then between the two projects we're talking about $9,000,000.

Dan Hughes advised of optional tourist taxes. He said that the municipal resort tax is the only tourist tax available to municipalities in Florida with populations greatly exceeding ours. Mr. Hughes also stated that there is a local government half-cent sales tax program.

Councilwoman Anita Cereceda noted that we have two people sitting on the TDC, Fran Myers and Roxie Smith, and they do a good job of pitching Fort Myers Beach any chance they get. She doesn't think it would be out of line for us to look to make a pitch to the TDC for projects that we're going to do. She would, however, feel uncomfortable with our looking at it as a funding source.

Mr. Mulholland stated that we should think of the possibility that we won't be able to do both projects at the same time.

Councilman Garr Reynolds felt that the Town has been pretty loose with money. Despite this, the budget has reserves of about $1,000,000. He is having a very difficult time coming to terms with spending residents' money on a county road. It seems to him that we should get the road and then start spending money on it, not the other way around. The amount of $275,000 allocated for the Mound House seems a little bit large just for a start up. He thinks we need to spread our money a little bit. He's not happy about the utility tax and thinks there may be other ways to do our financing. He disagrees with hiring an extra code enforcement employee. The County had the job done with one employee and now it's a two-man job.

Councilwoman Anita Cereceda said she would go with the Council on the tax, whichever way we want to go. But she will vote for a tax to provide this community with an Estero Boulevard streetscape and a beach renourishment program within a reasonable amount of time. Councilman Reynolds said he's not so sure we need it. He'd have to see a place where we really need the tax.

Councilman Reynolds said he strongly suggests that we do not hire a sixth employee. If anybody in the office needs an assistant, it's probably John Gucciardo. And in the future Janeen certainly will need an assistant. Anita Cereceda said she supports this position. Vice Mayor Mulholland said that there is no doubt in his mind that the office staff is busy and he would agree with the extra position. Our payroll compared to a similar Marco Island payroll is $250,000 versus $5,000,000. Mayor Murphy stated that it was amazing to him that we've come as far as we have with five employees. He knows that just based on the workload now that there's definitely a need for someone, especially if we take on these projects and will need someone working with the

engineering firm.

Councilwoman Anita Cereceda said she would like to see the utilization of one or both of the offices downstairs, and she'd like to see a networked computer brought there with the keys distributed to the Town Council so that those offices could actually be used as Council offices. Councilman Reynolds said that when we first became a town, the idea was that each Councilperson would have an office spot and accessibility to a phone but that didn't come about. So that's something that's three and a half years overdue. Mayor Murphy stated that every time he comes here there has always been room to do work.

Councilman Reynolds stated that he feels that contractual services are growing far too rapidly, as well as employees' salaries and benefits. The Town Hall lease has gone from $12,000 in '97 to $28,000 this year. More than anything else, what concerns him is the Town's liability insurance. We are paying $20,000 per year for liability coverage and yet, when he was involved in a lawsuit with the guy who rents jet skis, he was not given legal protection by the Town. Something is wrong when a councilman cannot be protected when dealing with Town issues. He would not have been taken to court if he had not been a councilman, so it was a Town issue. On the other hand, when the Town Manager had a problem, she came and asked for legal protection and was given it immediately, and he agrees with it, but he thinks that every councilman should have the same protection. He has been told that there are loopholes in our insurance, and that should not be.

Vice Mayor Mulholland referred to the Local Planning Agency costs. He agrees that they have gone up, but thinks that the LPA has a very heavy workload. Whatever costs they had he thinks is money well spent because they have served the first Council and this Council very well. Garr Reynolds advised he had been speaking of contractual services.

Mayor Murphy stated that as far as the lease for Town Hall goes, Garr Reynolds is correct. Since we first moved in, we've doubled our space and $12,000 a month was an extremely reasonable rate in the present market.

Councilwoman Anita Cereceda referred to the land acquisition under capital improvement. She asked if we had a stated policy in the comp plan about land acquisition. She would like to see us come up with a stated policy as to what land we are going to acquire. Mayor Murphy felt that that was pretty broad. Ms. Cereceda would like something that states why we're doing this and what we would hope to accomplish by doing this.

Anita Cereceda would also like to see us put into this budget, and there seems to be plenty of money to do it, a schedule created and money allocated to begin the implementation of repairs for all of those projects that were listed. Then, as John suggested, she'd like to see an annual amount specified in the budget for repairs and maintenance and whatever else we need to do. John Gucciardo stated that actually it would take a fairly minor adjustment in some of these numbers, because in the next fiscal year under General Transportation we have $250,000 for capital improvement for the road system, which is also the drainage system. Mayor Murphy said that he agreed with this. Other than those drainage projects, John said, the one thing that they try to highlight is that there is also budgeted approximately $60,000 for a drainage study, which is part of our obligation on the MPDES. This has already been started and it will be formalized so that it can flow into the projects that we'll he doing. In addition to that, we're talking about maybe another $20,000 into that line item.

Town Manager Marsha Segal-George advised that a lot of work was involved in managing, supervising and making sure that each one of the drainage projects is done correctly. We're trying to reshuffle some of the work. An assistant is suggested for John Gucciardo so that he won't be doing the kinds of tasks that someone else could be doing while he spends his time on more valuable things. We have to provide every one of those services that are on the organizational chart.

Anita Cereceda would like to see what we spent in prior years for Town Council travel, meals and auto. There is $10,000 allocated for this year. John Gucciardo said that this could be done.

On page 6 of the budget, Ms. Cereceda stated, there are quite a few policy questions. Our vision statement in our comp plan describes Fort Myers Beach as a living park. She would suggest that we redo the Bay Oaks Advisory Committee when their terms expire, but have a

Parks & Recreation Committee that will have on its board one member from each of our other committees. Their job would be to look at the big picture of Fort Myers Beach being a living park and make recommendations to the Council, such as how the pool should be run; how the Council should deal with parking at Bowditch Point; should the Town take over the beach accesses; should the Town look to create a park at Snug Harbor; should the Town take over Lynn Hall Park. Look at the bigger picture instead of these little pictures. The bigger picture is going to require funding and is going to require addressing. Dan Hughes said he thought there was some merit in this, but he's always concerned when we establish another entity. Ms. Cereceda said it would be reorganization. The multiplicity of entities, according to Dan Hughes, can be counter- productive.

Ms. Cereceda sees that the vast majority of our budget is going into Parks & Rec. and it's going to continue to be that way. We don't have anything in place right now to look at that big picture other than the Council. And she's not really sure what the Bay Oaks Advisory Board is doing for us.

Dan Hughes asked if a Town Council member would be on the new Parks & Rec board. Anita Cereceda said it would have a liaison.

Councilwoman Cereceda advised that at the last Traffic meeting they discussed trolleys at length. A motion was made for the Traffic Committee to support Anita Cereceda's request to ask the Town Council to subsidize the ridership on trolleys from 15 December to 15 April. The motion passed unanimously. Instead of paying for additional trolleys, which we do during season anyway, we would keep everything status quo. We wouldn't bring on any more than what we normally do bring on extra. What we would do is pay that amount of money so that the trolleys would be free. John Gucciardo stated that he has done some very preliminary playing around with the numbers. On page 18 of the budget, line 18 is $30,000 for trolleys. If we were to subsidize the 25 cents and also extend the period of time for the enhanced trolley, he would guess that would be about a $15,000 change. Anita Cereceda stated they were looking to find out what impact a free trolley ride would have. Dan Hughes said that if we're making the rides free to promote utilization of the trolleys, they are already utilized to capacity in season in his view.

The trolleys may have been subsidized by the CRA in 1993, and Mayor Murphy said that maybe we could get the results of that study.

Garr Reynolds would like to see at least one trolley operate up until 11:00 p.m.

Dan Hughes said he would like to see more trolleys rather than subsidizing the quarter fare, which he does not feel is a deterrent to ridership.

Councilwoman Cereceda suggested a free trolley ride from Summerlin to the beach as a compromise. Then we're looking at keeping cars from ever getting to the Island. Dan Hughes stated that if that would help, he would be in favor of it, as the service from Summerlin to the Beach is underutilized.

Anita Cereceda also suggested sponsorship by Pink Shell, the Outrigger or the restaurants on the Island if they got a plug on the trolley.

The big problem with trolley service according to Dan Hughes is its inability to operate on schedule during season because of the traffic situation. And more trolleys won't help because they just can't move.

Housekeeping

Deputy Town Manager John Gucciardo reminded us that the numbers that we're going to see on the final version of the budget on September 27 will be significantly different from the numbers that we have in front of us now. Obviously the closing on the Mound House will not happen. We will see an additional $1,000,000 in revenue, an additional $1,000,000 in expenditures. Ray Murphy asked if there were any way that the changes could be highlighted so that we could flip right to them.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

A. HOWARD FREIDEN

Mr. Freiden said he would like to be put on the September 27 agenda. Town Manager Segal-George noted that Mr. Freiden had referred to the trash compactor as a proposed facility, but that it is an approved facility. Mr. Freiden said that the County has told him that they're going to reject the compactor because it will be built in the street. Mrs. Segal-George said that it is our

street.

Mr. Freiden stated that the application that was filed Monday was for a civic pavilion, and that is what the County has seen. But it is not a civic pavilion, it is a garbage facility.

Councilwoman Cereceda said she would like to see us make an effort to be as cooperative with those property owners as possible. But they both know that that is an approved project that the Council is not veering from moving forward with. If there were a better alternative, she for one would certainly look at it.

Mr. Freiden said they are looking for alternatives, but in his opinion and from some of the information he's received from the County, there are impediments to building in this location. He would like to make a presentation and bring in people who know about these kinds of facilities and have them speak to the Council.

The council members said that they would be willing to listen to Mr. Freiden's presentation.

B. TERRY CAIN

Mrs. Cain said she just wanted to thank us for our consideration and she loved the living park idea.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lorraine Calhoun
Transcribing Secretary

Items for action from the meeting of September 16, 1999

1. The final budget hearing will be held on September 27.

2. Monofilament Madness will be held on October 24 from first light in the morning until 12 noon.