

**FORT MYERS BEACH**  
**TOWN COUNCIL WORKSHOP WITH SAN CARLOS CRA**  
**JUNE 18, 1998**  
NationsBank Building, Council Chambers  
2523 Estero Boulevard  
FORT MYERS BEACH, FLORIDA

**I CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Anita T. Cereceda opened the workshop on Monday, June 18, 1998 at 6:30 P.M. Present at the meeting were: Mayor Cereceda; Vice-Mayor Ray Murphy; Council Members Garr Reynolds, and John Mulholland; Town Manager Marsha Segal-George; Deputy Town Manager John Gucciardo; and Town Attorney Richard Roosa.

Absent from the meeting: Daniel Hughes

**II PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

All assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

**III INTRODUCTIONS**

Janet Watermeier, Executive Director of the Lee County Economic Development office, introduced Elly McKuen, program manager of the CRA.

She also introduced the members of the San Carlos Island Local Redevelopment Planning Committee: Earle Rossiter, Chairman, Betty Goodacre, Bill Semmer, Gene Steffan, Bob Beasley, and Joanne Semmer (former chairman of the CRA and now director of Waterfronts Florida program),

**III OVERVIEW OF SAN CARLOS ISLAND PROJECTS**

Ms. Watermeier said she would touch briefly on the projects planned for San Carlos Island, but would focus mostly on the mooring facility, which they feel that San Carlos Island needs for the shrimping industry to survive. She knows there are concerns about it in the Town and she wants to make sure they are working together as a team to make it happen.

The CRA plan is to improve image, redevelopment, and business opportunities along San Carlos Blvd. and the waterfront. They are working on design guidelines, zoning overlays to help with buildback opportunities, storefront grants (a matching program to help improve the image), streetscape, and the two projects of the Waterfronts Florida.

The design guidelines are the Old Florida look with metal roofs, awnings and landscaping. There are three zoning overlays: commercial corridor (San Carlos Blvd.); fishermen's wharf (under the bridge) and the industrial waterfront. Participation in the overlays will enhance the buildback ability and the shared parking.

Eleven people have opted for the storefront grants. It is a 1:1 match, \$6000 per storefront for improvements to the exterior and landscaping. Projects must be completed by Dec. 1998.

\$7250 has been set aside for the streetscape program. The Chamber is interested in some landscaping which may enhance the program. Before spending any of the dollars, they have to have a maintenance program in place. They will be looking at MSBUs or possibly to add it to the street lighting district. They are looking at some trees and a little bit of color – not a lot of heavy landscaping. Hopefully they can work together with the Town on this.

Waterfronts Florida is a state matching grant of \$35,000 local match to a \$35,000 state grant over a 2-year period. The grants for the next series are now out and it may be something that Fort Myers Beach can apply for and they will be glad to help us with the process. CRA dollars will match the money from the state. Four goals have to be met in any project: it must enhance public access, it needs to address hazard mitigation, it must include environmental and cultural resources, and it must support a viable traditional waterfront economy. The local group chose to work on: a San Carlos island web page (where merchants can advertise); hold a taste of the island and fishing tournament (annual event); a working waterfront trail, and the mooring facility.

The working waterfront trail will be a walking path with kiosks and informational and educational signs. They could include a kiosk at a Fort Myers Beach site if the town wishes. Mr. Spikowski also wants to include the potential for a water taxi site in the plan. There would be three main kiosks. The path would start under the bridge in the parking lot. You could walk or take some kind of van or trolley and learn

about what is going on, particularly about shrimping and fishing. It would stop at Ostego Bay, the Coast Guard Station, the shrimp houses, etc. Ostego Bay Foundation would be the maintenance organization.

Regarding the mooring facility, the shrimp boats are currently docked against the shoreline, 3 to 5 deep. It makes it difficult to unload the shrimp. They would really like a floating dock, but they realize that that idea won't go well with the Town. So they are looking for 6 pilings for the boats to tie up to. They will be approximately 50' apart for a total of 300'. After boats unload at the dock, they would go to the piling to tie up. Shrimp boats cost between \$650,000 and \$1,000,000. They purchase locally about \$7000 per trip in food supplies. They spend about \$15,000 per year in insurance, etc. A good night's yield is about \$1500 of shrimp. A captain earns between \$30,000-90,000 per year and the crew earns about 30% of the catch value. Typically the boat has a 3-person crew.

About 90% of Lee County's commercial fishing takes place on San Carlos island. There are 171 full time jobs, and wages are almost \$4 million. The average wage is \$22,000. The indirect impact (using the federal multiplier) adds 229 jobs and \$6.5 million, with an average wage of \$28,700. (Lee county average wage is \$23,280.) So it is an important industry to our economy (about \$9 million impact.) In Florida 54 million pounds of shrimp are harvested each year, with a dockside value of \$80 million. Lee county is 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state in the amount harvested, and is harvesting the higher value shrimp so it has about 12% of dockside value. There are about 140 shrimp boats that work out of San Carlos Island during the season. They are not all here at once. They go out for 18 to 40 days at a time, so less than 14% are here at any time. From November to April it ranges from 7 to 37 boats at a time. That represents about 1/4 of the boats in the Matanzas basin.

The mooring would be posts in the water with boats tied to it. At the dock will only be one boat against the dock. She showed a picture of where the mooring pilings would be. She thinks the maximum at any one time tied up would be 5 boats. She showed computer-enhanced photographs of what the moored boats would look like from different streets on the beach. They have done some soundings to see if it would work. The town expressed their concern about the DEP permits. Waterfronts Florida allowed that permit to die and will start all over, hopefully with the blessing of the town. Dollars will be matched by the shrimpers. The desired timeline is to get a feeling of approval from the town tonight so they can go forward with the DEP permit. Permitting would be in 1998-1999 and construction in 1999 – 2000, hopefully in time for next season.

#### **IV QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS**

John Mulholland said one of the things the Town and the MRTF are doing is to implement a harbor management plan. They have selected Coastal Engineering and are going into the feasibility phase. They are looking into a mooring plan for the recreational boats and would want the participation from San Carlos Island to help with the project. He said that when you look at the map that Ms. Watermeier presented, he can't tell how big the anchorage will be and if it will be near the shore of San Carlos Island. Ms. Watermeier said the town's line goes almost to San Carlos Island, so the facility will probably be in the town's water. But they feel that this plan will have less impact on the town than the floating dock they first proposed. Mayor Cereceda questioned how the pilings can be 50' apart if the boats are about 65' long. It was clarified that some boats are shorter than that, but that some are up to 80' long. Ms. Semmer said they will need an engineer to come up with the exact dimensions. Would the moorings be used in the off season? Ms. Semmer said no, only when the shrimpers are here. Will people live aboard? Ms. Semmer said the plan is that when the boats are moored, they will be empty and the shrimpers understand that. Ms. Watermeier said they will set out the parameters before any document is signed. Will there be a dockmaster and how do they plan to enforce that? It was stated that they will have to interface with all the regulatory agencies. Mayor Cereceda asked how far into the bay the mooring will go? Ms. Watermeier said that judging from the scale on the map, it looks like less than 300'. Ms. Semmer said the bottom is 15' deep in that area and there are no sea grass beds. It is the only location with that depth and that is long enough without dredging. They won't know until after the survey (which costs about \$4000) how far exactly it will go into our water. The site is off of Villiers Seafood and will not be in the federal channel. It is where the boats were turning around now. They showed a number of pictures of the area.

Ms. Semmer said that netmaking, the ice plant, electronics, trucking, woodworking, and the shipyard are examples of the indirect jobs created by the industry. Chuck Adams with the Univ. of Florida Sea Grant program said he was approached last year by WCIND to do a study of the economic importance of the fishing industry in Lee County. He has talked with the shrimp off-loading facilities, and has gotten data from a number of agencies. They also assign a value to a diverted boat if it can't tie up here. Most of

the shrimp leaves the county, so it is a true economic impact. His preliminary numbers are much bigger than the ones Ms. Watermeier showed, maybe 6 times higher. Their findings so far show about \$55 million, which is low. San Carlos Island is one of the three major off-loading sites and is probably the only full service one. Hopefully he will complete the study by the end of the summer.

Mr. Murphy asked how often diverting goes on. Christine Gala with Trico said that if boats even hear that it is too crowded here, they will divert. They have boats call 5 or 6 times a week to see if they are busy and can handle them. Sid Jacobsen from Island Packing said that he recently had a phone call from someone from Brownsville, TX with 5 boats that he would like to bring here next winter. He is looking at Tampa and Key West too. We need the dock space. Mayor Cereceda asked if the shrimp season is the same as tourist season. She was told that the boats leave in mid-July and come back in September. They have a closed season in Texas of 90 days where there is no fishing at all. They try to be in Texas on opening day. Mr. Mulholland asked if they see the moorings growing. Will it grow to 10 or 12 moorings? They replied that they would like to see it expanded, but they aren't in the process now. How did they decide on 6 moorings? Because originally they wanted a floating wharf of 300', so they stuck with that because that is the number they think they need now. Ms. Semmer said that anything larger will require dredging. Ms. Goodacre said after that you get back into sandbars and birds. Ms. Semmer said they have a determination by DEP that the aquatic preserve is on other side of the island. Mr. Mulholland said he doesn't see the boundary of our jurisdiction changing. He encouraged them to come to the MRTF meetings. He is not sure the town will be through with their study by the end of the summer. Ms. Watermeier said they would like to reapply for the permit and would like to start the process now, which is a long process that includes engineering studies. Waiting until summer puts them a year later. Ms. Semmer said that all waterfront in Florida is in demand for redevelopment. They want the fishing industry to be able to afford to stay there. That is a lot a property there and they are paying industrial taxes. Mr. Beasley said the space that is left is very small and cannot be expanded. He has 350' and operates large vessels, but they do not allow the shrimp boats to tie up there. Half of the property at Trico has been lost when the county put in the boat ramp. Ms. Gala said they used to have all the area from the bridge around, but it has been sold off slowly and they are being squeezed out. Key West has lost almost all their docks and the shrimpers are trying to relocate here. Ms. Semmer said they need to apply so they can hear from the state what is required from them and if they can afford to go forward. They would have to come to the town for construction permits. Ms. Goodacre said that the Matanzas basin should have been divided half way so the two islands would have their own piece of water. Now the city line comes right up to their seawall and people can't put out a dock without asking the town. She would like to see them appoint some people from San Carlos Island be on their harbor management committee. They have so much at stake so they should be on the committee. Mr. Mulholland said they are limited by town ordinance in the number of members and that they advise the council. The council has sent Councilman Murphy as a liaison with them and that Johanna Campbell has been sent as a representative also. Ms. Semmer said it will take a year or two to get the permits and they would like to start now. Mrs. Segal-George said the town had a number of objections to their first permit application. After they apply for the permit, DEP will send us a copy and it will go to MRTF and the council for comments. She said zoning is a question. The moorings will be in Town water and will need industrial zoning. The Town's boundaries do not take away any of the property owner's riparian rights. Where the riparian rights end is where the town's line starts. Mr. Mulholland said we should discuss the reasons for the objections first so we don't start the same problems again. Ms. Watermeier suggested a workshop to work out the problems first. She said there are conflicts over jurisdiction and even legal opinions differ. Mayor Cereceda said the Council cannot take any action at a workshop, but they can take with them the understanding that we are willing to work on a solution that is agreeable to all. We need to set up a future workshop to work out the problems that exist. Mr. Roosa said ultimately they are going to have to have the approval of the town. But if they could also get the support of the town, that will help them with their permitting process. He suggested getting the support first, then you have a better chance of the project being completed. Mayor Cereceda said our main goal is not animosity. Fort Myers Beach has always included San Carlos Island. Mr. Semmer said they started the permitting process over a year before the town became a town, so they thought it would go under their boundaries. Ms. Watermeier suggested that they meet again within 3 to 4 weeks after they have studied the Town's objections so the town can be comfortable with their going ahead with the permit, without committing the town. Mr. Rossiter said even if they don't have a workshop, they could get a list of the objections. Mr. Mulholland would like to get hold of the objections that the council and MRTF had and have the council talk about them. Mr. Reynolds said he thinks they are taking the first step of realizing that it is in our

territory. There are obligations that come along with the territory. Ms. Semmer said they made a presentation before the LPA and there were no changes from the DEP permit. Mr. Roosa said there should be an application that could be reviewed by our county staff. He is concerned about making a decision that could have a dramatic impact on that study that we are just beginning. We are trying to do too much this month. We can't be expected to approve an unknown application. We are in the process of new engineering study and that will have a significant impact. It may delay things for a couple of months, but in the total picture, it is not too much. Mr. Beasley said the money has to be used by a certain deadline. All they want to do is put in 6 pilings. Ms. Semmer said that the boats could anchor out there now, but it is not a safe thing to do. They are trying to make a safe place for the boats. Mrs. Segal-George said we can get copies of the objections to them and let them have time to respond to them before coming back. Mayor Cereceda suggested they could work with the MRTF through the summer and come back to the town in August with a recommendation and then make a decision. Ms. Watermeier said she thinks that time frame works and they will get the information they need and the communication they want.

**V ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Peggy Salfen  
Recording Secretary