

**MINUTES
FORT MYERS BEACH
MARINE RESOURCES TASK FORCE
Town Hall
2525 Estero Boulevard
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931**

Wednesday, April 14, 2021

I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Chair Johnson.

II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

Members present: Greg Fossum, Steve Johnson, *Rose Larkin and Jennifer Rusk.

Excused: Mary Rose Spalletta

Absent: Renee Jeffreys Heil

Staff: Environmental Project Manager Chadd Chustz

Council Liaison: Bill Veach

IV. APPROVE THE AGENDA

No quorum.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – March 10, 2021

No quorum.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

John Heim, resident, stated that the Town passed an ordinance in 2017 to test the back bay at 16 designated sites and inform the community of the results. He noted he could not find the test results and questioned whether the water was being tested and whether taxpayers were paying for testing that was not being done. He pleaded with MRTF to find out what happened to the tests. Chair Johnson replied that they would look into the matter.

*Rose Larkin arrived at 3:17 p.m.

VII. CURRENT ITEMS

A. Polyhydroxyalkanoate-Bio-polymers presentation by Phade Straws

Brad LaPorte, the CEO of WinCup, described his food service company and how they evolved to create biodegradable products. The phade straw was the first marine biodegradable product in the world. He distributed a handout of information and

explained the process of developing the straws. He explained why his product was better and less expensive than other materials. Mr. LaPorte stated that shade did not turn into microplastics and disintegrated within nine weeks in compost.

MRTF Member Fossum reviewed the degradation timeline of 10 days and noted that turtles and other wildlife could ingest the straws during that period. Mr. LaPorte replied that it was not a perfect solution, but he indicated the material sunk to the ocean floor instead of float on the surface. He stated that he did not test bird ingestion yet, but he noted that the material was natural. He compared the shade straw to what currently existed in the market.

Mr. LaPorte commented that he would send the straws to Project Manager Chustz. Mr. LaPorte explained the science behind his March 21, 2021 interview with the Wall Street Journal.

Chair Johnson felt the straws posed a potential problem for wildlife. MRTF Member Rusk agreed that the product was great but not feasible for coastal communities. MRTF Member Larkin thought it was a step up from what was being used. Mr. LaPorte suggested that Federal Trade Commission (FTC) guidelines be used regarding specific biodegradable claims for plastics.

B. Beach Bucket Foundation

Holly from Keller Williams distributed a proposal regarding the Beach Bucket Foundation. They installed beach bucket stations on the other coast for beach cleanup. She discussed the Beach Bucket Foundation partnering with the Town. Keller Williams offered to sponsor the first three buckets with the rest funded through sponsorships. She stated that they planned to organize a beach cleanup event on May 13 and launch the Beach Bucket program at the same time. She commented that they would not have time to customize the buckets for the first event. Liaison Veach noted that Town Council did not support advertising. Holly replied that advertisers did not have to appear on the buckets.

MRTF Member Rusk suggested locations for the bucket stations and indicated that the buckets could be added to existing posts. She supported using biodegradable bags. Chair Johnson suggested they get back with Holly after the meeting. He noted they would investigate other groups too. Holly commented that if Keller Williams could, they would support any group the Town chose.

Chair Johnson compared the buckets to what existed on the beach and reviewed options in the proposal.

MRTF Member Rusk stated that biodegradable bags existed and she discussed installing reusable bins for trash and recyclables. She described the short code registry to prevent theft. She indicated that the bins required less maintenance and were cost-effective.

Liaison Veach suggested they test the product at a beach access close to a MRTF Member so it could be monitored. MRTF Member Larkin suggested installing a couple in Times Square for all the cigarette butts. Different designs, products and single-use plastic bags were discussed. Chair Johnson did not care for the large cabinets offered by the Beach Bucket Foundation.

MOTION: MRTF Member Fossum moved to install bags at the doggie stations with a sign indicating what it was for as a test; second by MRTF Member Rusk.

Chair Johnson agreed it could be a problem and suggested that Public Works research maintenance. Liaison Veach suggested MRTF perform the research. Chair Johnson and MRTF Member Rusk offered to research products.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

C. Exotic Plant Survey

MRTF Member Larkin reported that 24 Master Gardeners and 1 Florida Native Plant Society volunteer put in 150 hours on the beach. She questioned who would be responsible for answering questions in Town Hall. She stated that they had to include a disclaimer because some trees were misidentified. She questioned adding information to the website and submitting press releases. She noted the project ends on May 1, 2021 and would result in a lot of data.

Chair Johnson questioned how long it would take to digitize the data. MRTF Member Larkin replied there were hundreds of properties and it would take a few hours. She revealed that a couple of Master Gardener volunteers could perform the task. Project Manager Chustz stated that the data did not have to be digitized before they contacted property owners. Liaison Veach discussed digitizing the data for a mail merge to explain the survey and provide options.

Discussion was held concerning reviewing the data at the next meeting and the next steps.

D. MRTF Educational Outreach

1. Pop-Up Tent Event Update

MRTF Member Rusk reviewed recent pop-up events. She felt they were successful and would share pictures at the next meeting. She reported that she is waiting for the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to approve her application for a blanket field permit for future events. She indicated that the fee was waived. MRTF Member Rusk stated that she was invited to meet with the working group of the Friends of Lovers Key. Her next event was tentatively scheduled for May 2, 2021, at the Taste at the Beach.

2. MRTF Brochure – tabled.

E. Ocean Friendly Sunscreen – tabled.

F. Dune Management – tabled.

G. Good Citizen Award aka the “Murphie”

MRTF Member Rusk described how Mallory from Fish Tale rescued a baby osprey.

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved to nominate Mallory from Fish Tale for the Murphie; second by MRTF Member Larkin.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

VIII. MEMBER ITEMS AND REPORTS

MRTF Member Rusk described a missing post for channel marker 63 at Bay Beach and requested that another sign be installed to help stabilize the osprey nest. Project Manager Chustz discussed the signs. MRTF Member Rusk requested that a discussion concerning osprey habitats be added to the agenda.

MRTF Member Fossum stated that he would attend the next AAC meeting to discover if pump-outs occurred outside the Mooring Field.

No items from other members.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT – no public comment.

X. SET AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING – add dark skies, lighting and osprey habitat.

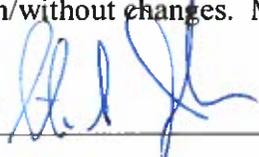
XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved to adjourn; second by MRTF Fossum

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:41 p.m.

Adopted 5-19-21 with/without changes. Motion by _____
(DATE)

Vote: _____ Signature: 

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