

MINUTES
FORT MYERS BEACH
MARINE & ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES TASK FORCE
Bay Oaks Recreation Center
2731 Oak Street
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931
Wednesday, January 10, 2024

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 a.m. by Chair Johnson.

II. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call

Members present: Steve Johnson, Rose Larkin, David Nusbaum, Jennifer Rusk and Mary Rose Spalletta.

Excused/Absent: Bill Althoff and Robert Howell.

Staff: Harbormaster Austin Gilchrist and Environmental Projects Manager Chadd Chustz.

IV. Approve The Agenda

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved to amend the agenda and add the staff report, beach sand projects, activity book and adopt the easement program if time allows; seconded by MERTF Member Spalletta.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

V. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes – December 13, 2023

MOTION: MERTF Member Rusk moved to approve the amended minutes of December 13, 2023; seconded by MERTF Member Spalletta.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

VI. Public Comment

Ed Rood, resident, clarified that he brought up the sand spur herbicide to ensure the current town council agreed with the application approved by the previous town council. He indicated that Rebecca from the Fish & Wildlife Conservation (FWC) stated they would remove Australian Pines from the Critical Wildlife Area (CWA), but the Town was responsible for those outside the CWA. Regarding renaming the CWA, he and his neighbors wanted to rename the area known as Little Estero Island CWA to honor Dan Hughes.

VII. Current Items

A. Sand Spur Maintenance in Shorebird Nesting Habitat

Chair Johnson reviewed the history of sand spur removal options. Mayor Allers tasked MERTF with researching whether herbicides other than Imazapyr were available today. Chair Johnson indicated that the FWC has not investigated other herbicides. He stated that Imazapyr worked when applied to the sand spurs and the FWC found that a second application was unnecessary. MERTF Member Nusbaum added that it was critical to apply the herbicide before the sand spurs developed on the plant. Projects Manager Chustz recommended that the Town approve FWC's recommendation to use Imazapyr. He advocated for mechanical removal before applying the herbicide and supported researching whether other means of removal were available. MERTF Member Nusbaum indicated that the FWC would not apply the herbicide. Projects Manager Chustz agreed and commented that the FWC would hire an expert to spray it.

MOTION: MERTF Member Spalletta moved to recommend that the Town authorize the FWC to use Imazapyr in the roped-off colonial nesting bird area for this one time, pending new information later, and recommend mechanical removal before applying the herbicide; seconded by Chair Johnson.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

B. Australian Pine Eradication in the Environmentally Critical Zone

Chair Johnson noted that Harbormaster Gilchrist stated the process was already underway at their last meeting. MERTF Member Nusbaum indicated that some of the trees were too big to pull out by hand, and homeowners requested that the roots be treated with an herbicide. Projects Manager Chustz explained how they were removed and that he would work with homeowners and the FWC to take care of them before nesting season. He encouraged property owners to contact him.

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved to support the removal of Australian pines in the EC zone and using an herbicide to paint stumps, seconded by MERTF Member Nusbaum.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

C. Renaming the Critical Wildlife Area

Chair Johnson questioned whether there was a reason to rename it and whether it was in their purview. MERTF Member Rusk commented that it was already named in an ordinance and supported keeping the name. Chair Johnson noted that it was named for former mayor John Mulholland and did not support renaming it. MERTF Member Nusbaum added that everyone referred to it as the CWA anyway, but he supported public input from the community.

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved to recommend not changing the name; however, the Town was welcome to pursue the issue; seconded by MERTF Member Spalletta.

VOTE: The motion carried 4-1, with MERTF Member Nusbaum dissenting.

D. Update on Activity Book

MERTF Member Rusk noted that Macy Knoll signed the contract with an end date of April 30, 2024. She reviewed the timeline from the handout she distributed and proposed

dates for a MERTF special meeting after April 10, 2024, with Ms. Knoll. MERTF Member Nusbaum recommended rescheduling their regular meeting. MERTF Member Larkin noted they could schedule a review committee meeting without all MERTF members in attendance. MERTF Member Rusk described the contents of the book. MERTF Member Nusbaum suggested sending the rough draft pages to members before scheduling more meetings to save staff time. MERTF Member Rusk replied that the staff did not have an issue with more meetings for workshops. Discussion was held regarding scheduling. MERTF Member Rusk will ask Ms. Knoll whether she could present the final concept sketches by April 10, 2024. MERTF Member Rusk will forward pages to MERTF members for review as they come in. Chair Johnson reminded members that there could not be a discussion outside of meetings.

E. Beach Sand Projects

Projects Manager Chustz stated the FEMA berm was complete and bids would be open today for the Florida Department of Emergency Management (FDEM) funded truck haul project, although the Town had not received the contract to fund the project yet. The renourishment contract bids were over budget, so the staff was working with the coastal engineers to find a way to add sand where needed. He stated the dune plantings would begin after the sand is replaced around late summer.

Projects Manager Chustz indicated that sand would be placed on private property with truck hauls to fill scours with permission from the owners. He discussed the Erosion Control Line (ECL) and the mean high water line and stated they were not adding sand above the mean high water. He discussed funding sources and requirements for placing sand.

VIII. Members' Items and Reports

MERTF Member Spalletta distributed a handout of four slides from a lecture at the Mound House regarding beach erosion on the Town's beach. She suggested that they review the bullet points before the next meeting. MERTF Member Nusbaum suggested sharing the presentation with staff and the coastal engineer for their advice. MERTF Member Spalletta stated there was still a dog problem on the beach.

No items from other members.

IX. Public Comment – no public comment.

X. MERTF Award

Chair Johnson indicated that publication of last month's award was delayed, so they would not choose another this month.

XI. Set Agenda for Next Meeting – add staff report permanently, beach projects, written draft of the activity book, adopt an easement project and compromised wastewater lines.

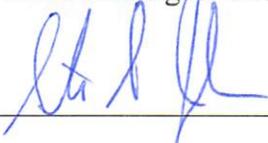
XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: MERTF Member Spalletta moved to adjourn; seconded by MERTF Member Nusbaum.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:53 p.m.

Adopted 2/14/24 with/without changes. Motion by Dave Nusbaum
(DATE)

Vote: 7-0 Signature: 

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