

MINUTES
FORT MYERS BEACH
Anchorage Advisory Committee
Bay Oaks Recreational Center
2731 Oak Street
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931
Wednesday, January 17, 2024

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chair Eckmann.

II. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call

Members present: Doug Eckmann, Jim Hockett, Chris Riedel King (via phone), Ted Lawwill, Sam Lurie, John Wesley Nash and Ed Schoonover.

Staff: Harbormaster Austin Gilchrist and Environmental Projects Manager Chadd Chustz.
Council Liaison: Jim Atterholt

IV. Approve the Agenda

MOTION: AAC Member Lurie moved to approve the agenda; second by AAC Member Schoonover.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

V. Approval of Minutes – December 20, 2023

MOTION: AAC Member Lawwill moved to approve the minutes as amended; second by AAC Member Hockett.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

VI. Public Comment – no public comment.

VII. Presentation: LCSO Chris Nyce

Lieutenant Nyce stated that he investigated derelict vessels, and 95% were on Fort Myers Beach. He reviewed his experience in the marine unit and the laws surrounding removing vessels. He indicated he had 14 active investigations, and a few were in the Mooring Field. He noted that derelict investigations took him about a year because of state law requirements. The three categories of derelict vessels are wrecked, junked, or two of the following: no motor, no steering, or a breach in the hull. Derelict vessels are taken to the Tri-Co area, torn apart and hauled to the dump. Lt. Nyce stated that the Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) had millions in the budget through the state for their derelict vessel program. He described his position and others from surrounding areas involved in the program. He explained how he found derelict vessels, tagged the vessels, the steps to take to identify the owners or the last responsible party, and the legal process.

He stated they have not yet received any money from the process and the cost to retrieve an average-sized sunk boat cost around \$15,000-\$19,000.

Lt. Nyce commented that if boats are maintained, they could drop anchor on most state property, even in front of residential homes. He explained why Fort Myers Beach had the most derelict vessels. He commented that he primarily dealt with manatee and speed-regulated zones. He added that 65%-70% of his day was spent getting people to slow down. He advised people to maintain their boats or take them out of the water. Discussion was held regarding people who were not pumping out their vessels and how they were caught.

Lt. Nyce stated that all the county speed limit signs were replaced, some state signs were replaced, but federal signs were not yet.

VIII. Current Items – Staff Report

A. Anchored Vessels

Harbormaster Gilchrist described the anchored vessel report he distributed and noted 27 were being monitored. He revisited the Anchorage Limitation Areas (ALA) discussed last month. Projects Manager Chustz stated that only counties could participate, and he was looking for direction from the AAC to advise the town council whether they wanted staff to pursue the issue with the county. He described the positive impacts of the ALA and how establishing it would help the Town.

MOTION: AAC Member Lawwill moved to recommend that the town council start discussions with Lee County designating the jurisdictional area of Fort Myers Beach, which was 1,000 feet, as an Anchorage Limitation Area, seconded by AAC Member King.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

B. Strategic Action Plan

Project Manager Chustz described Harbormaster Gilchrist's challenges with his myriad responsibilities. He described the strain on resources with increased pump-outs and stated they needed a plan yesterday. Discussion was held regarding dinghy facilities throughout the island, a pump-out boat mooring area with a sewage connection, an upland facility, a harbormaster office, and placement of transient vessels.

Chair Eckmann suggested the location of the pump-out boat and coordinating with Lee County was a high priority. AAC Member Lurie questioned whether the water tower property was suitable. Harbormaster Gilchrist replied affirmatively, and the pros and cons were discussed.

MOTION: AAC Member Lawwill moved to support staff to pursue a vessel mooring area in conjunction with a pump facility to service the pump-out boat connected with the Lee County sewer system; seconded by AAC Member Nash.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Eckmann suggested arranging a tour for AAC members and Harbormaster Gilchrist will follow up.

C. Marketing the MMF

Projects Manager Chustz stated they were surveying and compiling a database of businesses for which ones would provide promotions to patrons of the Mooring Field. He noted that Harbormaster Gilchrist and his team won the Boater's Choice Award at marina.com for 2023, which included 75 5-star reviews. Projects Manager Chustz stated that they utilized the services of the Chamber of Commerce as well.

IX. Member Items and Staff Report

AAC Member Schoonover asked whether the town council decided which committee they wanted to handle dredging. Liaison Atterholt responded negatively but will follow up. Town Manager Hyatt stated they were trying to find funding for the project. No items from other members.

Projects Manager Chustz revealed they received the West Coast Inland Navigational District (WCIND) grant and Lt. Nyce was involved with scheduling extra patrols on weekends and holidays. Harbormaster Gilchrist reported that American Underwater was experiencing staffing issues to install the systems, so they dropped systems off for Town staff to install them. The final five systems should be installed after the meeting. He explained that the wait list was first come, first served, engineers were inspecting the systems, a boat sunk in the backfield and was being investigated, pump-outs were overwhelmed, and he was trying to find companies to help. Bathrooms, showers and laundry facilities were in place. Harbormaster Gilchrist explained where the systems were located, maintenance was ongoing, the pump-out boat was working fine, observation piers were being used and the ramp at the end of Coconut was closed while they explored grants.

X. Public Comment – no public comment.

XI. Set Next Meeting Agenda – February 21, 2024

XII. Adjournment

MOTION: AAC Member Lurie moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by AAC Member Schoonover.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:49 a.m.

Adopted 2-21-24 with/without changes. Motion by TEO
(DATE)

Vote: PASS UNANIMOUS Signature: Sam Lurie

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