

**MINUTES  
FORT MYERS BEACH  
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Bay Oaks Recreational Campus  
2731 Oak Street  
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 9:10 a.m. by Chair Thomas.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**III. ROLL CALL**

Members present: Dan Blanchette, Jim Bougoulas, Keran Farrell, Heidi Jungwirth, James Knickle and Dawn Thomas.

Excused: Ron Benak

Staff Liaison: Jason Freeman/Tom Yozzo

**IV. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Christy Thorton, North Fort Myers, presented a plan to fix the traffic problems and distributed flyers. She displayed and described her plan of running chauffeured golf carts from her property on Old San Carlos Boulevard to the beach. She discussed the routes she would use to take people around the island. She requested that the county keep the tram off the island on the weekends because they held up traffic. She would charge \$17.00 per day.

Chair Thomas questioned whether she spoke to anyone from Lee County. Ms. Thorton attended a Lee County council meeting and hoped they would work with her. She described her one-year plan of offering a water taxi from her property to the beach and in two years, she plans to have a ferry service from the beach to Sanibel.

PSC Member Jungwirth asked how she planned to run golf carts on Old San Carlos Blvd. Ms. Thorton replied that they would need a tram for part of the service and hoped that Lee County would help. She commented that the golf carts would only be in town. PSC Member Knickle remarked that there would still be gridlock with golf carts. Ms. Thorton responded that she would have to have access to bike lanes, the emergency lane and the center lane. PSC Member Knickle noted that the downtown area had no additional lanes. She acknowledged that the golf carts would get stuck. She described other details of her plan. Ms. Thorton presented her plan at a town council meeting but has not heard back.

Ms. Thorton stated she needed the use of the additional lanes on Estero Blvd. and needed to know what type of permits she needed to operate on the beach. Chair Thomas suggested that she speak to someone in the town. PSC Member Knickle suggested that she contact Jackie Lyszak with the Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce.

**V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – February 27, 2024**

**MOTION:** PSC Member Jungwirth moved to approve the minutes; seconded by PSC Member Knickle.

**VOTE:** The motion passed unanimously.

## **VI. STAFF REPORT AND UPDATES**

Fire Chief Scott Wirth reviewed his report and included a breakdown of calls. He noted that there were some slip, trip and stumble calls. PSC Members will tour the EOC (Emergency Operations Center) on May 7, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. He will compile the sidewalk information after all reports from the PSC are in.

Tom Yozzo reviewed his experience with the beach and noted he was now the manager of BASE Operations and would be the liaison for the PSC. He commented that Ms. Thorton's presentation included many challenges. He stated that he looked forward to working with the PSC.

## **VII. SIDEWALK PROJECT**

Most members uploaded their information and the others would upload soon. Chair Thomas suggested that only safety hazards on sidewalks be reported. PSC Member Bougoulas indicated that a fence intruded on part of a sidewalk and sand in the bike lane caused bicyclists to veer into traffic lanes.

## **VIII. PUBLIC SAFETY CAMPAIGN AND MESSAGING**

PSC Member Knickle suggested installing three electronic signs up and down the island to provide information to travelers. Chair Thomas proposed that they find out what other towns were doing. PSC Member Knickle will research ideas.

## **IX. BICYCLING UPDATES**

Manager Yozzo commented that bicycle lane signs would be installed on street posts and bikes in the downtown district would be addressed. He will forward the sign information to members. Chair Thomas discussed ideas to help alleviate downtown traffic. Liaison Freeman will share information regarding a traffic plan study.

Chair Thomas mentioned requiring developers to provide wider sidewalks as a public benefit at the recent town council meeting. PSC Member Bougoulas described how people got frustrated from sitting in traffic for too long, which created a public safety issue.

## **X. MEMBER ITEMS AND REPORTS**

Chair Thomas responded to PSC Member Farrell and described issues discussed at the joint town council meeting. She indicated that PSC members take turns providing reports to the town council once a month.

PSC Member Bougoulas noted that the PSC could assist with community policing.

PSC Member Jungwirth suggested creating an agenda that includes items brought up at the joint meeting. New topics included neighborhood watch, community policing, electronic signage, the code blue project at the library, restoring bus stops and including electronic information in the bus shelters. PSC Member Knickle noted that the town council encouraged them to revisit projects completed before Ian destroyed everything. He addressed the contract with the Sheriff's Office to

provide traffic direction at the Crescent Street light. Individuals remarked they were ineffective because officers were not there or sat in their cars and allowed the light to manage traffic. He stated that officers in the street directing were far more effective. Liaison Yozzo explained what the officers were permitted to do under Florida law. PSC Member Blanchette noted that there were no officers at the light last weekend, and Liaison Yozzo explained that the officers were very busy and that the issue was a lack of staffing. He also commented that many people were not using the pedestrian overpass. Chair Thomas described electronic signs that indicated where available parking was on Vanderbilt Beach.

PSC Member Bougoulas suggested surveying the community to solicit their thoughts on public safety.

PSC Member Blanchette questioned overnight parking on the beach. Manager Yozzo replied that it was prohibited and was working with the Sherriff's Office to address the issue.

Chair Thomas asked whether the list of derelict buildings was available. Manager Yozzo responded that they were working on it. Chair Thomas discussed how essential communication was for the community.

**XI. PUBLIC COMMENT** – no public comment.

**XII. SET NEXT MEETING AGENDA** – April 16, 2024

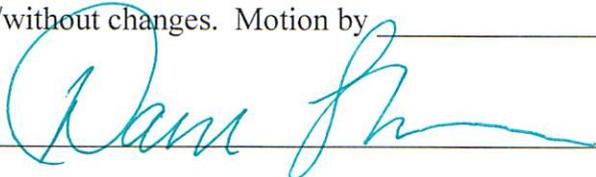
**XIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** PSC Member Jungwirth moved to adjourn; seconded by PSC Member Farrell.

**VOTE:** The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:27 a.m.

Adopted 4/16/2024 with/without changes. Motion by \_\_\_\_\_  
(DATE)

Vote: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: 

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