

MINUTES
FORT MYERS BEACH
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
Bay Oaks Recreational Center
2731 Oak Street
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Town Clerk Baker.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

Members present: Ron Benak, Dan Blanchette, Jim Bougoulas, Keran Farrell, Heidi Jungwirth (via phone) and Dawn Thomas (via phone for part of the meeting).

Excused: James Knickle

Staff Liaison: Jason Freeman

MOTION: PSC Member Farrell moved to allow Chair Thomas and PSC Member Jungwirth to participate virtually; seconded by PSC Member Bougoulas.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT – no public comment.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 16, 2024

MOTION: PSC Member Bougoulas moved to approve the minutes; seconded by PSC Member Farrell.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

VI. STAFF REPORT AND UPDATES

Captain Tim Lalor reported that there were no significant trends this year. They focused on traffic violations and the spring break operation started last Friday. There will be a presence on the beach and it will be increased as needed. He stated the officers were enforcing speeding and passing violations.

Fire Chief Scott Wirth distributed numbers from January. The calls were evenly split between fire and medical-related incidents and trauma-related calls were on the last page.

Liaison Freeman stated that sunshine law training should take place next month. The new trailers should be ready for occupancy by Monday, March 4, 2024.

VII. SIDEWALK PROJECT

PSC Member Jungwirth forwarded the information to Liaison Freeman and he distributed it to PSC members. After the meeting, he will send an update regarding who was responsible for which

sections. Chair Thomas indicated she walked the north end and made notes of hazardous areas. PSC Member Jungwirth submitted her list. PSC Member Benak offered to check Crescent to Tropical Shores, Tropical Shores to Mid Island - PSC Member Bougoulas, Mid Island to Publix - PSC Member, Publix to Sterling, Sterling to Albatross – PSC Knickle, Albatross to Bay Beach – PSC Member Jungwirth and Bay Beach to Estrellita – PSC Member Jungwirth.

Liaison Freeman indicated that potential hazards on sidewalks should be noted with pictures and a precise location. He commented that there were apps to provide an exact location. Chair Thomas questioned whether she should note driveway hazards. Liaison Freeman replied positively. Chair Thomas suggested that everyone submit their information to Liaison Freeman so it could be compiled.

VIII. PUBLIC SAFETY CAMPAIGN AND MESSAGING

Liaison Freeman reported that Nicole Berzin was hired as the new Public Information Officer (PIO) and he would invite her to introduce herself at the next meeting. Chair Thomas questioned whether Ms. Berzin would create a list of plans for the future. Liaison Freeman replied that he would check.

Chair Thomas commented that lighting, traffic and crosswalks had to be addressed. PSC Member Jungwirth stated they needed the town council's guidance concerning priorities. She noted that more than one group seemed to be working on the same issues. Chair Thomas agreed and brought up dilapidated buildings that needed to be demolished. PSC Member Benak thought meeting with the new PIO would help address their issues and educating the public would go a long way. PSC Member Farrell remarked that a confluence of entities wanted to improve many things in town, but how much fell under the PSC's responsibilities? He noted that better signage at the base of the bridge was up to Lee County and the lighting was an Florida Power & Light (FP&L) responsibility. Chair Thomas agreed. She discussed making recommendations without being able to remedy issues and continuing to talk about them. PSC Member Jungwirth questioned the role and responsibilities of the PSC and mentioned overlapping issues with other committees. Liaison Freeman responded that advisory committees had an ordinance that described the definition of each committee. He added that a PSC member could appear at town council meetings to establish priorities, or they could request a joint meeting. PSC Member Jungwirth recommended a joint meeting with the town council.

MOTION: Chair Thomas moved to request a joint meeting at the March 4, 2024 town council meeting; seconded by PSC Member Benak.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion was held regarding what to address at the town council meeting. Chair Thomas arrived and brought up inspecting sidewalks instead of working on bigger safety issues that were more meaningful after the hurricane. She questioned whether they should join forces with other entities doing the same things. She listed issues that were a higher priority than items on their agenda. PSC Member Jungwirth stated the town council needed to tell them what to work on. She felt they were wasting their time and just discussing issues without seeing solutions. Chair Thomas confirmed that she would attend the council meeting and request a joint meeting.

IX. BICYCLING UPDATES – no updates.

X. MEMBER ITEMS AND REPORTS

PSC Member Benak commented there was a dog incident in his neighborhood and dogs were not under control while on the beach. Chair Thomas added that there were issues on the beach and people were not cleaning up after their dogs. PSC Member Jungwirth stated that dogs had to be on a leash per an ordinance.

Chair Thomas indicated golf carts were driving on sidewalks to avoid traffic and education for golf cart renters would be helpful. She brought up people getting stuck while parking on vacant lots. She discussed meeting with the PIO.

PSC Member Bougoulas questioned when they could tour the Emergency Operating Center (EOC). Chief Wirth replied that they needed notice before a tour. Members agreed on May 14, 2024, with May 7, 2024, as a backup date. PSC Member Bougoulas noted that the town council tasked them with researching how to connect rental properties with code red notifications for people who chose to stay on the beach during storms. He will contact the new PIO to review the code red system and whether two-way communication was effective. He joined the committee to make an impact, drive the agenda, and remove roadblocks. Chair Thomas discussed policies and procedures regarding weather events for everyone to follow, including renters. PSC Member Jungwirth stated that landlords should be responsible for communicating with their guests.

Chair Thomas requested an update regarding derelict buildings.
No items from other members.

XI. PUBLIC COMMENT – no public comment.

XII. SET NEXT MEETING AGENDA – March 19, 2024

PSC Member Benak requested an excused absence. PSC Member Bougoulas requested an update about crosswalk signage. Chair Thomas requested an update from Rob Phelan from Lee County about the roads. She suggested promoting the pedestrian path under the bridge to avoid traffic at the base of the bridge. PSC Member Bougoulas agreed and suggested adding signage. He said that they had to determine who owned the property.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

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

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:07 a.m.

Adopted 3/19/2024 with/without changes. Motion by Heidi Jungwirth
(DATE) Seconded by James Brickle

Vote: 6-0 Signature: Amy Baker, Town Clerk

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