

MINUTES
FORT MYERS BEACH
MARINE & ENVIRONMENTAL
RESOURCES TASK FORCE
Town Hall Council Chambers
2731 Oak Street
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931
Wednesday, July 10, 2024

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 a.m. by Chair Johnson.

II. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call

Members present: Bill Althoff (virtually), Robert Howell, Steve Johnson, Rose Larkin, David Nusbaum (virtually) and Mary Rose Spalletta.

Excused: Jennifer Rusk

Staff: Environmental Projects Manager Chadd Chustz

Council Liaison: John King

MOTION: MERTF Member Larkin moved to allow MERTF Members Althoff and Nusbaum to participate virtually, seconded by MERTF Member Howell.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Approve The Agenda

MOTION: MERTF Member Spalletta moved to approve the agenda, seconded by MERTF Member Nusbaum.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

V. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes – June 12, 2024

MOTION: MERTF Member Spalletta moved to approve the minutes, seconded by MERTF Member Althoff.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

VI. Public Comment – no public comment.

VII. Current Items

A. Sea Grant

Projects Manager Chustz noted that Dr. Savarese and Dr. Daley from FGCU (Florida Gulf Coast University) were conducting resiliency experiments for the beach to measure the resiliency of different factors, including berms, vegetation, coastal armoring and green

and gray infrastructure combinations. He reviewed scenarios Dr. Savarese would investigate and indicated that FGCU awarded the grant with a negligible cost to the town. Projects Manager Chustz indicated that the scope of the work was data-based and an algorithm was created for different scenarios. He discussed the armoring proposal and encouraged members to email him with questions. Additional information regarding the sea grant was online.

B. Community Foundation Donation

MERTF Member Larkin suggested purchasing another stand for brochures at Town Hall. Budget Manager Cheri Russ reported two donations from the Community Foundation totaling \$12,829.00. Panther Printing estimated that 10,000 coloring activity books cost \$5,280.80, including shipping. The total remaining in the fund is \$7,548.74.

MOTION: MERTF Member Howell moved to use those funds to print the activity book, seconded by MERTF Member Spalletta.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

MERTF Member Howell suggested creating an education outreach plan at the school and described the curriculum-based study program. He offered to contact school officials. Liaison King noted that the school recently partnered with the FGCU water school. MERTF Member Nusbaum stated that they needed to contact the school principal first. Discussion was held regarding purchasing trees and distributing them to residents, similar to a previous Arbor Day tree distribution. Projects Manager Chustz suggested revamping the Shades book into a tri-fold brochure to educate the public. MERTF Member Nusbaum questioned expanding the bucket stands at the public accesses. Projects Manager Chustz will contact him regarding the program's success.

MOTION: MERTF Member Howell moved to start talks with the beach school regarding a curriculum for an ongoing education program, seconded by Chair Johnson.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

MERTF Member Althoff left the meeting due to a previous commitment.

C. Mangrove Protections

Projects Manager Chustz described the 1996 Mangrove Trimming and Preservation Act, which specifically protected red, black and white mangroves. He discussed obtaining the proper permits from the FDEP (Florida Department of Environmental Protection) or Army Corp. to remove or trim mangroves. Chair Johnson noted that the topic resulted from the people who removed all the mangroves from the Beach Theater without a permit. The mangroves were illegally removed, but the developers got around it by paying a fine. Projects Manager Chustz thought that they presented FDEP with a restoration program. He noted he would research the details but indicated that the town was preempted from regulating the mangroves by state statute. He added that there was a provision in the Act for delegating mangrove regulations to local authorities as long as certain criteria were met. Discussion was held regarding the criteria and transferring the cost and responsibility

from the state to the town without additional control. Liaison King stated it was better to ask for forgiveness than permission.

MERTF Member Spalletta discussed how the mangroves protected the island and how removing them decreased resilience. She added that education was crucial. Projects Manager Chustz distributed the state permit and a site view of how the developers proposed to mitigate the impacts of removing the mangroves. He will follow up with FDEP regarding the violation.

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved to recommend that the Town Council prioritize mangrove habitat propagation as a community benefit in all development on Fort Myers Beach, seconded by MERTF Member Spalletta.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

VIII. Members' Items

MERTF Member Nusbaum stated there were three Wilson Plover nests, one Killdeer nest, one Snowy Plover nest, over 100 black Skimmer nests and 17 Least Turns nests. There were four to six Wilson Plovers fully fledged, six Wilson Plover chicks and two near-fledging Snowy Plover chicks. There were also nearly 200 Black Simmer chicks. He added that it had been an excellent year for the birds.

MERTF Member Larkin reminded residents that artificial turf heated up, increasing air conditioning costs and broke down into microplastics.

MERTF Member Spalletta reported that one sea turtle nest hatched last night and there were 93 nests on the beach. She asked that people on the beach at night stay behind the turtles and refrain from using flashlights.

No items from other members.

IX. Staff Update

Projects Manager Chustz reported that the beach renourishment project has begun and cautioned boaters to be aware of the activity on the north side of the island. They should start pumping on July 21, 2024, and he described the progression over the next few months. The staff was pursuing a state grant to reduce the local cost share of the project.

X. Public Comment – no public comment.

XI. MERTF Award

An article regarding the Pink Shell award was not submitted last month and MERTF Member Howell volunteered to write one.

MERTF Member Nusbaum nominated Chris and Ginger Weber, owners of Mid Island Water Sports, for their conservation efforts to enhance endangered shorebirds. Since Pink Shell was not highlighted last month, Mid Island Water Sports will be in the bank for next month.

Chair Johnson indicated that MERTF Member Nusbaum was next for the Shoreline Spotlight article, followed by MERTF Members Howell and Rusk. MERTF Member Nusbaum questioned whether forwarding the articles to Communications Coordinator Nicole Berzin for distribution to other publications made sense. Chair Johnson suggested that MERTF Member Nusbaum copy

him and Coordinator Berzin and she could forward the article to whichever publications she wanted.

XII. Set Agenda for Next Meeting – August 14, 2024

Chair Johnson stated he would be out of town for the next meeting. Items to be discussed include the Community Foundation donation, the activity book, the Chevron decision and the Sea Grant.

MOTION: MERTF Member Spalletta moved to approve the agenda, seconded by MERTF Member Howell.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

XIII. Adjournment

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

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:59 p.m.

Adopted: 08/14/24 with changes. Motion by: David Nusbaum/seconded by Bill Althoff

(Date)
Vote 5-0 Signature: Amy Baker, Town Clerk

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