

**MINUTES**  
**FORT MYERS BEACH**  
**MARINE & ENVIRONMENTAL**  
**RESOURCES TASK FORCE**  
Town Hall Council Chambers  
2731 Oak Street  
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931  
**Wednesday, September 11, 2024**

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Johnson.

**II. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance**

**III. Roll Call**

Members present: Robert Howell, Steve Johnson, Rose Larkin, David Nusbaum (virtually) and Jennifer Rusk.

Excused: Bill Althoff

Staff: Environmental Projects Manager Chadd Chustz

Council Liaison: John King

**MOTION:** MERTF Member Larkin moved to allow MERTF Member Nusbaum to participate virtually due to unforeseen circumstances, seconded by MERTF Member Howell.

**VOTE:** The motion carried unanimously.

**IV. Approve The Agenda**

**MOTION:** MERTF Member Rusk moved to add the activity book and introduce the illustrator, seconded by Chair Johnson.

**VOTE:** The motion carried unanimously.

**MOTION:** MERTF Member Rusk moved to add town council items, including resiliency options at Clearwater, FL, moving traffic off Estero to a boardwalk, adding mobi mats, discussing flooding downtown and installing pump systems, seconded by MERTF Member Nusbaum.

**VOTE:** The motion carried unanimously.

**V. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes – August 14, 2024**

Add to last Public Comment: The Estero Island Garden Club began planting the Times Square Garden in September 2023. The vegetation plan was approved by the Town of Fort Myers Beach in Lee County. The garden was planted on March 24, 2024, with plants purchased from donations and labor provided by Beach Talk Radio followers. Two hundred and six plants were installed. Following the town placing fabric and rock in the area, 111 plants have been lost 54%. The only way to recover this garden is to remove the landscape fabric and rocks and add back in the small plants and ground cover.

**MOTION:** Chair Johnson moved to approve the amended minutes and include the original transcript comments, seconded by MERTF Member Rusk.

**VOTE:** The motion carried unanimously.

**VI. Public Comment** – no public comment.

**VII. Current Items**

A. Activity Book

Macy Knoll, an FGCU (Florida Gulf Coast University) student and illustrator of the activity book, introduced herself and noted that she was studying art and biology. MERTF Member Rusk revealed that 10,000 copies were printed and only 1,000 were left. She reviewed the changes she would like before the next printing.

MERTF Member Rusk reported that \$7,080.82 remained in the budget. She received two proposals from Panther Printing: \$7,000.00 for \$16,000 or \$10,000 for \$5,280.00, including the changes. Ms. Knoll would charge \$45.00.

**MOTION:** Chair Johnson moved to pay Panther Printing \$7,000.00 and \$45.00 to Ms. Knoll for edits for the next printing from the remaining balance of \$7,080.82, seconded by MERTF Member Howell.

**VOTE:** The motion carried unanimously.

B. FGCU/USDA Sea Grant Project

Dr. Chris Daley attended virtually and noted that it was a Florida Sea Grant, not USDA (US Department of Agriculture), funded through NOAA (National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration). He stated that MERTF and the town council suggestions would be added to future simulations. Elevation measurements of the beach were taken in March 2022 and again after Hurricanes Ian, Idalia and Debby. They were collecting data on waves, tides and currents and recently placed instruments offshore and in Estero Bay to take measurements.

Discussion was held regarding the suggestion of six to six-and-a-half-tall twin dunes, pillow berms and a sea wall. Projects Manager Chustz indicated he would send Dr. Daley contract plans from the beach renourishment company. Dr. Daley received clarification that adding dune grasses and all vegetation was suggested. Projects Manager Chustz will also send a cross-section of the beach renourishment plans. Dr. Daley stated that they would do a Hurricane Ian scenario and could also do a Hurricane Debby simulation.

Chair Johnson questioned what a dune that ran the entire length of the erosion control line would look like and how high it needed to be. Dr. Daley replied that it would act like a sandbag and there would be more energy dissipation with waves propagating towards the shore. He indicated it would increase protection.

MERTF Member Nusbaum brought up including a hard structure like Clearwater close to the vegetation line and creating a bike lane to help mitigate traffic on Estero. Dr. Daley responded that Fort Lauderdale had a low berm sea wall with a dune in front of it with vegetation. Projects Manager Chustz noted that he shared the coastal protection system with him and Dr. Savarese. Dr. Daley suggested another meeting in December with Ellen Quataert. Dr. Daley summarized the scenarios Sanibel and Naples suggested for their beaches.

### C. Town Council Items

Chair Johnson stated that the town council supported MERTF contacting the beach school. Discussions were held regarding resiliency options similar to Clearwater, moving traffic off Estero onto the boardwalk, working with state and federal agencies to evaluate options other than dunes and berms, looking for a continuous solution and adding mobi mats parallel to the beach for transportation.

MERTF Member Rusk indicated it would take a lot of time and effort for staff to remove the mobi mats ahead of storms and Chair Johnson was against them on the beach because of safety, environmental issues and private property rights, among other reasons. A consensus was reached for MERTF Members Nusbaum and Howell to investigate and report on mobi mats.

Chair Johnson brought up downtown flooding and pump systems and noted flooding was island-wide. Projects Manager Chustz will contact someone to explain the town's drainage system at a future meeting. Resiliency options, mobi mats and flooding issues were added to the initiative list.

### D. Manatee Conservation/Prop Guards

MERTF Member Howell stated that speeding was a bigger issue in the back bay, manatee, and no-wake zones. He asked how they could raise awareness and create incentives for prop guards. MERTF Member Larkin noted that many signs were still missing due to the hurricane. MERTF Member Howell reported that prop guards protected the seagrass and described the seagrass beds he monitored.

### E. FMB Elementary Outreach

MERTF Member Howell stated that the curriculum for next year was already set. He would draft a curriculum outline to align with the school's curriculum. MERTF Member Rusk suggested contacting Director Hauge regarding working with the school.

## VIII. Members' Items

MERTF Member Rusk described someone pumping debris without a net during pool construction and draining it into the storm drain on her street. She wondered if more staff should be hired to monitor construction sites. Pop-up dates: October 5 & 19 and November 2, 16 & 30. She will attend on November 7 at Santini Plaza and once a month afterward. December dates are the 14 & 28.

**MOTION:** MERTF Member Larkin moved to approve the pop-up dates, seconded by Chair Johnson.

**VOTE:** The motion carried unanimously.

MERTF Member Larkin stated that the Times Square Garden fabric was plastic. She demonstrated that the water did not penetrate the plastic, causing the larger plants to die.

MERTF Member Howell stated that his first Pink Shell science talk was on October 23, 2024, and that next week, the Discovery Channel will film a pilot episode with him tentatively titled Mother Nature's Mysteries.

Chair Johnson revealed that the newspaper reported that local people were lobbying DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) for harsher and more human habitat invasive turtle measures. He asked whether MERTF members were aware of anyone doing that and members replied negatively.

**IX. Staff Update**

Projects Manager Chustz reported that Coastal Engineering did Geotech, borings and a shoreline survey for the pier. The beach project contractor got two segments of beach graded and approved by the engineer. The final grade survey will be this week or next. He shared a sample of the sand and read an email from Michael Poff at Coastal Engineering regarding evaluating the sand and meeting specifications. Eve from Turtle Time was happy with the quality of the sand. Projects Manager Chustz stated the borrow area was the same as what has been used for over a decade. Rebecca Cray from FDEP needs volunteers to sample water quality in Estero Bay monthly. If interested, contact her for more details and information will be on the town's website. The town received a \$2.5+ million grant for a swale project. He will attend the Florida Shoreline and Beach Preservation Association conference for the next few days and will be unavailable to answer calls. MERTF Member Rusk revealed that she was invited to take some books to the FGCU Water Program Environmental Education conference on Saturday.

**X. Public Comment** - no public comment.

**XI. MERTF Award**

MERTF Member Howell nominated a local man who picked up trash on the beach. He estimated that he had picked up over 6,000 pounds since 2001. MERTF Member Rusk nominated Macy Noll for illustrating the activity book. Macy Noll was awarded the Murphie. Confirmed by MERT Member Nusbaum  
Shoreline Spotlight schedule – MERTF Member Howell, MERTF Member Rusk, followed by MERTF Member Larkin.

**XII. Set Agenda for Next Meeting** – tentatively October 16, 2024

Remove the activity book and Sea Grant project. Add coastal protection system, mobi mats, flooding, vegetation and someone to explain the town's drainage.

**XIII. Adjournment**

**MOTION:** MERTF Member Nusbaum moved to adjourn, seconded by MERTF Member Rusk.  
**VOTE:** The motion carried unanimously.

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

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

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