

MINUTES
FORT MYERS BEACH
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
Town Hall Council Chambers
2731 Oak Street
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

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

Excused: Dan Blanchette

Staff Liaison: Thomas Yozzo

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT – no comment.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 16, 2024

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

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

VI. STAFF REPORT AND UPDATES

Lieutenant Chitwood from the Lee County Sheriff's Office reported that there was not much to report and that Memorial Day plans had been finalized. He added that July 4, 2024, would be busy and plans for that event were almost complete. The next event they would be preparing for was Labor Day.

Operations & Compliance Manager Thomas Yozzo stated that visitors had declined and many residents had left for the summer. Extra staff was on hand for Memorial Day and the LCSO had extra people coming in. He explained how he addressed noise complaints.

VII. HURRICANE RESPONSE PLAN

PSC Member Bougoulas reported that he was unsure whether he was allowed to meet with the county regarding their emergency response technology. Manager Yozzo replied that individual members could attend but should check with the town council first. Chair Thomas will contact Liaison Allers for clarification.

Public Information Officer (PIO) Nicole Berzin stated that a successful code red test was sent out on May 1, 2024. Some residents requested to be unenrolled because they had moved. The event at the Mound House was also successful.

Town Clerk Baker stated that individual members were free to attend any event as a representative, but they had to report back to the committee. Any meeting with two or more members had to be advertised. PSC Member Bougoulas will schedule a visit.

VIII. PUBLIC SAFETY CAMPAIGN AND MESSAGING

A. ELECTRIC BIKE MESSAGING

PIO Berzin indicated that a newsflash stating that electric bikes were not allowed on the sidewalk was posted on the main web page and would remain so until the ordinance was changed. PSC Member Benak suggested using the term pedal assist instead of e-bikes. He noted that rental companies could disengage the throttle, so bicycles had to use pedal assist. He stated that there would be more pedal-assist bikes and they had to devise a plan. Chair Thomas noted that the topic was mentioned at the town council's strategic plan discussion, but details would be addressed later. She supported a golf cart path going north. Liaison Yozzo will check whether PSC members can contact the company that did the assessment. Discussion was held regarding options for a roll-up boardwalk path and eminent domain issues.

B. CROSSWALK MESSAGING

Chair Thomas wondered whether it was an issue right now and Liaison Yozzo noted he had heard complaints about jaywalking, but that was typical.

C. FDOT ROUNDABOUT MESSAGING

The representative had to cancel and Chair Thomas had not heard back regarding attending the June meeting.

D. SURVEY

PSC Member Bougoulas thanked the 35 respondents and noted the survey would be adjusted next time. He reported that many people were uninformed regarding what was happening to improve safety on the beach. The top four topics of concern were bike safety, street lighting, crosswalks and pedestrian safety. Open-ended comments included better lighting on Estero Blvd. and crosswalks, more education and more enforcement around safety. He indicated that e-bikes and bicycles were hot topics and reviewed some comments. He added that there were few traffic comments, but one parent noted their son on a bike was recently hit and the driver did not stop. Liaison Yozzo will contact the person to follow up.

Chair Thomas questioned whether designated spots for Uber or another ride-sharing vehicle could be located somewhere to prevent cars from stopping in the middle of Estero Blvd.

PSC Member Knickle discussed lights being turned off between Albatross and Lenell on May 2. Liaison Yozzo will follow up. PSC Member Farrell noted that 12 people out of 31 commented on the lighting in the survey. Liaison Yozzo will find out the timeline for installing the lighting.

IX. MEMBER ITEMS AND REPORTS

PSC Member Benak questioned the status of the sidewalk reports. Chair Thomas replied that Chief Wirth received the information.

PSC Member Farrell suggested starting with smaller increments by splitting the sidewalks between pedestrians and pedal-assist bikes instead of creating another path on the back bay or a boardwalk on the beach. He noted that e-bikes and regular bikes could go 20 mph. Liaison Yozzo described the difficulties with enforcing a speed limit.

PSC Member Jungwirth stated that they brought up splitting the sidewalks years ago but were told no because of curbs. Instead, the town printed signs that were too small to be effective. She asked about the status of the bright green test lane done before the hurricane. Liaison Yozzo will check.

Chair Thomas asked for an update regarding dilapidated buildings. Liaison Yozzo responded that they were moving forward and some cases would go before the Special Magistrate. He described the challenges of due process and noted this issue was a high priority.

PSC Member Knickle agreed with PSC Member Farrell regarding taking smaller steps to deal with issues. He felt most people would comply, especially with enhanced education. PSC Member Bougoulas suggested researching other beach communities regarding public safety issues to avoid reinventing the wheel. He will determine how to move forward. Chair Thomas thought their next step was to present their ideas to the town council at their next meeting. PSC Member Bougoulas volunteered to present and Chair Thomas reviewed the issues.

Liaison Yozzo listed the items he will follow up on.

X. PUBLIC COMMENT – no comment.

XI. SET NEXT MEETING AGENDA – June 18, 2024

Chair Thomas will not be present in June or July. PSC Member Jungwirth will be out in July and August. Chair Thomas noted she could call in for June. They will skip the July meeting and resume on August 20, 2024.

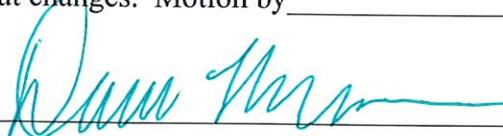
XII. ADJOURNMENT

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

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Adopted 8-20-24 with/without changes. Motion by _____
(Date)

Vote _____ Signature 

- End of document