

**MINUTES**  
**FORT MYERS BEACH**  
**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**  
Town Hall Council Chambers  
2731 Oak Street  
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931  
Tuesday, November 19, 2024

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Thomas.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**III. ROLL CALL**

Members present: Ron Benak (virtually), Jim Bougoulas, Todd Capela, Keran Farrell, James Knickle and Dawn Thomas.

**MOTION:** PSC Member Bougoulas moved to approve PSC Member Benak to participate virtually, seconded by PSC Member Knickle.

**VOTE:** The motion passed unanimously.

**IV. REORGANIZATION: SELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

**MOTION:** PSC Member Knickle moved to nominate Dawn Thomas as Chair and Jim Bougoulas as Vice Chair, seconded by PSC Member Farrell.

**VOTE:** The motion passed unanimously.

**V. PUBLIC COMMENT – no comment.**

**VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – August 20, 2024**

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

**VOTE:** The motion passed unanimously.

**VII. STAFF REPORT AND UPDATES**

Chief Wirth, Fire Chief, shared a report of calls from last month. There were no trauma calls, but more concerning electrical hazards. He noted that they received many calls before the recent hurricanes informing the fire department they were not home. He indicated that they will add the form to their website. PSC Member Bougoulas suggested that a section be added for people who were staying during weather events. PSC Member Knickle suggested that an advance notice be released informing people how to communicate their status to the fire department or the town. Chief Wirth described how the fire department and the town communicated during the last hurricanes.

Lieutenant Matt Chitwood, Lee County Sheriff's Office, noted they were planning for New Year's Eve festivities and Spring Break. There were no crime trends. PSC Member Knickle noticed that the Sheriff's Office response was much quicker with Milton. He thanked them and the Fire District for ensuring the residents were safe and allowing them back on the island as soon as possible.

Chair Thomas described people walking at night in the construction zone and questioned what they could do since it was pitch black. PSC Member Knickle asked why they could not install temporary lights at the bridge and downtown area. PSC Member Capela stated there were no sidewalks on either side of the road from Margaritaville or Lani Kai to Times Square. Chair Thomas mentioned adding barricades and Chief Wirth noted there were barricades last week. PSC Member Benak stated that four days ago, underground work for lights on Sterling was done.

#### **VIII. NEW TOWN COUNCIL DIRECTION FROM NOVEMBER 7, 2024 M&P SESSION: DISCUSSION ON ELECTRIC BICYCLES ON THE BEACH AND SIDEWALKS**

PSC Member Bougoulas reviewed the discussion from the town council meeting and noted the PSC was tasked with drafting language to add to the ordinance. Chair Thomas questioned the status of adding a bike lane separate from the sidewalk per Operations & Compliance Director Frankie Kropacek. Deputy Clerk Jason Freeman indicated they should have the results of the final report by their next meeting. PSC Member Bougoulas discussed educating people on how to safely pass others and focus on behavior because they could not enforce speeding. PSC Member Capela brought up enforcing pedaling on the sidewalk versus pedal assist. PSC Member Bougoulas noted that some people pretended to be pedaling, which was hard to enforce. PSC Member Farrell questioned how to legislate behavior. PSC Member Knickle replied that they could police reckless behavior. Chair Thomas discussed educating bicyclists and pedestrians regarding shared sidewalks, utilizing mobi mats on the beach and adding signage in high-pedestrian areas. PSC Member Bougoulas brought up educating people to ride with traffic instead of against it. Chair Thomas thought riding bikes on sidewalks should be prohibited in congested areas. PSC Member Bougoulas mentioned banning bikes on the beach during certain times.

Chair Thomas suggested waiting for the report and more information before continuing the conversation. PSC members agreed. PSC Member Farrell stated that the salt and sand damaged the e-bikes and that rental companies may not allow their e-bikes to be on the beach. PSC Member Knickle questioned when the town council expected feedback from them. Chair Thomas will check and report back.

#### **IX. HURRICANE RESPONSE PLAN**

PSC Member Bougoulas noted the form seemed to work well and he will contact Communications Coordinator Nicole Berzin regarding the new app.

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

- A. Electric Bike Messaging
- B. Crosswalk Messaging

C. FDOT Roundabout Messaging

Chair Thomas suggested combining all categories under Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Roundabout Messaging because that was their biggest issue. Discussion was held regarding the construction zone, detours, signs, lack of paint on crosswalks and using bright colors instead of white in crosswalks.

D. Survey

PSC Member Bougoulas displayed and discussed the survey results. He noted that he would provide more data from the spreadsheet he created. Chair Thomas suggested they look at the website to determine if anything was missing.

**XI. MEMBER ITEMS AND REPORTS**

Town Clerk Baker stated that a couple of their meetings had to be rescheduled. The recording skipped past the new dates. January and February meetings were rescheduled. She thought the Sunshine Law training would be at their December meeting, but she will verify and get back to them.

PSC Member Knickle brought up the lack of lighting and installing temporary lighting. PSC Member Bougoulas mentioned the FDOT project and indicated they needed signage. Chair Thomas suggested that the town promote using the back way by the bridge. She stated they needed a big sign at Margaritaville directing people where to go. PSC Member Capela asked whether they could schedule someone from FDOT and Chair Thomas will contact them. PSC Member Capela stated the three-foot-tall barricades were the only things that prevented people from climbing over and were needed on the Yucatan side right on down and around the corner.

PSC Member Farrell noted there were sources and grants available that would promote bicycle-friendly communities and he will provide a list at the next meeting.

PSC Member Capela stated that a yellow line had to be painted in the middle of Old San Carlos because people had no clue it was a two-lane road.

PSC Member Benak's issues were addressed.

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

**XIII. SET NEXT MEETING AGENDA – no changes.**

**XIV. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:22 a.m.

Adopted 12-17-24 with/without changes. Motion by \_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

Vote \_\_\_\_\_ Signature Dawn Thomas

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