

**MINUTES
FORT MYERS BEACH
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Town Hall Council Chambers
2731 Oak Street
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931
Tuesday, December 17, 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, Jim Bougoulas, Todd Capela, Keran Farrell, James Knickle and Dawn Thomas.

Council Liaison: Dan Allers

Staff Liaison: Thomas Yozzo

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT – no comment.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – November 19, 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

Lt. Chitwood stated there was no report. Chair Thomas described the traffic jam after the sand sculpting event and asked what happened. Lt. Chitwood replied that the town has to request a traffic detail when applying for a special event permit. He reviewed the process of requesting traffic assistance and noted the big events were covered. Liaison Yozzo noted that the person who submitted the application was responsible for requesting a traffic detail. He recommended having the requirements more locked in instead of being discretionary for smaller events. Mayor Allers indicated that signs for Crescent were ordered.

PSC Member Knickel asked whether Liaison Yozzo could flag special event permits that may need additional traffic control. Liaison Yozzo replied that he could make a request with the event holder. PSC Member Knickel felt the town should have some say regarding traffic issues. Chair Thomas stated that the Chamber of Commerce should have anticipated the traffic jam and requested assistance. She described how her group directed traffic.

Fire Chief Wirth stated it was a fairly quiet month. He indicated the new fire station was breaking ground soon and would take approximately 12-14 months to complete.

Liaison Yozzo noted an incident with an e-bike and a bench at the library and the family took her for treatment. The Rangers were working on the beach and picking up traffic duty where needed.

VII. PUBLIC SAFETY CAMPAIGN AND MESSAGING

A. Electric Bike Messaging

Chair Thomas summarized the discussion from last month, including painting graphics on the sidewalk indicating bikes were allowed to travel in the same direction as traffic and creating a rule for high-traffic sidewalk areas that pedestrians had to walk their bikes unless they were in the street. Mayor Allers reviewed the green bike markings by Beach Baptist before Ian. He recommended that the PSC send a formal request to the county and town council regarding continuing the bike markings on the sidewalk. He added that the Lee County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) could enforce that bikes travel in the same direction of traffic. Chair Thomas asked whether data was available regarding how many new people visited during specific months. She noted education was important. Mayor Allers suggested that she obtain data from short-term rentals since many used bikes and stress to LCSO that it was a public safety issue.

PSC Member Bougoulas questioned the results of the R2P2 study. Mayor Allers revealed the final report was available on the town's website. Chair Thomas will email her ideas to Deputy Clerk Jason Freeman for distribution to members.

Mayor Allers noted that they would resurrect conversations regarding landscaping to direct people to the crosswalks, similar to the hedges on North Estero Blvd., before Ian. He will follow up with the town manager to ensure the issue is still on the radar.

PSC Member Knickel mentioned that they discussed adding signs at each end of the island informing people that vehicles had to yield to people in the crosswalks. Mayor Allers suggested adding digital signs during season. PSC Member Benak asked whether cars had to stop for people standing on the curb. Mayor Allers thought the law was for pedestrians in the crosswalk only.

Discussion was held regarding adding temporary lights by the bridge. Mayor Allers thought the town could send a request to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). PSC Member Bougoulas discussed the FDOT project before Ian to redirect people around the bridge. Liaison Yozzo will also investigate the roundabout area and the possibility of adding barriers.

B. FDOT Roundabout Messaging

Messages should change monthly and include information regarding expected delays at the base of the bridge.

C. Survey

PSC Member Bougoulas proposed they host a meeting with the fire department and Communications Coordinator Berzin to discuss their plan for next season. He

commented the website had to be more concise regarding hurricane information. Chief Wirth supported having a meeting. Mayor Allers discussed creating a consolidated webpage with links to all information, including the fire department and other entities. Chief Wirth suggested scheduling a meeting at the end of the

PSC meeting next month. Chair Thomas will check with the town clerk concerning scheduling.

PSC Member Bougoulas questioned whether anyone was interested in researching areas of concern. The topics included marketing for improving safety on the beach, how to report concerns and informing people how to join a neighborhood watch. PSC Member Bougoulas reported that lighting was a priority for 46% of the open comments. He stated that the website's information was confusing and wondered whether they could communicate something simple and keep it updated. Open comments continued with police presence in the backstreets, enforcement on and off the island, lights in crosswalks, bike lanes, sidewalks and repairs, traffic and the rest was other. PSC Member Capela described his bike ride the length of the island and noted that private construction vehicles were parking on the bike lane and sidewalks between Seagate and Publix. He said it was like the wild west. Liaison Yozzo commented that the sidewalks had to be clear per Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and it was being enforced.

D. Grant Information

PSC Member Farrell distributed information regarding a website that listed funds for communities interested in promoting bicycle traffic. However, he learned today that the county was responsible for sidewalks. Chair Thomas suggested adding some of the information to their request to the county. Mayor Allers suggested they research the links to determine which ones applied to their projects.

X. MEMBER ITEMS AND REPORTS

PSC Member Benak asked whether e-bikes on the beach were allowed. Mayor Allers replied that a council member did not think it was a good idea but has not been voted on. PSC Member Benak discussed residents being able to pay to ride on the beach. Mayor Allers responded that he could bring it up at a council meeting, or the PSC could formally recommend it.

PSC Member Knickel asked when the lighting on the Estero Blvd. would be complete. Mayor Allers was told that they were on schedule. He will make sure an update is added to the town's website.

PSC Member Bougoulas asked whether a staff member who sat on FDOT meetings could give them an update at their next meeting. Mayor Allers will check.

Chair Thomas confirmed that more buildings were scheduled to be demolished. Mayor Allers stated that the Wyndham was supposed to tear down their building within 30 days, or the town would demolish it.

No items from other members.

XI. PUBLIC COMMENT – no public comment.

XII. SET NEXT MEETING AGENDA - TBD

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: PSC Member Knickel moved to adjourn, seconded by PSC Member Benak.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

Adopted 1-23-25 with/without changes. Motion by BOUGOULAS
(Date)

Vote 5-0 Signature Dawn Thomas

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