

MINUTES
FORT MYERS BEACH
MARINE & ENVIRONMENTAL
RESOURCES TASK FORCE
Town Hall Council Chambers
2731 Oak Street
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931
Wednesday, January 29, 2025

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Nusbaum.

II. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call

Members present: Bill Althoff, Sharon Hegstrom, Robert Howell, David Nusbaum, Leo Sand and Jennifer Rusk.

Excused: Ed Rood

Staff: Environmental Projects Manager Chadd Chustz

Council Liaison: John King

IV. Approve The Agenda

MOTION: MERTF Member Sand moved to approve the agenda, seconded by MERTF Member Althoff.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

V. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes – December 12, 2024

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

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

VI. Public Comment

Craig Luce from Creciente Condominiums stated that the condos from Leonardo to the Holiday Inn wanted to work with Projects Manager Chustz regarding erosion control.

Sam, past President of the Estero Beach and Tennis Club stated he had a great working relationship with Projects Manager Chustz and told him to keep up the good work.

VII. Current Items

A. FGCU/USDA Sea Grant Project

Projects Manager Chustz read Dr. Daley's email regarding the simulations. He stated they were running and he was comparing the model results to post-storm data. He should be

ready to present the results around March. Chair Nusbaum provided details regarding the simulation. He suggested they invite Dr. Daley to a March or April meeting to review the results.

B. 6000/7000/8000 Block Beach Management

Chair Nusbaum provided the background of the informal Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) meeting with the south-end condos regarding nesting issues.

He noted there was a positive effort from the 7000 and 8000 block owners that they needed to be proactive against sandspurs since they were lethal to the chicks. The approved herbicide was probably the best method to control the sandspurs. Projects Manager Chustz indicated that FWC would apply the herbicide in posted areas. Chair Nusbaum will update the town council at their next meeting.

Projects Manager Chustz felt it was good that the FWC wanted to partner with the community to manage the beach, but the 8000 block had concerns regarding maintaining their beach access. He suggested that the beachfront property owners draft a plan for how they wanted their beach to be managed and have a starting point to work with FWC to meet the requirements of the shorebird guidelines.

MERTF Member Hegstrom asked if there was a way to shift nests off the beach access path. Projects Manager Chustz replied that they must apply for a take permit. Unfortunately, the ideal path for people seemed to be an ideal place for the birds to nest. MERTF Member Howell asked whether mobi mats would help deter the birds and Projects Manager Chustz replied that they could interfere with the sea turtles' nesting. MERTF Member Howell will check with Brianna from FWC.

Projects Manager Chustz displayed and described schematic versions of dune planting from Bowditch Point, Crescent Park and Lynn Hall Park. He noted that the more they customize, the more difficult the project is. He will post the schematics on the town's website. He wanted to complete the project before sea turtle season.

C. Window Visual Transmittance (VT)

Chair Nusbaum noted Liaison King received information from the fenestration industry conducting baby sea turtle testing regarding window tints. The state mandates a 45 tint and some people say it is ineffective. Preliminary results indicated that a .3 tint and darker effectively reduced disorientation in nesting and hatching. Chair Nusbaum noted they were waiting for the final results and if that was the optimum level, he suggested making a recommendation to the town. He indicated that if this tint were used, it would not matter if curtains were open at night, saving Projects Manager Chustz and code enforcement a lot of time. Liaison King added that the 45 or the 15 VT did not have any data backing up why those percentages were chosen. He felt that the state would change its requirement once it understood where the optimal point was. Chair Nusbaum stated that this was the first actual scientific study done.

Projects Manager Chustz stated that the visual transmittance was a percentage and that there could still be an issue if bright lights were in front of windows. His understanding was that 30% of visual transmittance had a significant effect on disorientation rates, but it was not a zero effect.

VIII. Members' Items

MERTF Member Rusk noted that the Anchorage Advisory Committee (AAC) was hosting their Cruiser's Appreciation Day on Sunday, April 27, 2025, and she would like a MERTF booth. Chair Nusbaum did not see a problem with that. She invited MERTF members to stop by and have lunch. She requested approval to replace the tent lost during Hurricane Milton and the rusting tables. MERTF Member Howell donated one folding table.

MOTION: Chair Nusbaum moved to approve up to \$500 to replace the tent, tables and coverings, seconded by MERTF Member Sand.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Nusbaum asked whether the funds from the coloring book were done. MERTF Member Rusk replied that 1,000 to 2,000 were left and someone from the community offered to donate funds to print 2,000 more in the future.

Chair Nusbaum reported that the AAC would like to have a joint meeting with MERTF, the Captains for Clean Water and the Waterkeeper. He asked whether they would like to forgo their regular February meeting and have the joint meeting on February 21 or 28. A consensus was reached to meet on February 21, 2025. He was not sure about the time.

No items from other members.

IX. Staff Update

Projects Manager Chustz stated that 435 cubic yards of marine debris had been removed from the waterways, and the contractor was doing a great job. The beach renourishment project was slightly off schedule because of the storms, but they started pumping again south of DiamondHead.

They anticipated being done on the south end by March 1, 2025. They were working with FWC regarding an incidental take permit to keep the birds out of the project, but FWC advised that it may not be needed because the area had changed so much. They did not foresee nesting, but the nesting area would be monitored daily.

X. Public Comment

Craig from Creciente Condos asked whether there were sea turtle or bird restrictions for putting the seedlings in the ground in the 7000 block. Projects Manager Chustz replied that it might be different with the turtles behind the lagoon, but the permit allowed them to plant during sea turtle season as long as heavy equipment was not used on the beach. He will revise the plans as soon as possible, post them on the website and see if there is any feedback. He hoped to plant before sea turtle season. He asked what the process was for adding trees and seagrapes in a few years. Projects Manager Chustz advised him to contact him when they were ready.

MERTF Member Hegstrom commented that a new board member told them that the 8000 block owns the beach. For 32 years, Laguna Shores was allowed to use their property to get to the beach. She asked whether they could still do that. Projects Manager Chustz responded that he did not want to get into private versus public beach and advised her to contact their attorney.

XI. MERTF Award

MERTF Member Hegstrom nominated Chris King for cleaning up the beach every day. MERTF Member Rusk explained why the Sightseer boat tour company nominee in the bank deserved the award.

MOTION: MERTF Member Howell nominated Chris King, seconded by MERTF Member Althoff.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

XII. Set Agenda for Next Meeting – March 12, 2025

Add Dr. Savarese and Dr. Daly's presentation.

MERTF Member Rusk will write the April Spotlight article. Chair Nusbaum indicated that the articles had to be sent to Communications Coordinator Nicole Berzin.

XIII. Adjournment

MOTION: MERTF Member Althoff moved to adjourn, seconded by MERTF Member Howell.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

Adopted 3/12/2025 with/without changes. Motion by Leo Clay
(DATE)
Vote 5-0 Signature Paul Nusbaum

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