

MINUTES
Town of Fort Myers Beach
Cultural and Environmental Learning
Center Advisory Board “CELCAB”
Town Hall Chambers – 2731 Oak Street
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931
Thursday, February 27, 2025

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:02 p.m. by Chair Hill.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

Members present: Barbara Hill, Carolyn McKeown, Betty Simpson, Cherie Smith, Ellen Vaughan and Becky Werner.

Excused: Kerrie Henderson

Town Staff: Director Culture, Parks & Recreation Jeff Hauge and Museum Manager Adam Knight.

Council Liaison: Jim Atterholt

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – November 21, 2024

Clarification: Museum Manager Knight revealed that the Friends were paying \$2,000.00 a year for the ~~kiosk domain~~ web services and he found a website developer who offered to house it for free. Museum Manager Knight clarified that the Friends were no longer paying for the kiosk domain and CELCAB Member Vaughan stated it had not been a line item in the budget for years. Museum Manager Knight will look into it.

MOTION: CELCAB Member Smith moved to approve the minutes, seconded by CELCAB Member Simpson.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Charlie Streeter of Bonita Springs has been involved with the Southwest Florida Archaeological Society for years. He listed his extensive experience with other archaeological affiliations, including numerous excavations. He indicated the underground exhibit was only one of a handful of underground exhibits in the U.S. and one of the very few cultural attractions on Fort Myers Beach. He asked what grants had been applied for, what the funding status was, what the current physical status was inside and what the maintenance part was.

Theresa Schober, former Director of the Mound House, reviewed her experience. She requested that they do not close the underground exhibit. She suggested that a thorough, unbiased assessment of the value of the exhibit would be warranted. She described the stakeholders involved and questioned whether several of them had been contacted since they were involved in funding. She asked whether the restrictive covenants of the grants had expired and whether they wanted to lose DHR as a partner in the future. She noted they needed a broader perspective and asked whether

they could fold it into their strategic plan. She offered to submit her list of items to consider. She stated that she did not recommend closing the exhibit and she did not think it was a fact that the Seminole tribe were descendants of the Calusa.

VI. STAFF REPORT

Director Hauge reported that the sewer and water lines for the restroom trailers at Newton Beach Park were in and they were waiting for a final inspection for the electricity. The temporary parking lot should be completed in about a week. He indicated they had not yet received the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, but they did have a good design for the park when they received the money. Liaison Atterholt discussed potential revenue from the impact fees and wondered if they could acquire the property next to Newton Park through a loan to be paid off each year with impact fee money. Director Hauge responded that they could not apply for another loan until the bridge loan was paid off.

Manager Knight reported record attendance post-Ian at the Mound House and referred to his reports included with the agenda. The Mound House was closed for part of the month to repair the living room ceiling. The replacement gutters will be installed tentatively in April 2025. The bathroom was converted into the artifact preservation center to store the collection permanently. A video of the new center was posted on the town's website and another will follow of the virtual ribbon cutting. April 12, 2025, is a free lab day co-hosted with the Florida Public Archaeology Network and anyone can sign up on the Mound House website. He indicated he hoped to get a collections intern through Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) or other universities for public engagement with the exhibit.

He described the training he attended on emergency preparedness hosted by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Smithsonian Institute. He noted he was one of 20 out of 250 applicants chosen to participate.

He reported they had 1,025 visitors in January with the underground exhibit closed. He described the various events held, the marketing campaigns and funds received from different entities. The MAP organization was completed and he hoped to discuss it at the next meeting. Dead plants and the golden shower tree had to be removed. Manager Knight also attended the Jekyll Island Management Institute in January, which included 19 workshops over an 8-day period. He noted they received additional rack cards and the birding and brunch program will be held on March 15, 2025.

Manager Knight stated that February's visitors already surpassed January's numbers. Thirty-eight people attended The Movie on the Mound. He described outreach efforts and upcoming events. He noted pathway lighting was installed, the observation pier lights were repaired and the dock was illuminated. New signs will be installed on the observation pier and the dinghy dock. He addressed parking at the end of Connecticut and indicated there were many concerns. He explained why they were considering other options, such as extending the sidewalk. He provided an event calendar for the remainder of the year and reviewed various events.

VII. OLD BUSINESS – UNDERGROUND EXHIBIT AREA SUSTAINABILITY

Chair Hill reported that the town council unanimously voted to support the opening of the underground exhibit and a study to determine what it would take. Manager Knight described the damage from flooding over the years.

Ms. Schober reviewed the exhibit's design and explained how the water was supposed to move in and out. She described the exhibit at Spanish Point and explained that they cleaned the face of

their exhibit about every three years. The underground exhibit at the Mound House had not been maintained regularly over the last 14 years. She indicated it was designed to prevent rushing water from entering the exhibit. Ms. Schober thought the floor should be assessed and a plan to manage the walls should be developed. She added that footers may be needed. Manager Knight described the areas that had collapsed.

Manager Knight explained that there was mold and mildew growth due to the moist environment and they would get an air quality test and possibly a dehumidification system. Ms. Schober suggested installing a permanent well point system connected to the French drain and sump pump. Director Hauge commented that before the storms, the humidity was controlled.

Manager Knight noted that estimates for the planning phase and materials were \$250,000.00 and another \$500,000.00 for the implementation phase. One grant he researched required a one-to-one match. He met with the legal team, who were reviewing questions brought up at the last meeting, the zoning and floodplain departments and finance regarding insurance.

VIII. MEMBER ITEMS AND REPORTS

CELCAB Member Simpson thought the meeting was great and thanked Ms. Schober for her information, Manager Knight for his complete report and Chair Hill for leading the meeting.

Chair Hill reviewed agenda items.

CELCAB Member Smith thanked Ms. Schober for the background.

CELCAB Member Vaughan thanked Ms. Schober and Mr. Streeter for attending.

CELCAB Member Werner agreed with everything.

CELCAB Member McKeown was encouraged by what they heard.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Streeter stated that it would be a learning experience for everyone. He asked whether there was a dehumidifier or air conditioner in the exhibit now. He encouraged them to reach out to big companies for funding. He offered to include the Mound House activities in the Southwest Florida Archaeological Society newsletter.

Ms. Schober stated they were welcome to reach out to her anytime. She thought there might be a way to build in cultural, historical funding that allowed for an endowment to be built. Chair Hill discussed making it a public benefit for developers. Ms. Schober described how they drafted the Request for Quotes (RFQ) to weed out those who did not know what they were doing.

X. SET NEXT MEETING AGENDA AND DATE – March 27, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: CELCAB Member Vaughan moved to adjourn, seconded by CELCAB Member Smith.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

Adopted 3/27/25 with changes. Motion by CELCAB Member McKeown.
(DATE)

Vote: 6-0

Signature: Amy Baker, Town Clerk