

MINUTES
FORT MYERS BEACH
MARINE & ENVIRONMENTAL
RESOURCES TASK FORCE
Town Hall Council Chambers
2731 Oak Street
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931
Thursday, April 10, 2025

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chair Nusbaum.

II. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call

Members present: Bill Althoff (left early), Sharon Hegstrom (left early), Robert Howell (left early), David Nusbaum, Ed Rood, Jennifer Rusk and Leo Sand.
Staff: Environmental Projects Manager Chadd Chustz
Council Liaison: John King

IV. Approve The Agenda

MOTION: Chair Nusbaum moved to approve the agenda as written, seconded by MERTF Member Althoff.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

V. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes – February 21 and March 12, 2025

MOTION: MERTF Member Sand moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Chair Nusbaum.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

VI. Public Comment

Michael Thornton, resident, sent an email last month regarding canal dredging. He was interested in hearing an update.

VII. Current Items

A. Code Compliance

MERTF Member Howell asked about the blue lights at the park. Operations & Compliance Manager Thomas Yozzo replied that the lights were for the cameras on the tower stack. Chair Nusbaum asked who to call about trailers discharging waste into the storm sewers. Manager Yozzo replied that people should call code. MERTF Member Sand asked when the pipe will be removed from the beach. Manager Chustz responded that they would be done by May 31. Manager Yozzo stated that e-bikes and other powered

vehicles were not allowed on the beach and the speed limit for approved beach vehicles was six mph. To reach the central base, call 239-463-5888. RVs on vacant lots had to be removed by the end of September unless they could show progress with building. Manager Yozzo described the limited powers of the rangers. Chair Nusbaum discussed educating the public regarding dogs and shorebirds nesting.

1. Sea Turtle Nesting Season

MERTF Member Rusk reminded people to keep their lights off and drapes shut starting at 9:00 p.m. She asked people to pick up their garbage on the beach and fill in holes.

2. Illicit Discharge – see A. above.
3. Pre-Storm Construction Site Preparation – not addressed.

B. Canal/Channel Dredging

Manager Chustz indicated that some of the 30 canals were private and would take time to figure out who was responsible for dredging. He described setting up a taxing district to pay for it. He displayed graphics that demonstrated where dredging was needed and explained the process. He estimated it was a \$5.7 million project and noted it would be hard to obtain funds under the current administration. MERTF Member Sand discussed the economics of lots not selling because of the clogged canals and described how tax increment financing districts worked in Minnesota. Liaison King will contact the Lee County Property Appraiser for more information.

MOTION: MERTF Member Althoff moved to recommend that the town council research funding mechanisms to dredge the canals, recognizing the importance of the economic benefits and environmental improvement of the canals, seconded by MERTF Member Sand.

VOTE: The motion carried 5-2, with MERTF Members Rusk and Howell dissenting.

C. Dune Plantings

Manager Chustz displayed and discussed the dune plantings schemes and the default scheme would be the low-profile dune plantings preferred by property owners. He will work with people who want something else. He discussed the schematics for high- and low-profile plantings and noted the information was on the town's website. He described how the emergency berm was rebuilt in some areas. Manager Chustz explained the funding sources.

MOTION: MERTF Member Howell moved to support the exceptional plan that Manager Chustz presented, seconded by MERTF Member Rood.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

VIII. Members' Items

MERTF Member Althoff talked to the FWC (Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission) regarding MERTF being involved with a plan to do compaction testing on the beach to make sure

they were in compliance. He will investigate and talk to both of the government agencies. Chair Nusbaum indicated MERTF could look at it after determining the requirements. Manager Chustz stated that the FDEP (Florida Department of Environmental Protection) permit included compaction tests after the project is completed.

MERTF Member Howell encouraged people to contact him, MERTF Member Rusk, or Turtle Time if they wanted sea turtle literature.

MERTF Member Rusk noted that some property owners were concerned about Royal Palms being planted on Estero Blvd. because the palm fronds were very heavy and could drop on their property. She did not think they were appropriate and recommended planting silver buttonwoods. Manager Chustz replied that changing the trees would be a town council decision and they directed him to plant Royal Palms. He noted that the community wanted the Royal Palms that were there to be replaced. He explained where the renourishment sand came from. MERTF Member Rusk will set up a table for the Easter egg hunt on Saturday. MERTF will also attend the April 27 Cruiser's Appreciation event and encourages members to attend. She added that she had a list of plantings from the Estero Garden Club and asked that it be posted to the town's website. Manager Chustz will check with the town manager.

MERTF Member Rood stated that the friends of Little Estero Island were replacing the critical wildlife information panels. He asked whether he and volunteers could cut down the Australian Pines at the sand level on the beach and have public works pick up the debris. He could follow them, drill holes in the stump and put Roundup on them, but was told that only someone with a license to apply herbicides could do that. Manager Chustz replied that the FWC restricted cutting them during the bird nesting season, especially in the critical wildlife area. FWC would have to give them permission.

MERTF Member Sand would like to explore whether jetties could be installed to keep sand on the beaches. He indicated that the remaining posts from the dock in front of Caper Beach were cut off, and residents were concerned that they could pop up during the next storm. Manager Chustz explained that the costs and consequences of installing jetties were not feasible according to a past study. As far as the pilings, no one wanted to bury them and it was decided to pull them up so they were exposed.

IX. Staff Update

Manager Chustz stated that the 8000 block of the bird nesting area has been posted. He asked people to avoid walking their dogs in the area. The first Wilson Plover nest has eggs. The beach renourishment project was extended to April 30 on the south end and they will be on the central section on May 31. Shorebird nesting was being monitored daily.

X. Public Comment

Mr. Thornton asked if the canal graphics were available. Manager Chustz replied that he would ensure they were on the town's website and forward them to him.

XI. MERTF Award

MOTION: MERTF Member Rusk nominated the artist who painted the seascape at the library, seconded by Chair Nusbaum.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

XII. Set Agenda for Next Meeting – May 1, 2025

Add removal of Australian Pines.

XIII. Adjournment

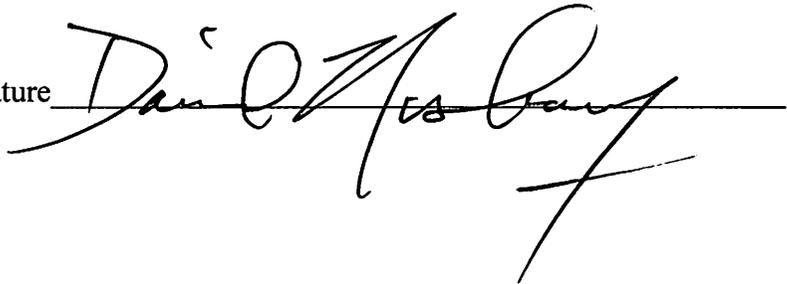
MOTION: MERTF Member Sand moved to adjourn, seconded by MERTF Member Rood.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

Adopted 05/01/2025 with/**without** changes. Motion by MERTF member Althoff, seconded by MERTF Member Sand.

Vote 7-0

Signature

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dan Althoff", written over a horizontal line.

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