

**MINUTES
FORT MYERS BEACH
MARINE & ENVIRONMENTAL
RESOURCES TASK FORCE**

Town Hall
6231 Estero Blvd.
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931
Thursday, September 18, 2025

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Nusbaum.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call

Members present: Bill Althoff, Sharon Hegstrom, Robert Howell, David Nusbaum, Ed Rood, Jennifer Rusk and Leo Sand (virtually).

Staff: Harbormaster Curtis Ludwig

Council Liaison: John King

MOTION: Chair Nusbaum moved to allow MERTF Member Sand to participate virtually, seconded by MERTF Member Althoff.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Approve The Agenda

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

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

V. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes – August 13, 2025

MOTION: MERTF Member Hegstrom moved to approve the minutes, seconded by MERTF Member Rood.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

VI. Public Comment – no public comment.

VII. Current Items

A. Mulholland Award

Chair Nusbaum reviewed the purpose of the award. He read the application nominating the Tunaskin company.

MOTION: MERTF Member Althoff moved to nominate the Tunaskin company for the award, seconded by MERTF Member Hegstrom.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

B. Dogs on the Beach

MERTF Member Rusk reported that many dogs were running around on the beach today without a leash. She said that she received calls every day regarding injured birds due to dogs. She noted that the signs needed to be replaced. MERTF Member Howell and Chair Nusbaum shared stories of dogs off-leash on the beach. MERTF Member Rood added that some people on the south end were unaware that dogs had to be leashed because they were renters and there were no signs. Liaison King offered to bring up the lack of signs and enforcement to the town council at the next meeting.

MERTF Member Sand suggested adding signs and doggie bags to beach accesses. Rental properties should also post the rules in their units. MERTF Member Rusk wondered whether any citations had been issued this year.

C. Canal Dredging

Environmental Projects Manager Chadd Chustz sent a plan to clean up and maintain the canals. Chair Nusbaum reviewed the summary and noted that the plan had to be financed. A discussion was held regarding special assessments. Liaison King indicated that the town manager will recommend hiring a survey specialist to determine who would be assessed if they needed one. Harbormaster Ludwig commented that the town was looking into the environmental impacts of dredging.

MERTF Member Sand confirmed that the surveyor would determine who owned which canal. He asked whether the town had ordinances controlling weeds, grass and tree trimming. Liaison King will look into it.

MOTION: Chair Nusbaum moved to request that the town council continue to move the project forward and research every financial avenue to get the canals back to pre-lan condition and MERTF supported an outside consultation to help the project, seconded by MERTF Member Sand.

A discussion was held regarding the dredging process.

VOTE: The motion carried 6-1 with MERTF Member Rusk dissenting.

VIII. Members' Items

MERTF Member Rood indicated that Town Clerk Baker could not find the origin of the Murphie award. He suggested changing it to the MERTF award and felt that it was overlooked and did not go through the proper channels with the town council. Chair Nusbaum did not think it necessarily had to be awarded monthly. He will bring up the award with the town council.

MERTF Member Howell brought up adding prop covers to rental boats to protect the manatees. He offered to create an informative sticker for the boats with buy-in from the town. MERTF Member Rusk noted that she distributed manatee stickers from FWC (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission) with their phone number on them. Harbormaster Ludwig pointed out that while rental boat companies have information on their vessels, a more in-depth conversation about manatees could be beneficial for the renters.

MERTF Member Rusk reported that they were monitoring 12 sea turtle nests, 80 have hatched and 30 were disoriented due to lights. Four nests were washed away and tides and rainfall inundated 17. She asked for help with the pop-up at the upcoming sand castle event. She thanked Alex King for donating money for the children's books. She indicated that a light installed at Newton Park was shining on the beach and Manager Chustz was aware of it, but it was still there after a month. MERTF Member Hegstrom noted that some members of the Castle Beach condos were opposed to planting on the berm.

No items from other members.

IX. Staff Update

Harbormaster Ludwig read Manager Chustz's report and noted that the beach renourishment was complete and damages would be assessed per the contract. The dune plantings were moving forward per the dune management plan. Iguanas were eating some of the plants and staff would pursue options to control them.

X. Public Comment – no public comment.

XI. MERTF Award

MERTF Member Rood explained why he felt that MERTF members should be eligible for the award. MERTF Member Howell stated that he did not want an award, but those who went out of their way to help the environment deserved to be recognized. MERTF Member Rusk and Chair Nusbaum agreed, adding that the spirit was to pay it forward.

XII. Set Agenda for Next Meeting – October 8, 2025

Add spearheading a project to distribute light cards to determine whether the lights were good or bad for Sea turtles. MERTF Member Howell was currently creating cards. Add replacing trees for Arbor Day next year. Add signs.

XIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:31.

Adopted Oct 9 2025 with/without changes. Motion by Rood
(DATE)
Vote 6-0 Signature David O. Howell