

MINUTES
Town of Fort Myers Beach
Cultural and Environmental Learning
Center Advisory Board “CELCAB”
Bay Oaks – 2731 Oak Street
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931
Thursday, August 28, 2025

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. by Chair Hill.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

Members present: Barbara Hill, Carolyn McKeown (virtually), Cherie Smith, Ellen Vaughan and Becky Werner.

Excused: Kerrie Henderson and Betty Simpson.

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

Town Council Liaison: Jim Atterholt

Members agreed to allow CELCAB Member McKeown to participate virtually.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – May 22, 2025

MOTION: CELCAB Member Vaughan moved to approve the minutes, seconded by CELCAB Member Werner.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Natalie De La Torre Salas, public archaeologist for the Florida Public Archaeology Network's Southwest Region, introduced herself and noted that she had partnered with Manager Knight on many events. She described FPAN's mission.

VI. STAFF REPORT

Manager Knight shared the reports for June and July. He reported that two employees left for other endeavors and he was taking over some of their duties. The Mound House will be closed the week of October 13, 2025, to allow for tenting due to termite activity. The artifacts will not be affected, but food items will have to be removed. The fire suppression system was repaired, the deposit for the gutter installation was submitted and work should begin soon. The ribbon-cutting event for the water quality station was held on the second Saturday in June. The Fort Myers Beach Community Foundation sponsored the event with free admission for the day, which drew over 60 people. Since Ashley left, FGCU (Florida Gulf Coast University) has had one of its staff members maintain, clean and calibrate the equipment at the water quality station.

An application was submitted for the Attraction Marketing Grant and \$20,000.00 was received from the Lee County Visitor Convention Bureau. The kayak launch will be improved, beach walks at Newton Beach Park were held on Fridays at 9:00 a.m., but will be shifted to Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m. starting in October. Emily Ton was hired as a full-time education coordinator and will start next Wednesday.

Director Hauge discussed the budget and noted that they proposed minimal suggestions to cut about \$50,000.00 to help bridge the gap. There were no cuts to staffing and an opening exists for an educator. A discussion was held regarding the possibility of cutting back some services and asking volunteers to step in. Director Hauge mentioned that the number of available grants had dwindled.

Chair Hill asked about a membership campaign to attract additional members and marketing items for sale at the museum store. Manager Knight indicated that the expected revenue for the store was \$20,000.00 and they brought in \$12,000.00 in July. Cultural Resources Coordinator Karina Britez was reaching out with a targeted mailing campaign to members with lapsed memberships to encourage them to renew. He described an upcoming dancing program in September, another event in October and brainstorming fundraising events with the Friends. He noted the big fundraising gala would be held in January, with details to follow.

Liaison Atterholt discussed the future water ferry stop at the Mound House, more parking at the Mound House and storing kayaks for a fee. Chair Hill noted those items were very important and had to be part of CELCAB and the town's strategic plan. Director Hauge described a self-serving automated kiosk for renting kayaks. Manager Knight explained why additional parking was not available, but indicated that LeeTran was tentatively expanding its route to the Mound House starting in November 2026. Director Hauge did not have an update regarding extending the sidewalk on Connecticut.

Director Hauge noted the design for Newton Park was awarded; however, it was being challenged, so they will have to rebid. A discussion was held about the fitness court, but the funding was a 40-50% matching grant, so they were holding off for a little while.

VII. OLD BUSINESS - MUSEUM ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (MAP) ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

A. ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

The first recommendation is to explore hiring a full-time marketing events coordinator or look to volunteers or interns to assist, the second is that the town should not consider the Mound House collections and artifacts as financial assets, but cultural assets in the public trust for future generations and finally, the finance department and the Friends need to explore grants outside the local and state level for educational programs, collection care needs, internships and historic preservation. Liaison Atterholt revealed that the town might hire an events manager for the town next year, which could potentially include Mound House events.

CELCAB Member Vaughan reminded members that they had some significant issues with the first sections and that there was an opportunity for them to express a rebuttal, as there were some contentions in the first part that she thought were misunderstandings. Those involved with the Mound House for a long time disputed some of the conclusions. Chair Hill felt that was a giant step forward because the reviewer recognized the discordance between entities. Manager Knight noted that it would not change the report or affect the opinion of anyone involved, but CELCAB can add its own amendments. Liaison Atterholt

described his disagreement with the language in a sentence regarding the town's charter that remained in the report.

B. COLLECTION STEWARDSHIP

Manager Knight reviewed the September recommendations and indicated that many of them have been implemented. The town does not have a fine arts insurance policy for the artifacts or collections, which affects traveling exhibits. A disaster preparedness and emergency response plan specific to the Mound House has been written and integrated within the town's emergency management plan.

C. FACILITIES AND RISK MANAGEMENT

The flow of the exhibits was addressed. Changes were recommended, including the installation of another sign halfway up on Connecticut Street, an integrated pest management and housekeeping plan and yearly walkthroughs with the sheriff's office, town security and the fire department. A portable gas generator and water pumps should be purchased to prevent flooding in the underground exhibit. Staff should be trained on facilities maintenance to address minor issues before they escalate into major problems.

D. EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

Recommendations include virtual school programs, finding grants and utilizing a large tent or Chickee Hut for outdoor exhibit space. Introduce formal evaluation in public programming, collect more data, look for grants for virtual classes to expand outreach, create an audio tour and replace exhibit light bulbs with LED bulbs to reduce light damage and conserve energy.

E. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Hire a full-time marketing and events coordinator or have interns or volunteers assist, create a partnership with university and high school students to help with marketing and create a process for evaluating programs and exhibits to measure effectiveness.

VIII. MEMBER ITEMS AND REPORTS

Chair Hill stated there were three openings on CELCAB and encouraged the public to apply. Details can be found on the town's website.

CELCAB Member Vaughan asked whether pre-Ian photos of the underground exhibit could be copied and added to the plywood covering the entrance. Manager Knight replied affirmatively and said that they would look into adding vinyl signage to the museum.

CELCAB Member Smith asked whether the mural was still outside. Manager Knight replied that all but one panel was up. Manager Knight confirmed that Breanna was still employed and she was planning to conduct a bimonthly tour.

Chair Hill asked about AI (artificial intelligence). Manager Knight responded that he and Breanna were attending sessions regarding AI in October.

No items from other members.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT – no comments.

X. SET NEXT MEETING AGENDA AND DATE – September 25, at 1:00 p.m. at the new town hall.

Add Summary and Recommendations. Manager Knight reminded members of the events scheduled for September and October.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: CELCAB Member Werner moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by CELCAB Member Smith.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

Adopted 09/25/25 with/without changes. Motion by CELCAB Member Smith
(DATE)

Vote: unanimous Signature: Raybow Hill