

**MINUTES
FORT MYERS BEACH
MARINE & ENVIRONMENTAL
RESOURCES TASK FORCE**
Town Hall - 6231 Estero Blvd.
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931
Thursday, November 13, 2025

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m. 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 Todd Zaccarelli.

Staff: Environmental Projects Manager Chadd Chustz

Council Liaison: John King

IV. Approve The Agenda

MOTION: MERTF Member Rusk asked that the budget be added to the agenda before Arbor Day, seconded by MERTF Member Howell.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

V. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes – October 8, 2025

Chair Nusbaum clarified that MERTF Member Rusk was asked whether there was a possible problem if any of the funds contributed toward the coloring books were diverted and he paraphrased her response as she did not think so. Chair Nusbaum noted that MERTF did not mean to belittle the sponsors or to disregard their intent. The vote would not have been taken if they thought there would be a problem. MERTF Member Rusk later received clarification from the donors.

MOTION: MERTF Member Howell moved to have the above discussion rewatched, evaluated and then updated in the minutes from the last meeting, seconded by Chair Nusbaum.

Chair Nusbaum indicated that the minutes would be republished and MERTF will approve them at the next meeting.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

VI. Public Comment – no public comment.

VII. Current Items

A. MERTF Budget

MERTF Member Rusk distributed a packet regarding the budget. She highlighted and described the checks intended for the children's coloring books. A total of \$8,752.92 was received for the books. Printing costs for 20,000 books are \$8,716.44, which leaves a balance of \$36.48 in the MERTF budget for the children's books. A discussion was held about what remained in the MERTF budget.

MOTION: MERTF Member Rusk moved to print 20,000 books for a total of \$8,716.44, seconded by MERTF Member Hegstrom.

A discussion about the budget continued.

VOTE: No vote.

MOTION MERTF Member Rood moved that, provided that the treasury writes the check, he was good with it, seconded by Chair Nusbaum.

Manager Chustz indicated he would find out whether there were funds in the account for the children's books within 48 hours.

VOTE: The motion carried, 4-3 with MERTF Members Rusk, Howell and ? dissenting. Manager Chustz will contact the finance department.

B. Florida Arbor Day and National Arbor Day

Chair Nusbaum noted that he had received only one response from the nurseries in the area, and the youngest trees cost between \$75.00 and \$125.00. The Arbor Day in Florida was in January and the National Arbor Day was in April. Chair Nusbaum suggested contacting Cathy Turner from the Garden Club about growing palms from seeds to be planted next year and donating them to the town. He mentioned individuals donating trees in memory of a loved one and planting them on the island. Manager Chustz would like to have a Florida Arbor Day and will get back to the committee. He thought the town got about 100 trees pre-Ian. He suggested discussing details at the next meeting. Chair Nusbaum and Manager Chustz will contact Ms. Turner. He noted that he would reach out to local landscapers.

C. Hazardous Waste Collection

The date is February 4, 2026, at Bay Oaks. Manager Chustz will advertise the event.

D. Sea Turtle Conservation Education & Outreach

MERTF Member Howell displayed the final turtle-friendly viewer with the film, which allowed negative wavelengths through but stopped the wavelengths that the turtles could see. Manager Chustz agreed it was an excellent tool but noted that the town's spectrometer was the final scientific instrument used to determine wavelength.

Manager Chustz noted that there was no policy in place regarding cumulative lighting for single-family homes landward of the CCCL; however, it was in place for the sea turtle conservation ordinance waterward of the CCCL. He asked members to get the word out that the exterior lighting would be scrutinized. If lights from a house on the landward side of Estero were directly or indirectly visible from the beach, they would be approached accordingly and they would be subject to the sea turtle conservation code.

Manager Chustz noted that fan lights in condos were a problem, and that one fan available had a built-in shield for the light. Chair Nusbaum will reach out to the condo board secretary to invite Manager Chustz to a meeting.

Manager Chustz will attend the sea turtle workshop at UF next week.

MERTF Member Rusk reported that 5,465 hatchlings emerged this year, with 56% from 113 nests.

E. 6000 Block Beach Management

Chair Nusbaum described installing sand fencing to trap blowing sand and create a drift to help raise the lower areas. Manager Chustz noted he still needed to reach out to FDEP (Florida Department of Environmental Protection). He indicated it was an option outside of sea turtle season and thought it made sense. Chair Nusbaum noted that the 501(c)(3) for raising sand and the 6000 block beach management plan were on his to-do list.

VIII. Members' Items

MERTF Member Howell will distribute the turtle viewers to whoever wants them. Chair Nusbaum suggested making them available at Town Hall.

MERTF Member Rusk asked for volunteers for the pop-up booth at the sand sculpting event on Saturday from 10:00-1:00 or 1:00-5:00. She received a \$500.00 check from MERTF Member Hegstrom for the coloring books. She reported that Finance Director Joe Onzick verified that the funds to print the book were available.

MOTION: MERTF Member Howell moved to order 20,000 books for \$8,716.44, seconded by Chair Nusbaum.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

MERTF Member Hegstrom commented that the waterkeepers group she belongs to recommended a book about the Everglades, The Swamp, by Michael Grunwald.

MERTF Member Zaccarelli noted it was a pleasure to be there.

Chair Nusbaum responded to MERTF Member Rood, stating that the town council did not object to adding the town logo to the MERTF award and was very pleased with the appearance. MERTF Member Rood checked with Town Clerk Amy Baker regarding the origin of the award and whether the name Murphy was discussed. The Town Clerk did not find anything.

MOTION: MERTF Member Rood moved that the award reflect the name of the committee, and in the future, it is officially the MERTF Award, seconded by MERTF Member Rusk.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Nusbaum asked MERTF Member Rood to use the donated funds to order more MERTF awards. He suggested presenting a retroactive award to Tunaskin so they can display it in their shop. MERTF members agreed.

No items from other members.

IX. Staff Update

Manager Chustz indicated that 75 Royal Palms were planted, funded by an FDAC grant and they would be visiting the beach in a week or so. More canopy trees will be added to Bay Oaks and the beach accesses. The U.S. Coast Guard provided positive feedback regarding the six balls in the Mooring Field that were out of alignment. He added to the sea turtle statistics, noting that 9,678 eggs were laid; 3,843 did not hatch, and 5,646 did. Of those that hatched, 5,465 were live hatchlings. Eighty-two of the 113 nests hatched and lights disoriented 29 nests that did not hatch. He described how one little LED stair light could negate the amber lights. Manager Chustz indicated that this was a down year, but the best they have had in the last three years. Manager Chustz reported that the beach was officially certified by Coastal Engineer Michael Poff. He summarized the report and noted that 160,000 plants had been installed to date. Manager Chustz noted that the FDEP permit was extended for the 8000 block bird management plan.

X. Public Comment – no public comment.

XI. MERTF Award

MERTF Member Rusk commented that the College Hunks Hauling Junk helped clean up the beach and has contributed to past events.

MOTION: Chair Nusbaum moved to award the MERTF to the College Hunks Hauling Junk, seconded by MERTF Member Rusk.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

XII. Set Agenda for Next Meeting – December 10, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

Add town nursery discussion.

XIII.. Adjournment

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

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:03 p.m.

Adopted _____ with/without changes. Motion by _____
(DATE)

Vote _____ Signature _____