

BEACH STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE MINUTES

November 18, 2020 - 9:00 A.M.

PRESENT: Linda Borgia, Member
Janet Harris, Member
Dan Rothenberger, Vice Chair
Lenny Stamos, Member

ABSENT: Lynda Lind Fontana, Chair

ALSO PRESENT: Mike Clarke, Public Works Director
Ginny Keeter-Bodkin, Deputy City Clerk

1. Changes to the Agenda - Member Borgia asked to add an item regarding beach signs (added as item 1.). Mr. Clarke stated that the City Manager asked to add two items – the use of plastic straws (m.) and plastic bags (n.).
2. Audience Comments – There were no audience comments.
3. a. Approval of Minutes – 2/19/2020

Member Borgia moved and Vice Chair Rothenberger seconded the approval of the February 19, 2020 minutes as presented; the motion passed unanimously.

b. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Member Borgia moved and Member Stamos seconded the appointment of Vice Chair Rothenberger as Chair. Vice Chair Rothenberger accepted and the motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Member Borgia moved and Chair Rothenberger seconded the appointment of Member Stamos as Vice Chair. Member Stamos accepted and the motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

4. Action Items - There were no action items.
5. Discussion Items - Mr. Clarke provided updates on the following items:
 - a. Invasive plant removal along dunes between 13th and 14th Avenues - Many of the plants have been pulled and proper permitting is in place to do so. Staff are trained to identify specific plants and remove precisely.
 - b. Dune Crossover Program - This program has been suspended indefinitely pending a beach nourishment project led by Pinellas County and the Army Corp of Engineers focusing on beach resiliency and storm mitigation.
 - c. Restroom Improvements at Pass-A-Grille - The project is nearly finished, and restroom improvements have begun at Upham Beach.
 - d. Evaluating Possibility of Restricting Smoking on Beaches - SB 670 - The Bill has passed in the Senate and has moved to the House. Per the City Manager's request, the

Committee unanimously confirmed that they do wish to bring their February motion in favor of banning smoking on the beaches to the City Commission in December or January.

e. 1st Avenue Fishing Pier Update - The City Commission has selected the replacement style of pier. The existing pier will be removed and replaced almost as it is now with some ADA required upgrades. It will be a monolithic concrete structure with a stainless steel railing; this will negate the need to replace pilings in the future.

f. Merry Pier, 7th and 11th Avenues Renovations Update - The Merry Pier sustained some damage during Tropical Storm Eta. Design for the replacement is at 100% and a contractor is in place reviewing the drawings. The concessions may be back in operation in February or March if scheduling moves well. The 7th and 11th Avenue Piers are bundled into this project. The 11th Avenue pier was lost in TS Eta and will be a new structure that will look the same with some added ADA requirements.

g. Pass-a-Grille Way Seawall 1st to 12th Avenues Update - The wall is older and in need of repairs; several blocks will be replaced at the new required height – this should be approved by the City Commission in early December.

h. Turtle Season Lights - Turning Back On - It was a good year; lights have been turned off, but now coming back on.

i. Identification of Lights to Change to Amber and Notifications - The lights on Pass-a-Grille Way from 1st to 12th Avenues on the bay side are currently LED white acorns, which are perceived as too bright; the City Commission will consider changing to lights that are in a wave length that turtles cannot see in a Sanibel type fixture to lessen the reach of the light.

Each year the City receives a report from Pinellas County in which they identify every building and light that shines on the beach, potentially disorienting the sea turtles. They are largely on private property/condominiums. Discussion followed on mobilizing assistance to make the owners aware and see if they would be willing to changing to amber lights. Mr. Clarke could arrange for a direct mailer to these residences.

Member Borgia moved and Member Stamos seconded, that the Beach Stewardship Committee will provide support to Public Works in following up on amber light notifications. The motion passed unanimously.

j. Consideration of Bicycles and/or Motorized/Electric Transport Vehicles on Beach - The Committee discussed pros and cons of wheeled vehicles on the beach and whether there is an existing ordinance as none could be located. Mr. Clarke asked for the Committee's recommendation absent an ordinance.

Member Borgia moved and Vice Chair Stamos seconded that the Beach Stewardship Committee recommend to the City Commission that bicycles and all wheeled conveyances, including motorized, be prohibited from use on the beaches. The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

Member Stamos added that this should be fast-tracked if not already in the Code of Ordinances and signage should follow.

k. Research with FDEP to Determine What Permits Exist on Gulf Sand - Mr. Clarke explained that some businesses are permitted, by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), to shape the sand, including dunes. The recent storm highlighted the fragility of the sand and dunes in the event of water threats. Manpower, time and diligence will be required to evaluate who holds what permits, what the permits allow and make decisions based on that information.

Chair Rothenberger moved and Member Borgia seconded that the Beach Stewardship Committee will support the City in evaluation of the FDEP permits on the beaches to the maximum of their ability. The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

l. Beach Signs (added item) - Member Borgia reported that signs at Upham Beach say restroom available at 10th and 16th Avenues, which is misleading. Beach regulation signs are not well placed. Mr. Clarke will take on having the signs updated and moved to more suitable locations.

m. Use of Plastic Straws (added)

Member Borgia moved and Member Harris seconded that the Beach Stewardship Committee would endorse a plastic straw ban on the beaches. The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

n. Use of Plastic Bags (added)

Vice Chair Stamos moved and Member Harris seconded that the Beach Stewardship Committee would encourage the City Commission to consider a ban on single use plastic bags. The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

Other Business - Mr. Clarke reported that in the coming weeks, there will be a station going up at Upham Beach with containers encouraging people to fill them with trash and put in the garbage.

6. Adjournment - There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 10:20 AM.

These minutes were approved at the February 17, 2021 Beach Stewardship Committee meeting.