

BEACH STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE MINUTES

May 18, 2022 - 9:00 A.M.

PRESENT: Dan Rothenberger, Chair
Lenny Stamos, Vice Chair
Linda Borgia, Member
Michael Welch, Member

EXCUSED: Janet Harris, Member

ALSO PRESENT: Mandy Edmunds, Parks Supervisor
Alex Rey, City Manager
Ginny Bodkin, Deputy City Clerk

Chair Rothenberger called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

1. Changes to the Agenda - There were none.
2. Audience Comments –

Lisa Reich of Sea Turtle Trackers spoke about concerns with lighting on the beach; about 90% of the properties are not compliant. Education regarding compliance with the City regulations is needed. She also commented about ‘stuff on the beach’ (i.e. 35 buoys at one property) which entangles wildlife, and beach loss. Vice Chair Stamos suggested the use of a drone to prevent further traffic on the beach, however drones disturb birds according to the Florida Wildlife Commission. Audience comments were paused when the speaker arrived.

3. Presentations

a. Keep Pinellas Beautiful

Pat Deplasco, Executive Director of Keep Pinellas Beautiful (KPB), reviewed a presentation about her organization and what they do - transforming public spaces to beautiful places and raising environmental awareness. She shared information about the impact that KPB had during 2021 and 2022, as well as the Bebot, a robot which gathers beach trash. Committee members raised concerns about disturbing the beach ecosystem; she explained that the Bebot collects the trash for educational purposes to show the effects of leaving litter on the beach. KPB will be at Archibald Park in Madeira Beach on June 24th doing a learning presentation on the Bebot. Her presentation is part of the meeting record.

Public Comment continued after the presentation.

Amy Loughery of Pass-a-Grille spoke with regard to vending on the beach and its negative impacts, and also catering to tourists vs. residents and those impacts. She mentioned tents and grills on the beach.

Joe Widlansky of Sea Turtle Trackers commented on a zip line on the beach at Tradewinds; he would like the City to inform or ask for input from their organization before issuing permits on the beach during turtle season. Vice Chair Stamos suggested bringing that matter to the City Commission. Turtle friendly lighting and windows were also mentioned.

A brief recess was called from 9:52 to 9:56 AM.

4. Action Items

a. Approval of Minutes 2/28/2022

Member Borgia moved and Member Welch seconded the approval of the February 28, 2022 minutes as presented; the motion passed unanimously.

b. Election of Officers 2022-23

Member Welch moved and Member Stamos seconded the re-appointment of current Committee Officers Dan Rothenberger as Chair and Lenny Stamos Vice Chair for 2022-23; the motion passed unanimously.

5. Items for Discussion

a. Revised Beach Ordinance – Ms. Edmunds explained that this is still a working document, and it has been brought here for feedback and will go to a workshop from here and other steps before adoption by the City Commission. Previously, elements of beach regulations had been spread throughout the Code of Ordinances; the goal is to bring them into a dedicated section. Most of the outlined ordinances are already included in the Code. She highlighted some of the proposed modifications and asked for input. Her presentation is part of the meeting record.

- Prohibit fishing near swimming and on sand; City Manager Alex Rey spoke about the potential risks when mixing swimming and fishing; there could be a designated fishing area or times
- No smoking/vaping on public beaches has been added.
- A recent Micromobility Ordinance prohibits e-bikes on the beach; the Committee discussed regular bicycles on the beach and consensus opinion was to prohibit them
- Single use plastic straws are already prohibited; Mr. Rey explained that Styrofoam is the greatest concern.
- Regulation of commercial rental operations – discussion consensus was to regulate the number of cabana and other rentals; the potential for requiring permits for photographers (as a business) was discussed
- Equipment/chairs on the beach – discussion of keeping it behind a certain line after hours or a corralled area
- Vehicles on beach – discussed limiting vehicle weight, creating a designated travel area for permitted vehicles, adding a mention of wheelchairs, moving to electric vehicles only as soon as possible
- Regulation of special events/alcohol for beachfront residents
- Seabird protection added
- Dune protection clarified by the City and DEP; sea oat and plant protection
- Commercial property cabanas – the Committee suggested at least 50 feet from wet sand

Discussion followed on adding parameters for service dogs on the beach to the ordinance and enforcing fireworks on the beach.

b. Vehicles on the Sand – Ms. Edmunds explained that the new proposed speed limit would be 15 mph - Committee consensus was to keep that at 10 mph.

6. Updates

a. Florida Legislature's Action on Smoking Restrictions – This was discussed during the Ordinance item.

b. Swim Buoys – Ms. Edmunds reported that our City is working with Treasure Island as we use their barge and some staff; current estimated timeline for the replacement of the buoys is sometime in June.

Final Public Comments –

Lisa Reich of Sea Turtle Trackers commented on storm runoff onto the beach at some properties; Ms. Edmunds will look into that.

Betty Rzewnicki of DonCesar Place Property Owners commented on the consideration of adding verbiage regarding restriction of private properties' weddings, sprinkler systems, dunes, and enforcement of same, and driving on the beach. She would like to see more workshops on this ordinance.

a. Adjournment Next meeting is August 17, 2022

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:55 AM.

These minutes were approved at the August 17, 2022, Beach Stewardship Committee meeting.