

BEACH STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE MINUTES

November 16, 2022 - 9:00 A.M.

PRESENT: Dan Rothenberger, Chair
Linda Borgia, Member
John Kurzman, Member
Michael Welch, Member

EXCUSED: Lenny Stamos, Vice Chair

STAFF PRESENT: Ayako Ruckdeschel, Beach Manager
Jennifer McMahon, Chief Operating Officer
Ginny Bodkin, Deputy City Clerk

Chair Rothenberger called the meeting to order at 9:10 AM. He welcomed and introduced new Committee member John Kurzman who was recently appointed by Commissioner Grill.

1. Presentations

a. Sea Turtle Trackers End of Season Report

Theresa Aronholz of Sea Turtle Trackers reported on the number of nests, eggs and hatches on the beach this year. There was a decrease this year, possibly due to a move to Treasure Island, since their numbers were up. She provided some detail on the sequence of the laying and hatching of eggs and how obstructions such as beach chairs and non-turtle friendly lighting can have a negative effect on hatches. A question and answer period followed.

b. Audubon Society Black Skimmer Report

Presenter Holly Short was unable to attend, but Chair Rothenberger reported that subsequent to the fireworks discussion last year and the City Commission's decision to relocate them, there were 128 fledges this year, which was quite an improvement.

2. Audience Comments

Leslie Price of Sunset Way commented on concerns that some resorts north of the Don CeSar and up to Upham Beach area that presume to own the beach up to the water line. COO Jennifer McMahon explained that some of them do, based upon the property surveys they have provided. Staff is in the process of compiling all the surveys. A discussion followed on State and Federal laws governing beach ownership. Ms. McMahon suggested adding an item to the next meeting agenda to give staff time to research and provide information.

3. Approval of the Agenda

Ms. McMahon asked to add the introduction of Ayako Ruckdeschel, timeline on beach ordinances, and Mobi-mat ribbon cutting to the agenda.

New Member Kurzman asked to be brought up to date on who owns what on the beaches, and who is responsible for vegetation and garbage removal. Ms. Ruckdeschel and Ms. McMahon explained that the City maintains public beaches; resorts are responsible for theirs.

Member Welch asked to add a discussion on beach smoking.

Member Borgia moved, and Member Welch seconded the approval of the agenda as presented with the additions; the motion passed unanimously.

a. Approval of Minutes 8/17/2022

Member Welch moved, and Member Borgia seconded the approval of the August 17, 2022 minutes as presented, Member Kurzman abstained; the motion passed unanimously.

b. Approve/Accept Meeting Dates for 2023

Member Borgia moved, and Member Welch seconded to accept the 2023 meeting dates as presented; the motion passed unanimously.

4. Items for Discussion

a. New Dune Trimming Permit Process –

Beach Manager Ayako Ruckdeschel explained that although protection of sand dune during the trimming process has been in the ordinances, the City is now making effort to enforce and protect; that will be part of her role as Beach Manager. She has reached out to identified violators and letters have been sent to owners explaining the violation process. Violators are called to appear before the Code Enforcement Special Magistrate for hearing and potential imposition of fines.

Added – Ms. McMahon introduced Ayako Ruckdeschel. She has been with the City for over five years, previously as the Aquatic Supervisor, and now as Beach Manager. She will be the new point of contact for this committee along with Mandy Edmunds.

Added – The City Attorney's office is finalizing the Beach Ordinance and it should be completed by end of month and will then be sent to the Pinellas County Sheriff's attorneys for review enforcement matters. The goal is to present the first reading to the City Commission at the second meeting in January.

Added – Ms. McMahon reported that the Mobi-mat has been installed at Upham Beach and the one at 22nd Ave. will be installed on December 2nd. There will be a ribbon cutting on Upham on Monday, December 5th at 10:00 AM and members were encouraged to attend. The mats were purchased and paid for by the Forward Foundation with assistance from Help Us Gather and the Disability Network; it was a team effort over two years.

Added – Member Welch inquired about the ban on smoking being broader to include all smoking. The Chair and city staff confirmed that recently passed State legislation allows cigars without a filter or plastic tip. Member Kurzman read that portion of the law.

5. Adjournment – Next meeting February 15, 2023

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 AM.

These minutes were approved at the February 15, 2023, Beach Stewardship Committee meeting.