

BEACH STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE MINUTES

February 21, 2024 - 9:00 A.M.

PRESENT: Dan Rothenberger, Chair
John Kurzman, Vice Chair
Brad Panek, Member
Jon Stevens, Member
Michael Welch, Member

STAFF PRESENT: Matthew McConnell, Assistant City Attorney
Ayako Ruckdeschel, Beach Manager
Ariana Wilson, Admin. Assistant – Clerk’s Office
Jennifer McMahon, Chief Operating Officer

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

1. Presentations

a. Committee Members – Welcome and Farewell

Chair Rothenberger recognized Commissioners Marriott and Rzewnicki and thanked them for their service and time dedicated as members of this Board. He welcomed new Board members Jon Stevens and Brad Panek. They each gave brief introductions.

b. Ocean Rescue Alliance – Building the First Ever Shoreline Snorkel Reef

Shelby Thomas, CEO, and founder of Ocean Rescue Alliance International (ORAI) gave a short presentation to the Board, the presentation is made part of the record. Ms. Thomas stated ORAI is a Marine Conservation Restoration nonprofit mostly based in South Florida but looking to expand to the West Coast. They focus on building artificial infrastructure for different biological purposes. She reviewed the importance of coral reefs and some of the current problems reefs face today. ORAI has created artificial reefs that are made of eco-friendly materials. She stated they’ve been working with Pinellas County to designate some sites where they can place their projects and hope to work with the City in the future as well.

A brief Q&A took place.

2. Approval of the Agenda –

Vice Chair Kurzman requested to add the following items under Items for Discussion:

- Urgent matters before the City Commission which would have an impact on City Beaches to include a toolkit.
- Formalize what was discussed at the last Beach Stewardship Meeting (Inputs and outputs).
- A request to the City Commission for an analysis of deeds and surveys to determine ownership rights of ways and access ways.

Chair Rothenberger stated Vice Chair Kurzman’s second requested item is on the agenda as Item 5.a.

Assistant City Attorney McConnell suggested Board members state what they would like to see on the next agenda at the end of the meetings. He reminded the Board this is a Committee agenda and that everything that is discussed should be as a whole Board, not individuals.

Attorney McConnell stated Item 5.a. could cover many things including the suggestions Vice Chair Kurzman made.

Vice Chair Kurzman moved, and Member Welch seconded the approval of the February 21, 2024 agenda with the additions of items 5b and 5c; the motion passed unanimously.

3. Audience Comments – None

4. Action Items

a. Approval of Minutes 11/15/2023

Member Welch moved, and Vice Chair Kurzman seconded the approval of the November 15, 2023 minutes as presented; the motion passed unanimously.

b. Qtr. 1 Beach Report (1 Oct – 31 Dec, 2023)

Ms. Ruckdeschel announced she would be including these beach reports at every meeting going forward. She stated the reports cover some statistics of events that have occurred on the beach as well as some meetings that involve the beach. She stated some of the statistics came directly from the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office.

A brief Q&A took place.

5. Items for Discussion

a. Beach Stewardship Committee – Resolution Regarding Concerns Affecting Our Beaches

Attorney McConnell stated he worked closely with the Historic Preservation Board and they recently had a Resolution adopted. He suggested that if the Beach Stewardship Committee is interested in something like this, they meet more than their regularly scheduled quarterly meetings. He stated the Board can initiate a proposed Ordinance to change and add to the powers and duties in the Code of Ordinances, however, Ordinances are required to be advertised and have two public readings that ultimately are adopted by the City Commission. A Resolution can be passed with one reading, it's not codified in the code it would be codified on the City's website under rules and regulations on the Beach Stewardship Committee page and it can be as broad or as narrow as the Board chooses. Attorney McConnell stated that the Historic Preservation Board had a checklist of 12-13 items they wanted to review to ensure that the character of the historic district and other contributing structures was maintained. If this Board can find a purpose for the proposed Resolution, he can dedicate time to meet with the Board and help guide and prepare a Resolution to present to the City Commission.

Member Stevens stated he watched the last Beach Stewardship Committee meeting and from what he understood the Board wanted to see how they could become more informed and more involved in communications regarding the beach.

Attorney McConnell reviewed the code and what is required from everyone on the Board. He reminded the members that this Board will never be able to say yes/no, they will only be able to make recommendations.

Vice Chair Kurzman clarified that they would want to be informed of anything that would go in front of the City Commission regarding the beach.

Ms. McMahon provided some background on the process of getting the Resolution approved for the Historic Preservation Board. She also provided an example to the Board to get a better understanding of what is being requested. Tradewinds needs to move a firepit for an event they have coming up. She informed the Board this is something the Fire Marshall is handling since it is in her purview. She asked if this was something they would want to come in front of them.

The Board clarified this is not something they would want to see. Member Stevens suggested the Board come up with an “All Things Beach” menu to see what they would want brought to them.

Ms. McMahon suggested they have a workshop or add this as a formal item to the next agenda.

Vice Chair Kurzman asked if Ms. McMahon could provide examples of what is provided to the City Commission regarding the beach.

Ms. McMahon will compile a list of items that go in front of the City Commission and potential workshop dates.

A brief discussion on the status of the Beach Ordinance ensued.

Attorney McConnell asked the Clerk’s Office to help with a poll for 3-4 dates before the next meeting to go over what is uncovered in Ms. McMahon's list if it is not placed as an agenda item.

b. 2/21/2024 City Commission Meeting – Added

Vice Chair Kurzman stated he wanted to add this item since he had previously mentioned at one of the hearings that he thought the Beach Stewardship Committee should provide input to the City Commission before decisions are made. He provided a handout where he highlighted every time the Beach is mentioned in the Resolution of the Sirata CUP. This is made part of the record.

Vice Chair Kurzman moved, and Member Welch seconded to have a representative from the Beach Stewardship Committee attend and make public comment at tonight’s 2/21/2024 City Commission Meeting. The motion carried 4-1, with Chair Rothenberger voting no.

The Board reviewed the listed conditions for the Sirata CUP with Attorney McConnell to identify what the Committee wanted to comment on as a whole.

Vice Chair Kurzman stated he would be in attendance and would make a public comment at tonight's City Commission meeting, which would state the Beach Stewardship Committee agrees with the conditions.

Attorney McConnell stated that Vice Chair Kurzman could not make a public comment as a Beach Stewardship representative agreeing with the conditions and then make a public comment as a resident disagreeing.

Given that no other members could be in attendance, Member Stevens suggested the Board members reach out to each of their Commissioners via email stating that the Board reviewed the conditions and agreed with them instead of making the public comment as a whole.

c. Deeds and Surveys – Added

Vice Chair Kurzman stated he added this item to revisit a project that Ms. McMahon and former City Manager Rey were working on. They had a map where they were trying to show where they were planning on having beach access points. Vice Chair Kurzman stated he also drafted a document with easements and some maps he grabbed from Google where there are differences. He is interested in seeing what the deeds say about property lines.

Vice Chair Kurzman moved to request the City Commission ask the professional and the staff to put together the surveys from Upham to the County beach where there appear to be no currently recognized beach access points and collect the deeds west of Gulf Blvd. including the exception pages and make them available to the Beach Stewardship Committee for review. The motion died for a lack of second.

Attorney McConnell stated Vice Chair Kurzman is referring to the CCNA contracts, it's a statute that local governments must abide by when soliciting certain contractors.

d. Public Comment Received – Added

Ms. Ruckdeschel discussed the public comment that was received from Mr. Malinowski before today's meeting and addressed the questions that were listed in his comment.

Ms. Ruckdeschel requested that Ms. Thomas with ORAI come back with specifics of where a future project could take place in St. Pete Beach.

6. Adjournment – Next meeting will be May 15, 2024.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:29 AM.

These minutes were approved at the May 15, 2024, Beach Stewardship Committee meeting.