

BEACH STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

June 18, 2024 - 9:00 A.M.

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

STAFF PRESENT: Ayako Ruckdeschel, Beach Manager
Jennifer McMahon, Chief Operating Officer
Andrew Dickman, City Attorney
Ginny Keeter-Bodkin, Deputy City Clerk

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

1. Presentations

a. Florida Model Sea Turtle Lighting Ordinance

Stacey Gallagher, Development and Policy Coordinator of the Sea Turtle Conservancy (STC), appeared via Zoom for her presentation, which is part of the meeting record. Joe Murphy of the National Wildlife Federation also appeared via Zoom.

Ms. Gallagher provided a history of the Conservancy, types and numbers of turtles nesting in Florida and the world, threats of light pollution to turtles, success rates where lighting has been mitigated, and examples of the preferred long wavelength light. She went on to explain the 2020 Model Lighting Ordinance (which updated the 1993 version). Ms. Gallagher explained ways in which the STC can assist the City with the changes.

A Q&A period followed. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission is a resource for a list of certified products that can be utilized to transition lighting.

Attorney Dickman mentioned the Endangered Species Act, which protects other species in addition to turtles from harassment, and the definition of the related word “take.”

2. Approval of the Agenda –

Vice Chair Kurzman asked to add a status update item regarding the status of the overall Beach Ordinance.

Vice Chair Kurzman moved, and Member Welch seconded the approval of the June 18, 2024 special meeting agenda with the change; the motion passed unanimously.

3. Audience Comments –

Resident Cindy Perry commented on the harassment of black skimmers and Treasure Island’s enforcement of no fireworks on the beach.

4. Action Items

a. Florida Model Sea Turtle Lighting Ordinance

The location of the ordinance in the City Codes was discussed.

Chief Operating Officer McMahon suggested that since the Committee is in favor of a lighting ordinance, attention today could be for directions for staff to work on Section 4 regarding enforcement and recommended penalties (amounts) to be reserved for a sea turtle fund.

Resident Leslie Price of Sunset Way gave public comment regarding lighting on the beach.

Member Stevens moved, and Vice Chair Kurzman seconded to move forward with updating the City's lighting ordinances with any and all improvements to current standards and best practices and to permit the City Attorney to draft the changes; the motion passed unanimously.

b. Shark Fishing

Ms. McMahon reported that she had reports of commercial shark fishing near the beach, causing bait to wash up on the shore. She asked for Board input on how to address.

Member Welch moved and Vice Chair Kurzman seconded to extend the meeting to 11:00 AM; the motion passed unanimously.

Member Stevens moved and Vice Chair Kurzman seconded to allow staff and the City Attorney to work on an amendment discouraging commercial fishing and activities attracting sharks to swimming areas on the beach; the motion carried unanimously.

c. Dune Preservation

Member Stevens asked for Committee input regarding the possibility of adding straightforward language to the Code of Ordinances regarding dune protection and preservation. A memo, information, and examples had been included in the meeting packet.

Attorney Dickman interjected that Land Development Code Section 25-7 states that in accordance with F.S. Ch. 161, the St. Pete Beach Comprehensive Plan and the Code, dunes along the Gulf of Mexico within the City shall be protected and enhanced. It is a general policy. Mr. Stevens suggested making the policies easier to find and more specific.

Mr. Dickman suggested that he can provide a legal analysis of what laws the City is abiding by, to include State Statutes and the Comprehensive Plan.

Resident Deborah Rothenberger of Dune Savers commented on protecting dunes and suggested the inclusion of language for the prohibition and removal of invasive plants in the beach ordinance. Chair Rothenberger thanked Dune Savers for their recent cleanup efforts.

Chair Rothenberger moved to continue the meeting to 11:10 AM; Member Stevens seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

d. Status of the Beach Ordinance (Added)

Vice Chair Kurzman suggested showing what has been deleted from the ordinance to date and adding cross referencing to any relocated sections, words or sentences. Ms. McMahon suggested instead that she and staff add the recent changes that have been made to the original PowerPoint presentation in which all changes were tracked.

5. Items for Discussion - None.

6. Adjournment – Next meeting will be August 21, 2024.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:07 AM.

These minutes were approved at the August 21, 2024, Beach Stewardship Committee meeting.