

BEACH STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE MINUTES

August 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: 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. Dune Savers at DCPOC – Nancy Stevens

Chair Rothenberger introduced Nancy Stevens of Dune Savers of St. Pete Beach and other ecological organizations. Dune Savers' volunteers work at the removal of invasive and non-invasive plants so that native plants can survive and thrive. She spoke about the locations they have worked, hours spent, and the amount of debris that has been removed. Her presentation included the identification of invasive and non-invasive species and the value that the native plants provide to the ecosystem. Her presentation is part of the meeting record. She mentioned Sea Oat Planting on August 24th at 7:30 a.m. and invited all to attend and participate.

2. Approval of the Agenda –

Vice Chair Kurzman asked to add discussion items on the process of adding agenda items, communications to beach stewards, the recent Redington Beach decision on Customary Use, and Business Tax Receipts (BTRs). Chief Operating Officer Jennifer McMahon explained that BTRs are governed by State Statute, so that did not warrant discussion.

Member Stevens moved, and Member Welch seconded the approval of the August 21, 2024 agenda with the three added discussion items; the motion passed unanimously.

3. Audience Comments –

Joe Widlanski of Sea Turtle Trackers spoke about the beach renourishment project and the resulting changes to the dunes, as well as dune, nest, and turtle habitat losses from Tropical Storm Debby.

4. Action Items

a. Approval of Meeting Minutes May 15, 2024 Regular and June 18, 2024 Special

Newly elected City Commissioner Joe Moholland was recognized as well as City Attorney Andrew Dickman's 10 years of service.

Vice Chair Kurzman moved, and Member Stevens seconded the approval of the May 15 and June 18, 2024 minutes as presented; the motion passed unanimously.

b. Election of Committee Officers 2024-25

Chair Rothenberger expressed his willingness to serve again, and Member Stevens would accept the office of Vice Chair if so moved.

Member Stevens moved and Vice Chair Kurzman seconded the appointment of Dan Rothenberger to continue as Board Chair for 2024-25; the motion carried 5-0.

Member Welch moved and Chair Rothenberger seconded the appointment of Jon Stevens as Board Vice Chair for 2024-25; the motion carried 5-0.

5. Items for Discussion

a. Beach Lighting Ordinance

Ms. McMahon and Attorney Dickman reported that this is still being worked on; they will report back at the next meeting.

b. Beach Ordinance Update

Ms. McMahon reported that the GIS Contractor has begun the process of developing a map to begin the process of creating the required Business Impact Statements for each involved party. That will then be reviewed with the City Manager and then move on to the City Commission with a target date sometime in late October. There were brief discussions on businesses that border the beach and Business Impact Statements.

c. PAG Renourishment

Ms. McMahon reported that the TS Debby did destroy some of the renourishment, which is being replaced. The County reports an estimated completion time by late October or November, as this is their project.

d. Beach Rights, Incidents, or Reports

Member Kurzman spoke about incidents wherein a hotel removed individuals from the beach for trespassing and also where chairs placed farther out from private property than they should be. Attorney Dickman summarized what he knew of the incidents, which had already been resolved, Mr. Dickman went on to summarize the Redington Beach Customary Use decision (Item 5.i.). Vice Chair Stevens requested that staff include beach trespass incidents in the quarterly report to determine how widespread that issue may or may not be and whether there is an actual problem to solve. Attorney Dickman suggested that the members each reach out to their appointing Commissioner to discuss Conditional Use prior to public discussion.

e. Beach Quarterly Report

Ms. McMahon reviewed the report that had been included in the meeting packet including warnings and citations (181 warnings and 4 citations) and the beach ambassador training that took place in June.

f. Annual Sea Oat Planting Day

This item was discussed during the presentation at the beginning of the meeting. Vice Chair Stevens added details on where the focus will be; the plant material comes from the County.

g. (Added) Process of Adding Agenda Items

Ms. McMahon and Attorney Dickman reviewed the process of staff agenda creation and member submission of items. Items for the following agenda can be requested at the end of each meeting or submitted to the Committee liaison early and succinctly to allow time for staff to consider inclusion, contact experts if necessary, and properly notice. Items may be added at the beginning of a meeting if agreed upon by the Committee as a whole. The Committee discussed and concurred to limit the number of requests for each member.

h. (Added) Communications to Beach Stewards

Member Kurzman inquired about having incidents of illegal activity on the beach reported to the Committee; the practicality of that was discussed. A quarterly summary of incidents is already included, as it was for this meeting.

i. (Added) Redington Decision on Customary Use

Attorney Dickman spoke about the Customary Use Doctrine and summarized the recent decision in a US District Court Case in Redington Beach, in which the town prevailed after several years of litigation to allow the public to use the sandy beach leeward of the highwater line for recreational purposes, as it has been customarily. He will send a copy of the decision to the members.

Ms. McMahon reviewed the items which she had noted for the next agenda: lighting audit report, beach lighting model ordinance review, Sea Turtle Trackers activity report, Public Works/Mike Clarke report on the County's beach renourishment project, beach ordinance update (Vice Chair Stevens suggested this be a standing item until completed).

6. Adjournment – Next meeting will be November 13, 2024.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:00 AM.

These minutes were approved at the November 13, 2024, Beach Stewardship Committee meeting.