

BEACH STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

October 23, 2025 - 9:00 A.M.

PRESENT: Jon Stevens, Chair
Dan Rothenberger, Member
Bill Thompson, Member
Natalie Looney, Member

ABSENT: John Kurzman, Vice Chair

STAFF PRESENT: Camden Mills, Public Services Director
Brian Peckins, Assistant Public Services Director
Ralf Brookes, City Attorney
Ginny Bodkin, Deputy City Clerk
Brandon Berry, Senior Planner

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

1. Audience Comments - No members of the public came forward.

2. Items for Discussion –

- a. Ordinance 2025-16: Amending Land Development Code Division 44 - Marine turtle protection - Discussing the proposed content of Ordinance 2025-16, the second of three proposed ordinances intended to address the City's beach regulations, pertaining generally to standards for new and replacement lighting that is visible from the beach, and associated enforcement and penalties.

Senior Planner Brandon Berry reviewed the substantive changes in the marked-up copy of the proposed ordinance, which was included in the meeting packet.

- Although not indicated in the marked-up version, Mr. Berry proposed changing the Division title of 'Wildlife Friendly Lighting' or similar, to encompass birds as well as turtles, and the Board members agreed.
- Sec. 44.1 Purpose and Intent was unchanged, but Mr. Berry suggested this could be broadened to include other wildlife and will send the state's version to the members for consideration. Chair Stevens inquired about enforceability, and Mr. Berry explained that Code Enforcement has been and will be involved throughout this process.
- Most of the definitions come directly out of the State Wildlife Ordinance. He reviewed the definitions line by line. Noted items included:
- *Construction* – deferring to the meaning in Div. 2. in the LDC.
- Staff updated *cumulatively illuminated* (from a bulb or direct source of light) to indicate that it can be seen by an observer standing anywhere on the beach, and *directly visible* means when elements or reflections of light sources can be seen by an observer standing anywhere on the beach
- *Full cutoff* is new to ordinance and recommended by the state to orient the light below 90 degrees.
- *Long wavelength* means an amber, orange, or red lamp or bulb that has a light source emitting a light wavelength of 560 nanometers or greater and is absent wavelengths below 560 nanometers.

- *Tinted glass* means any glass modified by tinting, film or other material that has inside-to-outside light transmittance value of 30 percent or less (recommended by the Sea Turtle Conservancy). Research shows that 30% or less moves the needle on false crawls.
- *Transient lighting* definition was updated.

Comments on definitions from Board: Chair Stevens inquired about solar bollard lighting placed by individuals in the dunes. The state recommends no lighting seaward of the dunes during turtle season. It was suggested to include restricting those all over the dunes seaward or not. Motorized vehicle definitions need to match across the board.

Mr. Berry resumed the section-by-section review; notable items included:

Section 44.4 – Certification of Wildlife-Friendly Coastal Lighting

Applicants for new coastal construction must submit certification that their project complies with the ordinance. This certification includes product specifications or references to FWC approved lighting (cut-off, long-wavelength, shielded, etc.). Inspections are required prior to the Certificate of Occupancy for new coastal construction or for projects using non-certified bulbs. The city's definition of "new coastal construction" differs slightly from the Florida Building Code. The proposed definition: any new building, structure, or accessory structure where new exterior or interior light sources are visible from the beach – and includes redeveloped portions of structures and newly enclosed spaces. Only the altered or new section must comply; existing non-conforming lighting remains grandfathered.

Discussion ensued on remodels, repairs, and alterations and centered on whether any replacement of a light, window, or door visible from the beach must comply with turtle-friendly standards. Options were to require compliance only for substantial improvements or new openings or make any single window or light replacement subject to compliance. The Committee leaned toward requiring each replaced fixture/window to meet new standards, not the entire building. Concerns were raised on the cost of compliant (turtle-friendly) hurricane windows, condo ownership conflicts - individual vs. association responsibility and aesthetic inconsistency, when some units comply and others don't. Consensus was to limit the scope to the specific replaced unit (window, door, or light), allow film application as an alternative to replacement glazing, and consider incentives (not mandates) for voluntary full compliance.

Existing interior lights visible from the beach remain covered under "existing lighting" provisions and if windows/doors are replaced, the new element must meet the 30% Visible Light Transmittance (VLT) standard. Existing exterior fixtures must already have complied by 2007, according to the city's prior deadline.

Section 44.6 – Standards for New Beachfront Lighting

This updates terminology referencing long-wavelength light rather than specific bulb types. It requires full cut-off fixtures and spectrometric inspection where needed and adds standards for pools, spas, and decks, specifying the use of long-wavelength, fully shielded, wildlife-friendly underwater and deck lighting. There was a suggestion to clarify whether dune crossovers includes both wood and sand.

Discussion followed on wildlife-friendly pool lighting. Underwater lights should be mounted horizontally and not visible from the beach. New pools or major remodels must comply.

Section 44.7 – Standards for Existing Beachfront Lighting

This section retains most provisions from prior code (based on the 2000 State Model Lighting Ordinance) but removes references to obsolete bulb types. Existing property owners can comply by applying tint or film or by using blinds, curtains, or moving light sources out of view.

Although there was no change to #8 in this section (Plant or improve vegetation buffers between the light source and the beach to screen light from the beach), it was requested to ensure native, dune-stabilizing plants (e.g., sea grapes, sea oats) are used. The City already prohibits Category 1 invasive species (e.g., Australian pines, Brazilian pepper).

Section 44.8 – Public Lighting (Street, Parking, and Access)

No substantive changes were made, but the proposal maintains higher shielding standards. There was a comment to ensure consistent definition of “sunrise to sunset” across all code sections.

Sec 44.9. Special events utilizing light during turtle season

This is a new section that specifies that all temporary lighting, stages, and special events during turtle nesting season must be wildlife friendly. Discussion ensued on fireworks, and the general consensus was to prohibit fireworks on the beach during turtle season.

Sec. 44.10. Construction during nesting season.

This section retains prior standards but adds explicit mention that temporary lighting used during construction must also be compliant.

Sec. 44.11 Enforcement.

Random inspections are preferred to scheduled ones (to prevent temporary compliance).

Sec. 44.12. Penalties.

Multiple violations (different light sources) may be cited individually. Transient or event-related lighting can be cited under new citation procedures. Unauthorized public light sources may be removed without notice during turtle season.

Sec. 44.13. Monitoring and reporting guidance

The committee reviewed the information to be compiled by the city or qualified wildlife protection program partner on an annual basis and submitted to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Marine Turtle Protection Program. The annual report includes violations, corrections, and nesting outcomes. The committee requested that they and the City Commission also receive the reports.

A discussion followed on who governs sea turtle protection.

- Federal: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service under the Endangered Species Act.
- State: FWC regulates lighting, nest management, and permits.
- Local: City enforces code through ordinance and permitting.

Only state-licensed permit holders may relocate nests.

Closing discussion concluded that the ordinance applies year-round, though enforcement is concentrated during turtle nesting season. The Committee was in support of requiring compliance for each new or replaced light or window, considering incentives to encourage

broader compliance, using native vegetation for buffering light, and extending report visibility to local committees. There was general satisfaction with staff preparation and ordinance clarity.

Public comment - Cindy Perry of Boca Ciega Isle Drive commented that 80% of birds migrate at night; dark windows reflect more and can increase strikes. There is a larger picture for wildlife.

Public Services Director Camden Mills provided an update that the Upham Beach renourishment is beginning and expected to last approximately four weeks. Beach access will be closed. The County provides updates on their website.

Mr. Mills reported that the staff liaison for the Committee moving forward will be Assistant Public Services Director Brian Peckins, who has been in that role for about five months and is up to date on city operations. Mr. Peckins holds a BA and MS in Civil Engineering and has extensive construction experience with the Army Corps. He is a licensed Professional Engineer and will be able to provide technical perspective. His team manages capital projects including dune walkovers, and he coordinates with the County on beach renourishment. The Committee welcomed Mr. Peckins.

6. Adjournment – Next meeting is scheduled for November 19, 2025.

There being no further business, Member Rothenberger moved, Member Thompson seconded, and the motion carried 4-0 to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 AM.

These minutes were approved at the November 19, 2025, Beach Stewardship Committee meeting.