

**MINUTES
FORT MYERS BEACH
MARINE RESOURCES TASK FORCE**

Town Hall
2525 Estero Boulevard
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931

Wednesday, October 14, 2020

I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Chair Johnson.

II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

Members present: Greg Fossum, Renee Heil, Steve Johnson, Rose Larkin, Jennifer Rusk, Mary Rose Spalletta and Sarah De Beer.

Staff: Environmental Project Manager Chadd Chustz.

Council Liaison: Bill Veach

IV. COMMITTEE CHAIR & VICE CHAIR NOMINATIONS/VOTE

MOTION: MRTF Member Spalletta nominated MRTF Member Johnson as Chair; second by MRTF Member Fossum.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Chair Johnson nominated MRTF Member Fossum as Vice Chair; second by MRTF Member Spalletta.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

V. APPROVE THE AGENDA

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved to approve the agenda; second by MRTF Member Spalletta.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 9, 2020

MOTION: MRFT Member Spalletta moved to approve the minutes; second by MRTF Member Fossum

VOTE: Motion approved unanimously.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

VIII. CURRENT ITEMS

A. Ordinance Regarding Turtle Sales

Mitch Krohn from the Tiki Hut described his efforts to educate the public regarding the turtles and distributed a paper he provided to customers. He stated the turtles were all females and approximately two inches.

Rob Howell noted that some information Mr. Krohn provided was questionable. He disputed that the turtles were only sold to locals. He stated that he sold the turtles because he liked them. He stated that turtles under four inches were prohibited for sale in the country due to salmonella. He indicated that he still found dead turtles and he asked for help contacting local, state and federal officials to enforce the federal law. Mr. Howell stated that he had alternatives and options to replace the lost income from turtle sales.

Chair Johnson felt the main issue was the fact that the turtles were being released in the wild. Discussion was held regarding who should determine which animal was or was not suitable as a pet. MRTF Member Heil brought up protecting the environment against non-native species. Chair Johnson stated that their issue was how to prevent the turtles from being released on the Island.

Manager Chustz stated that the Town would not be able to prohibit the sale of turtles. Chair Johnson suggested that Mr. Krohn mandate the sale of a container for the turtles. MRTF Member Spalletta suggested making customers watch a short video before purchasing the turtles. Chair Johnson added that he would research laws against releasing the turtles.

Mr. Krohn agreed with a free return policy if approved by the veterinarian and showing an educational video. He stated that he would abide by the law.

Chair Johnson suggested that Mr. Howell work with Mr. Krohn to produce a video. He noted that someone needed to contact the Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC) regarding enforcing the federal law preventing the sale of turtles less than four inches. MRTF Member Fossum suggested that Mr. Howell and Mr. Krohn work together and report back in a few months. Chair Johnson agreed to revisit the issue in three months. Mr. Howell felt that people would stop and think about buying a four-inch turtle compared to a two-inch turtle.

B. Fertilizer Ordinance Education

Manager Chustz distributed an informational card to provide to landscapers. Chair Johnson questioned sending letters to landscaping companies. He volunteered to compose a list of companies. MRTF Member Heil suggested that Social Media & Communications Coordinator Dexter post the information on the Town's website. Manager Chustz stated that he would invite her to speak at their next meeting.

Bill Perry suggested that permits should be required for anyone applying fertilizer. He reviewed his experience in the Town.

C. FMB Dune Management

Mr. Perry stated that he designed most of the dunes and helped to create the largest dune systems on the Island. He discussed the creation of the bird nesting program at the south end of the Island. He recommended that Keith Laakkonen be awarded the John Mulholland Stewardship Award for creating the bird nesting program. He stated that

they had to have buy-in from the property owners regarding the dunes and he offered to help. Chair Johnson discussed various management plans Manager Chustz included in their information. Discussion was held regarding involvement by property owners on the beach. Manager Chustz reiterated that property owners would not lose land. Chair Johnson discussed building dunes and regulations. Liaison Veach mentioned building up dunes before installing plants. MRTF Member Fossum commented on the costs to property owners. Liaison Veach stated that educating people on dunes and dune plants would help. Chair Johnson suggested that they study the issue and table it until the next meeting. Manager Chustz will forward applicable ordinances.

D. Exotic Vegetation Management

Manager Chustz stated that this issue was to manage exotic vegetation on the beach and was separate from dune planting. Liaison Veach noted that they would have to collaborate with property owners to remove exotic trees such as Brazilian Peppers and Australian Pines. Chair Johnson suggested looking at other municipality ordinances for guidance. Liaison Veach mentioned writing letters to owners with exotic trees on their property. Manager Chustz stated his priorities are trees in the EC, removing Australian Pines and making property owners aware of exotic trees. MRTF Member Heil's supported contacting and educating property owners. Liaison Veach reminded members that Manager Chustz was discussing properties in the EC zone. Manager Chustz stated that his priority was to address FLEPPC invasive Exotics in the EC zone Category 1. Chair Johnson suggested they take more time to research the topic.

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved to move Public Comment before E.; second by MRTF Member Fossum.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

X. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Perry stated that funnel dunes were successful. He described the Coastal Construction Line and noted they put vegetation on that line. He noted that the rules in the permit were accepted by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and if MRTF put the rules together it would be a good plan for the whole Island. Mr. Perry stated that the dunes were not the problem, but the rules were. He described the two-foot line agreement the Town made with the property owners in the north end and suggested those same rules should apply to the whole Island. He explained why he preferred funnel dunes. He indicated they needed to add sand in front of Newton Park and the Town should be involved in managing future dredging projects.

E. Times Square Foliage Recommendations

Liaison Veach noted that an arborist friend recommended live oaks or sea grapes. Manager Chustz stated that an update of the trees projects would be presented at the next Council meeting and they might want to attend or watch the meeting. MRTF Member De Beer mentioned native plants. Discussion was held concerning various trees. MRTF Member Spalletta questioned how live oaks would fare near the saltwater. Chair Johnson questioned whether the Garden Club was approached for their input. Liaison Veach replied negatively. Chair Johnson thought it would be wise to contact them and the Native Plant Society due to their expertise.

F. Good Citizen Award aka the “Murphie”

MRTF Member Rusk suggested Betty Thompson who had been picking up trash on the beach for 25 years. Chair Johnson mentioned Brad from Audubon and students from FGCU who cleared sand spurs from the south end of the Island. Liaison Veach brought up a property owner north of Newton Park who had railroad vines growing toward the beach.

MOTION: MRTF Member Fossum nominated Betty Thompson; second by MRTF Rusk

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

IX. MEMBER ITEMS AND REPORTS

Chair Johnson reported that Town Council did not prioritize their list, but Vice Mayor Hosafros stated that boat pump-outs and derelict vessels were handled by the Anchorage Advisory Committee (AAC). Council supported the remaining items on their list except for the artificial reef and the Big Carlos Pass Bridge fishing pier. Discussion was held concerning the reef.

Chair Johnson reviewed who was scheduled to write articles.

MRTF Member Fossum questioned pump-outs and derelict vessels for the entire Island. Chair Johnson recommended that they attend the upcoming AAC meeting.

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved that they appoint MRTF Member Fossum to communicate with the AAC to ensure that their work on pumping out boats and derelict vessels was representative of their views and they were willing to help with derelict vessel cleanups and anything else; second by MRTF Member Spalletta.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

MRTF Member Larkin described a rope she purchased a year ago that was made of the mini-reef system. She noted it was falling apart and she questioned whether it was the same type that Fish Tale Marine purchased. Liaison Veach suggested that she contact the manufacturer.

MRTF Member Heil questioned the dredging process. Manager Chustz indicated that the Army Corps of Engineers was in control of dredging on the Island. MRTF Member Heil questioned involvement with future events to distribute educational information to the public. Liaison Veach noted they had a banner and a tent. MRTF Member Heil reported that the Farmer’s Market supported the idea.

MRTF Member Spalletta stated that turtle lighting regulations were still in place. She noted they had 132 nests and statistics would be released soon.

Chair Johnson brought up looking into policies concerning dark skies on the Island. He noted that Lee County was replacing lights county-wide. He described the satellite view on the East Coast.

MRTF Member Rusk felt that they should address the masks discarded on the beach. She suggested that restaurants provide trash cans. She discussed public safety issues and hazardous waste. Liaison Veach stated that they could submit a letter to the editor of local newspapers.

XI. SET AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING – no change

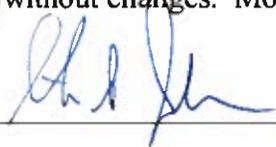
XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved to adjourn the meeting; second by MRTF Member Spalletta.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

Adopted 11-18-20 with without changes. Motion by SPALLETTA
(DATE)

Vote: _____ Signature:  _____

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