

**MINUTES
FORT MYERS BEACH
MARINE RESOURCES TASK FORCE
Town Hall
2525 Estero Boulevard
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931**

Wednesday, February 9, 2022

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 3:01 p.m. by Chair Johnson.

II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

Members present: Greg Fossum, Robert Powell, Steve Johnson, Rose Larkin, Jennifer Rusk and Mary Rose Spalletta.

Excused/Absent: Wendy DeGaetano

Staff: Environmental Services Project Manager Chadd Chustz

Council Liaison: Bill Veach

IV. APPROVE THE AGENDA

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

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

V. APPROVE PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES – January 12, 2022

MOTION: MRTF Member Spalletta moved to approve the minutes as amended; second by Chair Johnson.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT – no public comment.

VII. CURRENT ITEMS

A. FWC Presentation

FWC Southwest Region Conservation biologists Becky Schneider and Tyson Dallas followed up after the beach walk last month. Ms. Schneider utilized Power Point for her presentation. Slides included: Beach-nesting Birds of Fort Myers Beach; State Threatened Species; Seabirds-colonial and Shorebirds- solitary; Where and When do They Nest; Open Sandy Beach; Recipe for Conservation Success; Vegetation Management; Temporary Refuge; Temporary Refuge-Productivity; Temporary Refuge-Vegetation; Fort Myers Beach Code of

Ordinances; Black Skimmers-Chick Mortality; Vegetation Management Goals and Questions.

Ms. Schneider discussed vegetation in the temporary refuge. Discussion was held regarding creating another site at Bowditch Point and creeping vegetation. Mr. Dallas noted that there were more people on Bowditch than at the temporary refuge. MRTF Member Howell commented that Snowy Plovers nested at Bowditch last year. Mr. Dallas responded that they nested there two years ago. He commented on the negative decline of the Least Terns. Ms. Schneider discussed vegetation management at Big Carlos. She stated that they were not allowed to use vinegar or salt as an herbicide due to state and federal regulations and toxicity to animals. She described research results on a synthetic herbicide called Imazapyr with extremely low toxicity. The chemical could be applied before the birds arrive and it will not wash out of the soil. The property owners stated that they would not participate in the temporary refuge posting for the birds if the vegetation in the posting area was not managed to their standard. Ms. Schneider noted that if they forgo management throughout the nesting season like they did last year, they were out. She was not aware of any mitigation efforts. Project Manager Chustz will check with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Ms. Schneider stated that the upcoming Beach Nesting Bird Guidelines will affect the community. She noted they needed qualified bird monitors and details were on the website. She described the duties of bird monitors.

Liaison Veach read a description of Imazapyr on the web and was concerned about the residual nature of controlling aquatic weed species. Ms. Schneider replied that they would apply the herbicide to the soil.

B. MRTF Budget

Chair Johnson stated they had \$10,000.00 in the budget. MRTF Member Rusk discussed creating a new pamphlet to distribute at the pop-up events and MRTF Member Howell mentioned items available at Manatee Park and noted he would check prices. Liaison Veach indicated he was still working on a national park-style brochure. MRTF Member Rusk described information from the Sea Turtle Conservancy and noted it contained fun facts about different species. She indicated that seashell and bird guides were popular. MRTF Member Howell volunteered to create a draft brochure and MRTF Member Rusk provided ideas for content. MRTF Member Rusk thanked MRTF Member Howell for his offer and suggested that they contact a graphic designer since they had a budget. MRTF Member Howell will forward the flyer he created for Pink Shell to Project Manager Chustz.

MRTF Member Larkin suggested that they make a donation to Sanibel for providing booklets for their pop-up events. Liaison Veach discussed applying for grants. MRTF Member Fossum brought up using digital material and using recyclable paper for printing. MRTF Member Howell brought up using QR codes. Liaison Veach suggested concentrating the budget on a graphic designer for the brochure.

MRTF Member Rusk described the pop-up at Newton Park and stated it was the busiest event they ever had. She questioned whether they had money in the budget for a field trip to Pinellas County regarding MRTF's pop-up events. Project Manager Chustz suggested offering turtle-safe flashlights to people on the beach.

MRTF Member Rusk discussed using the town tent and asking the town to set it up for the pop-ups. Liaison Veach noted that she would not need a tent in Times Square when the stage was completed, and they might be able to do something at Newton Park.

MRTF Member Fossum brought up printing more reusable bags. Liaison Veach noted they needed

to allocate money for vegetation replacement. Chair Johnson estimated \$3,000.00 for pamphlets, \$5,000.00 for reusable bags and \$2,000.00 for the pop-ups.

C. Dark Skies

MRTF Member Spalletta reported that she contacted several entities over the country. She read the most valuable response from Big Park, Arizona. She noted it would be a long-term commitment if they decided to move forward. She stated that she was still communicating with all her contacts, and they offered to provide answers to specific questions. All of the responders stated the program was wonderful and easy, but they were already halfway there when they applied. Chair Johnson reviewed the completed applications and noted they had to show broad community support and the lighting ordinance had to be in place. He described a long list of support letters from many different entities. Chair Johnson did not think they had community support. He added that approved permits for enforcement were required to be included with the application. He did not submit the initial application because it would take three years from the date of submittal, and he questioned support from the town. He did not think it was impossible, but they were not ready to submit anything right now. MRTF Member Spalletta agreed. MRTF Member Fossum brought up sending a survey to homeowners. Liaison Veach suggested submitting letters to editors to generate interest.

MRTF Member Rusk questioned whether the Town Manager could direct staff to start enforcing the lighting ordinance. Liaison Veach discussed enforcement costs. He questioned whether MRTF wanted to recommend that Town Council start enforcing the biggest violators of light trespass. MRTF Member Rusk agreed. Project Manager Chustz discussed light meters, photometric studies, and the lighting ordinance.

Chair Johnson noted that the lighting consultant would present their plan at Town Council's Management and Planning Meeting on Thursday.

MOTION: MRTF Member Fossum moved to recommend that Town Council should adhere to the lighting ordinance as written and set an example to follow the letter of the law; second by MRTF Member Howell.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

D. MRTF Meeting Schedule

Project Manager Chustz questioned whether members were available for morning meetings. He will check to see whether the space was available to start meetings at 2:00 p.m.

E. Shrimp Fest

MRTF Member Rusk confirmed their space was paid for. She created a sign-up sheet for members. MRTF Member Howell described what needed to be done to make his boat ready for the parade. Discussion was held regarding finding a trailer to use. Chair Johnson suggested that if they could not find a trailer by February 23, they would work on plan B.

F. Exotic Vegetation

MRTF Member Larkin noted that 761 properties were identified with invasive plants,

not 161. She reviewed the steering document and indicated that some information was added to the Town's website, and she hoped to add a link to the identified properties. She suggested they direct people to Sanibel's Natural Resources site rather than include the information on the Town's website. MRTF Member Larkin described her activities and questioned the status of the Vegetation Management Plan. Liaison Veach replied that Council was discussing the plan. Discussion was held regarding how to notify property owners. Liaison Veach mentioned checking with the Town Attorney.

G. Manatee Conservation

MRTF Member Howell reported that he reached out to several biologists regarding a propeller guard mandate. He started a petition in December and received 22,532 signatures so far supporting a mandate. He described a GPS mandate to keep boats in the channels. He discussed the high deaths of manatees this year and described how propeller guards helped. Enforcement issues were discussed. Liaison Veach discussed a GPS mapping program to keep boaters out of seagrass beds. MRTF Member Rusk suggested distributing educational materials to boat rental companies.

H. Good Citizen Award, aka the "Murphie"

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved to award the Wyndham maintenance technician; second by MRTF Member Spalletta.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

VIII. MEMBERS' ITEMS AND REPORTS

MRTF Member Larkin thanked Ms. Schneider for her assistance with her article. She stated the monofilament recyclable containers were not put back on the pier.

MRTF Member Rusk noted she was the new Osprey monitor and encouraged members to contact her with issues or questions. She was scheduled to speak on March 8 at the San Carlos Bay Sail and Power Squadron meeting.

Chair Johnson recognized Publix for adding amber lights on their property. He brought up their motion for a name change in his report to Town Council. Liaison Veach stated that Council needed a resolution to change the name. He mentioned renaming MRTF The Marine and Uplands Resources Task Force. MRTF Members did not agree.

MRTF Member Spalletta stated that dogs were running on the beach off leashes and chasing the birds. No items from other members.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT – no public comment.

X. SET AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING

Remove Manatee Conservation.

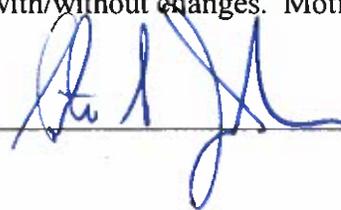
XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: MRTF Member Spalletta moved to adjourn; second by MRTF Member Howell.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

Adopted 3/9/2022 with/without changes. Motion by Mary Rose Spalletta
(DATE)

Vote: 4-0 Signature: 

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