

MINUTES
FORT MYERS BEACH
MARINE & ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES TASK FORCE
DiamondHead Resort, 1400 Estero Blvd.
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931
Wednesday, April 12, 2023

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chair Johnson.

II. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call

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

Excused: Wendy DeGaetano and Robert Howell.

Staff: Environmental Services Project Manager Chadd Chustz

Council Liaison: Bill Veach

IV. Approve The Agenda

MOTION: MERTF Member Spalletta moved to add Reorganization and Staff Update; second by MERTF Member Fossum.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

V. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes – August 10, 2022

MOTION: MERTF Member Fossum moved to table until the next meeting; second by MERTF Member Spalletta.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

VI. Public Comment – no public comment.

VII. Reorganization

MOTION: MERTF Member Fossum nominated Steve Johnson as chair; second by MERTF Member Larkin.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: MERTF Member Spalletta nominated Greg Fossum as vice chair; second by MERTF Member Rusk.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Current Items

A. Staff Report

1. **Emergency Berm Project**
Project Manager Chustz reported that he had been meeting weekly with the contractors and other entities. He commented that details concerning the berm were located on the town's website. He noted that the scours on the beach would be filled with sand and the berm project should be complete in July.
2. **Shorebird Nesting**
Project Manager Chustz noted that there were breaks in the berm due to shorebird nesting (Snowy Plovers and Killdeers) in and around the Critical Wildlife Area (CWA). MERTF Member Spalletta stated that people were removing signs that marked the nesting area in front of the Wyndham.
3. **Sea Turtle Nesting**
Project Manager Chustz said he would conduct nighttime inspections to address the lighting issues. He confirmed that any source of light that could be seen from the beach was prohibited. Discussion was held regarding sending lighting advisories since property owners may now have prohibited lights due to the destruction from Ian. Liaison Veach reviewed the street light situation with Florida Power and Light (FP&L).
4. **Staff Update**
Chair Johnson noted that the tree and vegetation ordinance was waiting for language and was not voted on before Ian.

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved to update the Town Council regarding the three remedial projects (tree and vegetation ordinance and adoption of the South Florida Water Management District model ordinance) that were ongoing before the disaster and asked whether they were priorities. Motion withdrawn.

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved that MERTF advises Council that they need direction regarding the tree ordinance, vegetation ordinance and the South Florida Water Management District model ordinance; second by MERTF Member Spalletta.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

B. Building Back Better

1. **Beach Accesses**
The berm will be in front of accesses and the sand should help buffer the area from storms. MERTF Member Fossum questioned installing bridges over the accesses that washed away and project Manager Chustz replied that bridges were being discussed. MERTF Member Spalletta observed a correlation between scours and seawalls. MERTF Member Rusk noted that her street donated \$5,000.00 to The Town to replace the vegetation and signs for their beach access on Miramar. Project Manager Chustz will contact Public Works regarding the access.
2. **Vegetation/Trees**
MERTF Member Rusk brought up holding a fundraiser to raise money to replace trees lost by Ian. MERTF Member Fossum questioned how much rain they needed

to wash away the salt before replanting. MERTF Member Larkin responded that adding compost to the soil was all that the native plants required. Chair Johnson noted that five large live oaks were removed from a property and questioned whether The Town was monitoring landscape issues. Project Manager Chustz suggested complaints be sent to code enforcement. He noted that the people who removed a bunch of mangroves were appearing in front of the Special Magistrate later this month.

MERTF Member Larkin shared a brochure from the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Group that identified plants that survived Ian. She will request that the information be added to the town's website.

MERTF Member Fossum stated that MERTF could educate, observe and report but could not enforce the rules. He added that they needed to educate the contractors and excavators to stop clear-cutting.

MERTF Member Fossum noted that some sewer pipes were damaged from Ian and sewage was getting into the waterways. He recommended requiring cameras to inspect the lines.

MOTION: MERTF Member Fossum moved that MERTF investigate the magnitude of the problem of home sewer leaks contributing to pollution in the bay waters; second by MERTF Member Rusk.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

IX. Members' Items and Reports

Chair Johnson reported that the Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Sea Turtle Symposium presented research on the sea turtle glass light transmission and found that less than 30% was the correct number and The Town's current ordinance was 45%. Enforcement challenges were discussed.

MERTF Member Rusk stated that the last pop-up event was very successful. She received consensus to hold events at Moss Marine on April 29, 2023, during the 5k race on May 13, 2023, and on Earth Day. Chair Johnson recognized Beach Talk Radio for their fundraising efforts.

MERTF Member Spalletta noted choosing the correct poison for rats to prevent killing other wildlife was important. She shared an educational handout listing poisons to avoid and will give it to Communications Coordinator Jennifer Dexter to post on the website. MERTF Member Rusk noted that bats were inhabiting structures and she questioned whether the properties were inspected before being demolished. Project Manager Chustz replied that he did not see people going into homes that needed demolishing and felt the bats would probably leave as soon as the heavy equipment started taking the structure down. MERTF Member Rusk suggested that the public be reminded not to feed the wildlife and mentioned adding clips for the garbage can lids to a future agenda.

MERTF Member Larkin attended the Burrowing Owl Festival, picked up an earth-friendly building brochure and distributed stickers for windows to prevent birds from flying into them.

X. Public Comment

Bob Weis, real estate developer, suggested that Public Works get involved regarding the pollutants in the water.

Good Citizen Award, aka the "Murphie"

MERTF Member Larkin nominated Kim and Ed Ryan from Beach Talk Radio for their outstanding support of environmental issues on the beach and for providing information after the hurricane.

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved to nominate Kim and Ed Ryan from Beach Talk Radio.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

XI. Set Agenda for Next Meeting

Add Shoreline Spotlight article, Council Report Update, Dark Skies, and MERTF Award to the current agenda.

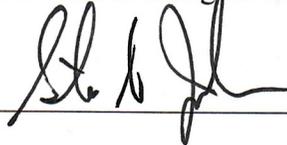
XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: MERTF Member Fossum moved to adjourn; second by MERTF Member Spalletta.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:42 a.m.

Adopted May 10, 2023 with/without changes. Motion by Mary Rose Spalletta
(DATE)

Vote: 6-0 Signature: 

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