

**MINUTES**  
**FORT MYERS BEACH**  
**MARINE & ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES TASK FORCE**  
DiamondHead Resort, 00 Estero Blvd.  
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931  
**Wednesday, May 10, 2023**

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 10:38 a.m. by Chair Johnson.

**II. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance**

**III. Roll Call**

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

Excused: Robert Howell

Absent: Environmental Services Project Manager Chadd Chustz

Council Liaison: Bill Veach (left early)

**IV. Approve The Agenda**

Add Shoreline Spotlight article.

**MOTION:** MERTF Member Spalletta moved to approve the amended agenda; second by Chair Johnson.

**VOTE:** Motion passed unanimously.

**V. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes** <sup>April 12, 2023</sup> ~~August 10, 2022~~, and September 14, 2022

**MOTION:** MERTF Member Spalletta moved to approve the minutes; second by MERTF Member Fossum.

**VOTE:** Motion passed unanimously.

**VI. Public Comment**

Cathy Turner from the Estero Island Garden Club said they would like to partner with The Town. She noted that members cleaned up the memorial garden by Bay Oaks and they will return after the rainy season. She praised Director Hauge for his assistance. She added that the Garden Club was interested in an advisory partnership concerning what would be worthwhile in order to revitalize gardens. Ms. Turner felt that getting information out to the community to help with landscape planting was essential. Chair Johnson thanked her for her offer.

**VII. Current Items**

A. Staff Report – no report.

1. Emergency Berm Project – no report.
2. Shorebird Nesting – no report.
3. Sea Turtle Nesting

MERTF Member Spalletta reported that the first nest with 110 eggs was discovered today, but it had to be moved because it was too close to the emergency berm. She added that there were seven false crawls that she was aware of.

**B. MERTF – Scope of Rebuild Focus – Planning**

1. Bayside Park

More information is needed before recommendations can be made.

2. Beach Accesses

MERTF Member Rusk stated that they needed to fill in the scours as soon as possible because the holes were dangerous. She questioned whether they had to wait until the beach renourishment was complete next year. Signage and vegetation also needed to be replaced. MERTF Member Spalletta added that the sea turtle nest was next to a scour before it was moved. MERTF Member Fossum remarked that they needed more information regarding the accesses. Safety, garbage and pet waste were high-priority items.

**MOTION:** MERTF Member Fossum moved to recommend that staff provide information regarding a timeline for the repair of beach accesses; second by MERTF Member Spalletta.

**VOTE:** Motion passed unanimously.

3. Town Vegetation

MERTF Member Larkin described information on the website for residents and business owners to identify invasive plants. She noted that the MERTF Member Rusk provided information at the pop-up events and Ms. Turner offered her assistance. Master gardeners from Sanibel were planning to hold presentations in the fall. Chair Johnson discussed areas in town where MERTF could make landscape recommendations. MERTF Member Larkin stated that the Lee County Extension Service tested soil and soil samples could be sent to the University of Florida Extension Service for a fee. She will make sure the information is added to the website.

MERTF Member Spalletta brought up having a gathering for the community regarding the best steps to replant their property. MERTF Member Rusk suggested that they partner with the Garden Club. Discussion was held regarding the quality of the sand and water.

4. Others – Complete List and Priorities

Codify official ordinances, boat pump outs, community groups and volunteers, create a list of what to plant and mangrove protection. Discussion was held regarding destroyed mangroves at the Beach Theater. Chair Johnson added beach obstruction compliance, beach raking, EC zone and intensity and density. MERTF Member Rusk suggested having a joint meeting with the LPA and Chair Johnson will contact Chair Cereceda. Discussion was held regarding the ordinances. Chair Johnson added the topic to his list to present to Town Council.

C. Dark Skies

Chair Johnson reported on the FP&L presentation and Town Council decided to install the amber lights on Estero Blvd. as a temporary measure by June 1, 2023. The Town requested \$10 million from the state to fund the lighting, including the side streets. The final decision was all-amber lighting and Lee County was responsible for the crosswalks. Chair Johnson noted that a dark sky ordinance existed in their code. MERTF Member Rusk revealed that the Post Office installed bright white LED lights that faced the beach and a worker told her they did not need a permit because they were a federal entity. He said that the lights would not be turned on for a month. MERTF Member Rusk reported them to The Town, but she did not know the result.

Chair Johnson reviewed the steps to achieve a dark skies certification. MERTF Member Fossum suggested that MERTF stay vigilant.

D. Good Citizen Award, aka the "Murphie"

Chair Johnson explained why last month's Murphie and article were not submitted. MERTF Member Rusk described why she nominated Keep Lee County Beautiful.

**MOTION:** Chair Johnson moved to award the Murphie to Keep Lee County Beautiful; second by MERTF Member Fossum.

**VOTE:** Motion passed unanimously.

E. Shoreline Spotlight

Chair Johnson suggested setting a new article schedule starting in June. MERTF Member Larkin will do June, MERTF Member DeGaetano will do July, MERTF Member Spalletta will do August, Chair Johnson will do September, MERTF Member Fossum will do October, MERTF Member Howell will do November and MERTF Member Rusk will do December.

### VIII. Members' Items and Reports

Chair Johnson reported that The Town was pursuing waste pipe damage. He described Art Hushen and the National Institute of Crime Prevention. He stated that Mr. Hushen offered to present to the Public Safety Committee (PSC), but they have yet to resume meeting. He received consensus from MERTF members concerning a joint meeting or co-hosting a discussion on the subject. MERTF Member Rusk received a donation of \$5,000.00 from the Community Foundation. She proposed that MERTF allocate all or some of the funds to print the artwork from the beach kids

for an activity book. She commented that an illustrator offered to do the illustrations for free. MERTF Member Fossum suggested depositing the check until they received more information regarding the cost of printing. Chair Johnson stated that they should not count on having a budget this year because of Ian. MERTF Member Rusk reported that The Town received \$50,000.00 to refurbish the ball fields at Bay Oaks. She commented that the MERTF brochure was on hold for now.

MERTF Member Larkin noted that two master gardeners from Sanibel were looking at putting together landscape programs for business owners and residents in Sanibel. She will propose they schedule a meeting on Fort Myers Beach regarding appropriate landscape and related topics.

MERTF Member Spalletta noted that people were letting their dogs off leash and bothering the nesting shore birds. She also noticed there was a lot of dangerous debris being washed up every day. She encouraged people to wear shoes on the beach and to be aware of semi-submerged debris.

#### IX. Public Comment

Ms. Turner suggested providing education to the staff concerning landscape. She stated that Waterside did hydroseed planting and they were guaranteed not to need water while the seeds were establishing. She added that they had native seeds available.

Virgil agreed with how MERTF was moving forward with projects.

#### X. Set Agenda for Next Meeting

Add staff report and build back right, lighting compliance, water ordinance, density and intensity and raking. The rest of the agenda remains the same.

#### XI. ADJOURNMENT

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

**VOTE:** Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:33 p.m.

Adopted June 14, 2023 (DATE)  with  without changes. Motion by Greg Fossum  
Vote: 7-0 Signature: [Signature]

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