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

The Mound House – 451 Connecticut St.
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931
Wednesday, August 9, 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: Wendy DeGaetano, Greg Fossum, Steve Johnson, Jennifer Rusk and Mary Rose Spalletta.

Excused: Robert Howell and Rose Larkin.

Council Liaison: Bill Veach

Staff: Harbormaster Austin Gilchrist

IV. Approve The Agenda

MOTION: MERTF Member DeGaetano moved to approve the agenda; second by MERTF Member Fossum.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

V. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes – June 14 and July 12, 2023

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved to approve June 14, 2023, and July 12, 2023, minutes at the September meeting; second by MERTF Member Spalletta.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

VI. Public Comment

Becky Weber, resident, indicated that the beach theater was requesting five boat slips and London Bay was considering bringing a shuttle in for Charlie's. She stated they were quiet communities with small canals and residents did not want to deal with commercial boats in and out of the canals near Curlew. She suggested that people be shuttled to and from public marinas. Nadine DeGenova, resident, thanked MERTF members for all they do. She stated she retired here for the wildlife and tranquility and enjoyed watching the birds. She encouraged MERTF to remember that the community made the beach what it was. She did not want to see shuttles on the canals.

Jim Dunlap, resident, lived two doors away from the beach theater and was involved with the mangrove situation. He explained that since the owners removed the mangroves without a permit, it goes back to the town for mitigation. He noted it was an issue for the neighbors and encouraged MERTF to get involved.

John McLean, resident, agreed with all comments. He stated that the canals were not easily maneuverable and did not think it was appropriate that residential communities be subjected to commercial traffic.

VII. Current Items Staff Report

Harbormaster Gilchrist reported several disorientations due to direct and exterior light sources visible from the beach and sky glow. Staff requested that all properties off and on the beach be evaluated. Some rental houses on the beach did not have curtains. It was a record year for shorebird nesting and the beachfront project will resume in September after the shorebirds fledge. Staff will issue an invitation to bid to make beach accesses more accessible by changing the slopes. Staff was seeking direction from Town Council regarding the tree and vegetation ordinance.

A. FWC Presentation – Becky Schneider, Regional Biologist for FWC Southwest Division, Alexis Cardis, Regional Shorebird Biologist and Adam Brown, Public Information Officer. Ms. Schneider utilized PowerPoint for her presentation on Shorebird Conservation. Slides included: Background, Species Conservation Measures and Permitting Guidelines, Four State Threatened Shorebirds & Seabirds, Beach Nesting Birds – Nesting, Number of Birds, Species and Location, Populations in Decline, What is “take,” What does it mean to harm?, What does it mean to harass?, Brief History of the IBNB GLs, Anticipated Users Include Those Conducting..., Beach Cleaning, FWC Permitting, ShoreMapper, Permitting Approach, Examples of Minimization Options, Examples of Mitigation Options, Financial Contribution: Harassment, Harassment – Construction, Financial Contribution: Significant Habitat Modification, Significant Habitat Modification and Next Steps for Implementation.

Ms. Schneider noted that a lot of information and resources were on their website. She stated that FWC worked closely with the DEP (Department of Environmental Protection).

B. Vegetation Ordinance – to be presented at the Town Council Management & Planning Session on Thursday. Chair Johnson reviewed the green sheets and attachments for discussion at the meeting.

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved to inform the Environmental Project Manager that there was an addition to the recommendations to include a minimum of 75% native and 25% Florida-friendly vegetation; second by MERTF Member Rusk.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

C. Shoreline Spotlight Article – Chair Johnson reviewed the lineup.

D. Council Report Update

Chair Johnson reported that he showed the Lee County recognition award to the Council and corrected the record.

VIII. Members' Items and Reports

MERTF Member Spalletta described the turtle disorientations and noted that, due to Ian, this year was the worst in 35 years.

MERTF Member Rusk received an envelope of drawings from the kid's camp.

MERTF Member DeGaetano was excited about the Estero Island Garden Club's plans to replant beach accesses.

Chair Johnson noted that the Perseid Meteor shower was on August 12-13, 2023. He suggested discussing the residential uses of canals and mangroves per public comments.

IX. Public Comment – no public comment.

X. MERTF Award

MERTF Member Spalletta described a teenager who helped her save disoriented turtles, but she had to obtain permission from the parents before going public.

Chair Johnson nominated Rick Warren for helping to save a disoriented turtle. Another candidate is Lisa DePalma, a CROW volunteer, for helping a sick bird. He reviewed two others in the bank.

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved not to choose a candidate this month because two have yet to be published; second by MERTF Member DeGaetano.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

XI. Set Agenda for Next Meeting

Add residential canal and dark skies/lighting.

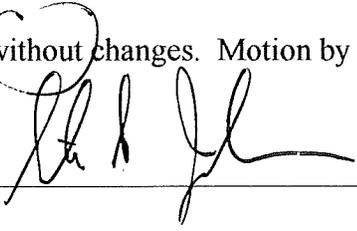
XII. ADJOURNMENT

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

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:34 p.m.

Adopted 9/13/2023 with without changes. Motion by Mary Rose Spalletta
(DATE)

Vote: 6-0 Signature: 

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