

MINUTES
FORT MYERS BEACH
MARINE & ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES TASK FORCE
Town Hall Council Chambers
2731 Oak Street
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931
Wednesday, March 13, 2024

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: Bill Althoff, Robert Howell, Steve Johnson, Rose Larkin, David Nusbaum, Jennifer Rusk and Mary Rose Spalletta.

Staff: Environmental Projects Manager Chadd Chustz

Council Liaison: John King

IV. Approve The Agenda

MOTION: MERTF Member Spalletta moved to shift E. above C.; seconded by MERTF Member Nusbaum.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

V. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes – February 14, 2024

MERTF Member Althoff ~~lived~~ owns property on the beach and supported additional sand no matter where it came from.

(The recording skipped and resumed with Mr. Perry talking about not raking the beach since Ian. He will start raking again when the FWC gives him the green light.) MERTF Member Larkin stated that Mr. Perry reviewed the historical background of the movement of sand from Lover's Key to Fort Myers Beach.

MOTION: Chair Johnson moved to approve the minutes; seconded by MERTF Member Howell.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

VI. Public Comment

Cindy Johnson, resident, discussed a light pollution seminar held in November and listed the attendees. She discussed the dark sky ordinance and noted education was important because people did not understand or abide by it. The focus was to reduce light pollution.

VII. Current Items

A. Sea Turtle Conservation

Projects Manager Chustz commented that he was given discretion in reviewing lighting plans to allow for non-long wavelength lights if they could show they were not producing light cumulatively visible from the beach. He added that there was a condition on all permits that applicants comply with the sea turtle conservation and lighting standards codes. Projects Manager Chustz educated those whose property did not comply with dark sky lighting. A discussion was held regarding educating code enforcement to educate violators who were out of compliance with lighting. MERTF Member Spalletta stated they had to address lighting violations before sea turtle season. MERTF Member Nusbaum suggested that the town include lighting information on the website. MERTF Member Rusk questioned whether the town could offer light bulbs again this year. Projects Manager Chustz replied that MERTF could advise the council and MERTF Member Rusk did. Since the hurricane, the town has not offered bulbs.

Projects Manager Chustz stated that he was being proactive with lighting, that the annual notice would be sent out, and that the website would be updated regarding compliance with the code.

MERTF Member Spalletta volunteered to sell bulbs and Projects Manager Chustz replied that it would be a good project for a 501(c)3 organization. MERTF Member Nusbaum noted that it was not hard to purchase the correct bulbs. MERTF Member Larkin suggested that the hardware store promote the proper bulbs and that Beach Talk Radio pass along the information.

Chair Johnson pointed out that cumulative light sources needed to be shielded to prevent sky glow. Discussion was held concerning adding educational videos on the town's website.

MOTION: MERTF Member Nusbaum moved to advise that the PIO identify and illustrate the lighting ordinances for sea turtle nesting and that timeliness is critical to getting the information to the citizens; seconded by MERTF Member Spalletta.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

B. Resiliency Panel Event

The event was taking place on Thursday, March 21, 2024 from 9:00-11:00 a.m. at Town Hall. He listed the experts attending and reviewed their areas of expertise. He indicated it was a MERTF-sponsored workshop and it was a question-and-answer forum rather than a lecture.

C. Activity Book

MERTF Member Rusk distributed five pages for review. Corrections and comments were submitted.

D. Adopt a Right of Way

Chair Johnson noted the right of way was the space between the sidewalk and the street on Estero Blvd. MERTF Member Nusbaum questioned whether property owners could do whatever they wanted in the space or whether there were limits. Liaison King was

unaware of limits but was sure there were some. Discussion was held regarding the framework of the program and surveying property owners regarding their level of interest. MERTF Member Rusk preferred a uniform look on Estero Blvd. and MERTF Member Nusbaum preferred individuality to make the space interesting. MERTF Member Althoff did not think MERTF should be involved and the Garden Group would be more suited for the project. MERTF Members agreed and discussed promoting native plants. A consensus was reached to table the discussion.

E. Sewer Lines

MERTF Member Nusbaum suggested that they recommend that the town strongly encourage property owners to have their lines scoped and realigned or repaired. Chair Johnson indicated that grants may be available to property owners. MERTF Member Spalletta felt it should be mandatory at some point. MERTF Member Nusbaum suggested that new development be required to scope the pipes before construction. MERTF Member Althoff commented that the requirement might already be a part of the occupancy permit.

MOTION: MERTF Member Nusbaum moved to recommend that the town ask residents to inspect their laterals for breaks; seconded by MERTF Member Spalletta.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

VIII. Members' Items

MERTF Member Spalletta stated that dogs were still an issue on the beach. She noted that spraying water while demolishing buildings made a big difference in reducing air pollution. She described a climate summit conference she recently attended in Punta Gorda.

MERTF Member Larkin noted that World Water Day was next Friday. She commented that she had an article published in the Observer that stated the pop-up booth would be in Times Square on March 15, but she noted the pop-up was canceled.

Chair Johnson reminded members about the panel forum on March 21, 2024. He will share feedback on the raking paper at the next meeting. He asked MERTF Member Nusbaum to share the information regarding the panel forum meeting with condominiums and he agreed.

MERTF Member Rusk was concerned about the drains not working correctly and encouraged residents to call the town if the drains backed up. Pop-up dates: March 29, April 12, April 26, May 10 and May 24, 2024.

MERTF Member Nusbaum requested to participate via ZOOM for the May meeting. Consensus was reached to allow it and Liaison King stated they had to vote during the meeting.

IX. Staff Update

Projects Manager Chustz commented that the sand beach project continued and scours were being filled in. Bird monitors were surveying daily before construction, the renourishment bid was going out soon and a solution for installing a berm on the north end was being investigated. He noted that water in Lake Okeechobee was released from March 4-10, 2024.

X. Public Comment

Cindy Johnson continued describing the light pollution workshop. The lighting industry was aware that light pollution affected wildlife and humans. By 2025, the design light consortium hoped to write over 600 white papers with recommendations for the light industry on 600 different species. She described why the window tint industry attended and the FWC (Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission) would perform another window tint experiment this summer with green turtle hatchlings.

XI. MERTF Award

The Dixie Fish House was nominated as the recipient.

XII. Set Agenda for Next Meeting

Remove sea turtle conservation and sewer lines and add a resiliency panel debrief to the remaining items. Add a presentation by a gentleman who manufactures solar amber lights.

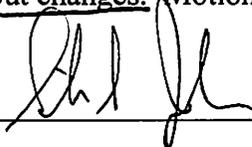
XIII. Adjournment

MOTION: MERTF Member Nusbaum moved to adjourn; seconded by MERTF Member Althoff.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:11 p.m.

Adopted 4/10/2024 ~~with~~ without changes. Motion by Nusbaum, 2nd by Althoff
(DATE)

Vote: 7-0 Signature: 

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