

City of Treasure Island Beach Stewardship Committee

May 12, 2010

1:30 PM

Committee Present: Dennis Velasco, Don Nolan, Ruth Philipon, and Mary Daughtry, Commissioner, Carol Coward, and Mayor, Robert Minning.

Chairman, Dennis Velasco called the Beach Stewardship Committee meeting to order at 1:30 PM in the City Hall Auditorium, 108th Ave., Treasure Island, Florida.

A draft of the minutes of the March 10, 2010 meeting had been previously distributed and reviewed by all committee members. Upon appropriate motion, the draft was approved as submitted.

Changes to the Agenda – Dennis introduced Heather Hammers from the Pinellas County Extension which is part of a University of Florida branch program that will be beneficial to all the beach communities.

Heather explained to the Committee that she works with the Florida Sea Grant which is a collaboration of academia from the University of Florida as well as partnership formed with NOAA, Fish and Wildlife Services, as well as many other federal agencies. The Extension job is to disseminate information that comes out of research areas whether state or federal and gather that information to convey to the “lay” audience. She further explained the role of the Extension is to service a gateway between the huge wall of information and be able to convey it to the “lay” audience so it is understandable and also applicable to the different communities. She indicated this position has never been created before, and feels this is an important tool for the beach communities. She will be going out to the communities and listening to what they have available and what they feel needs to be addressed. She feels the barrier islands, in particular, need attention especially at the present time with the oil spill but also the climate variability and other hazards like storm events which pose a big risk for these type of communities. She will be submitting a list of programs and subjects that may be pertinent and return for future meetings to do presentations. Heather gave examples of the different presentations she has recently presented. These presentations are aimed at improvement and education to the communities including the hazards that coastal communities face, and advise of some of the program areas, strategies and tools to address these areas.

The program presently is to work on dealing with the oil spill and communicating at a level where everyone will benefit plus getting that information out to the communities. This information will include a fact sheet with important phone numbers, emails, and what is entailed as a volunteer. She indicated the need to stress that oil is a hazardous material and that only veterinarians and emergency response teams who have taken, by law, the Hazmat training to handle wildlife. She noted there

are many areas for volunteers such as beach cleanup prior to the oil making land fall. She is presently preparing a list for organization of all the needs and information.

Commissioner Coward asked if she will be giving her presentation to any group or only government. Heather stated she would speak with community groups as well as government officials and tailor the presentation for the “lay” audiences who may not necessary understand the hazards and risks

Heather noted that the Florida Sea Grant is an ongoing grant which is part of the NOAA sponsors. She indicated it is a large grant which spans across the Gulf of Mexico and is also referred to the Gulf of Mexico Alliance. Sea Grant agents are also in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama.

Heather will email the Committee the various subjects and programs, and will attend another meeting in the future.

Dennis advised the Committee that they are meeting with Phil Graham to rework the mid-beach trail; and hopefully in the next meeting or two, there will be more specific information for the Committee to consider, and then move on to the Commission for their consideration.

Dennis stated that Rick Raus, who was unable to attend, emailed him to notify the Committee that the City has begun removing sand from the sand wall from the part of the beach which was formally a no rake area.

Andy Squires, from the County, sent an email to all the communities regarding the annual planting of sea oats, and the Committee has to determine where the new vegetation should be planted. Dennis will speak with Rick, on his return, as to the other areas the Committee is considering for planting. Andy Squires requested, however, that due to the upcoming renourishment, not to plan any plantings on Sunshine, Sunset, and Upham Beach. He stated that depending on funds, another sea oat order may be placed for these areas after the renourishment has been completed. Mayor Minning suggested planting at the new park due to the fire in the sea oats, and this will be an area for planting.

Remarks by Members – Commissioner Coward stated she was happy to hear about the ongoing meetings with Phil Graham regarding the mid-beach trail. She stated that residents and tourists are also happy with the improvements.

Ruth Philipon stated that friends read in the newspaper about supplies needed for the event the oil spill come ashore of boxes of t-shirts and supplies, however, when they took them to the Suncoast Bird Sanctuary, they were turned away stating they were not needed. Heather recommended the City begin creating their own inventory of supplies.

Dennis indicated he got an email forwarded by Commissioner Bildz from a resident stating that the main beach area is void of any trees or vegetation. It is his opinion that palm trees make it more of a beach environment. Dennis felt that in

planning the new beach trail consideration should be made to palm trees and vegetation in the middle beach area where the beach is wider. Mary Daughtry felt that more native plants be used, not just sea oats. Don Nolan reminded the Committee regarding the contention of the hotel/motel with vegetation obstructing their view. Dennis felt their contention was primarily regarding the dunes.

Don Nolan discussed the oil spill and the re-nourishment project and its effect on the project. Mayor Minning felt that the renourishment should not be impacted at all. He indicated the renourishment was postponed to late July, early August but is still on "the books" and fully funded. The reason for the postponement is the footprint which they originally anticipated filling is now much larger, therefore, they had to go back, redesign the template and determine how much more sand will be required.

Don Nolan reminded the Committee that the Household Electronics and Chemical Collection will be held on Saturday, May 15, 2010 at the Community Center.

Mayor Minning gave an update regarding the sand sharing. He indicated that request for bids have been published and bids are due on June 11. These bids are for a dredging contractor to move sand from mid-island to Sunset or Sunshine Beach. In the event of an emergency, the Emergency Management Plan has a "trigger" that if it is determined the beach is in danger of being washed away, it will be presented to the Commission to authorize the expenditure. At that point, a survey crew will come out to determine the extent of the area that will need the fill, and the sand sharing plan will then begin.

The Mayor stated he went to Elnor Island to look at all the work which had been done a couple summers ago, and it looked great. He noted he walked around the island and noted 10 blue heron nests where there had only been 3 pre-cleanup. He stated the Audobon Society was pleased that there were other birds there that had not been there prior to the clean up. Tampa Bay Watch initiated the oyster bed enhancement program, however, the Mayor spoke with Peter Clark, and he indicated it will not be happening until the summer of 2011. He also noted that he does not think the salt marsh grass will be done until the oyster beds are more established. Dennis asked regarding the rodent control and the status of that project. The Mayor stated that Lynn Rosetti has put in calls to Fish and Wildlife regarding the application for rodent control from the US Dept of Agriculture, however, she has not heard anything as of yet. Mary inquired the status of the rodent problem, and Mayor Minning indicated there is still evidence of rats in the form of nests, however, he didn't see any physical evidence. Dennis asked for an update on the exotic plant removal. The Mayor stated that this is a 4 year project, 1 year to kill the exotic plants and 3 years to monitor, and he believes this project is in its third year. He noted that if you look at the island from John's Pass Bridge, you will see a lot of the dead vegetation which they wanted to leave in place to deteriorate naturally.

Mayor Minning informed the Committee that the marina at City Hall is a green marina. Heather indicated they will have another one in September and encourage people with a clean marina to take information back to their staff to not only acknowledge them but also to spread the word.

The Mayor stated the NOAA project is going well, and the signage has been completed. The final specifications on the documents will be completed and submitted to NOAA for final approval. These plans will also incorporate 4 new crosswalks. The matching signs for Sunset Beach will have the same design except smaller and still require approval by the Commission. The bicycle racks along with receptacles will be made of stainless steel to avoid rusting. There will be 30 educational signs, which was encouraged by NOAA, and the lighting will be solar. He informed the Committee that it is hopeful this project will be completed by mid-December.

Chairman Velasco thanked everyone for their input; and since there were no further comments, the meeting was adjourned. The Committee was advised that the next Beach Stewardship Committee Meeting will be on June 9, 2010 here at the City Hall Auditorium.