

BEACH & SHORE PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Indian River County (IRC) Beach and Shore Preservation Advisory Committee (BSPAC) met at 3:00 PM on **Monday, March 15, 2021**, in Building B, Conference Room B1-501, 1800 27th St, Vero Beach, FL. You may hear meeting audio and review the agenda and minutes on the IRC website: www.ircgov.com/Boards/BSPC/2021.

Members present

David Barney, Chairman, BCC Appointee
William “Tuck” Ferrell, Vice Chairman, BCC Appointee
Robbie Brackett, City of Vero Beach Appointee (*late arrival*)
David Cox, BCC Appointee
Christian Hendricks, Town of Indian River Shores Appointee
Inocensia Hernandez, City of Fellsmere Appointee (*via Zoom; not counted for quorum*)
Fred Jones, City of Sebastian Appointee
Paul Knapp, Town of Orchid Appointee
Francisco San Miguel, BCC Appointee
Commissioner Joe Earman, BCC Representative (non-voting member)

Members absent

David Morgan, BCC Appointee
Mark Tripson, BCC Appointee

IRC staff present

Kylie Ariotti, Beach Program Specialist
Quintin Bergman, Environmental Specialist
Eric Charest, Natural Resources Manager
Kevin Kirwin, Director, Parks & Recreation
Molly Klinepeter, Lagoon Plan Environmental Specialist
Rich Szpyrka, Director of Public Works
Ed Offutt, Commissioner Assistant, Recording Secretary

Others present

Bob Auwaerter, Indian River Shores Resident
James Gray, Executive Director, Sebastian Inlet District (*via Zoom*)
Paul Hart, General Manager, Disney's Vero Beach Resort (*via Zoom*)

Call to Order

(3:00 PM) Chairman Barney called the meeting to order and noted that a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes from February 22, 2021

(3:00 PM) **ON MOTION BY Mr. Ferrell, SECONDED BY Dr. Cox, the members voted unanimously (8-0) to approve the minutes of February 22, 2021, as presented.** (*Mr. Brackett arrived late to the meeting.*)

Coastal Division Updates

A. Round Island Beach Access Project – Mr. Charest

(3:00 PM) Mr. Charest revealed that the Round Island project bids were under review prior to a

recommendation being made to the BCC. (See Attachment 1 for a summary of Mr. Charest's report.)

B. Derelict Vessel Removal – Mr. Charest

(3:01 PM) Mr. Charest specified that the staff was still awaiting letters from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) to establish derelict vessel removal release authorities within the Indian River Lagoon. (See Attachment 1 for a summary of Mr. Charest's report.) He noted that funding is again available for this purpose, and the staff is ready to ask for grants as soon as the boats are released.

C. Local Gov't Funding Requests (LGFR) Grant Application – Mr. Charest

(3:02 PM) Mr. Charest announced that the County's Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) LGFR application looked "promising" at this time. (See Attachment 1 for a summary of Mr. Charest's report.) He noted that money generated from "doc stamps" had not seen significant reductions during the COVID pandemic, thus preserving a \$50M fund for beach rebuilding efforts.

D. Sector 4 Critically Eroded Area – Mr. Charest

(3:03 PM) Mr. Charest stated that County-provided data had not convinced the state to designate Sector 4 as a critically eroded area. (See Attachment 1 for a summary of Mr. Charest's report.) He specifically mentioned that "SBEACH" modeling software had determined only one structure in Sector 4 would be vulnerable to erosion from a "25-year storm event."

(3:04 PM) Mr. Brackett arrived at the meeting.

(3:05 PM) Mr. Auwaerter asserted that Sector 4 beaches look no different than Sectors 3 and 5, both of which are designated as critically-eroded; he reported that, during strong storms, the water reaches right to the base of the dune structure, and inquired as to whether an appeal of the state's decision was possible. Mr. Charest replied that no grounds for appeal were offered and that he didn't know what FDEP might regard as "more significant" erosion; he announced that the County would continue its annual surveys, collect further data, and keep watch. Mr. Hendricks remarked that he was disappointed and believed the staff's argument was a "home run," while Dr. Cox agreed and couldn't fathom what other data might be needed. Mr. Charest reaffirmed that the County's submission had broached all four of the state's specified criteria, and advised Chairman Barney that he would ask for clarification on what else the County might have provided. Chairman Barney further questioned whether the County's beach renourishment efforts had been fully assimilated by the SBEACH model in establishing erosion rates, and opined that multiple structures were either threatened or nearly threatened in the modelling efforts. Mr. Auwaerter also felt that turtle habitats were in danger of disappearing, and contributed that John's Island had spent \$1M on new sand placement three years ago and that all of this sand was now washed away. Commissioner Earman proposed that a letter from the BCC to the state might convey the County's disappointment, but Mr. Szyrka asked for more time (until at least April 6th) to research the state's position, better understand the criteria the County's package was measured against, and assess the appeals process, as it exists. Chairman Barney closed the discussion by again emphasizing how pleased he was with the staff's effort and how surprised he was by the outcome.

E. Beach Preservation Plan (BPP) – Mr. Charest

(3:19 PM) Mr. Charest disclosed that the final version of the BPP, with all suggestions for improvements adjudicated, was complete and ready for endorsement by the BSPAC. (See Attachment 1 for a summary of Mr. Charest's report.)

(3:19 PM) ON MOTION BY Mr. Hendricks, SECONDED BY Mr. Ferrell, the members voted unanimously (9-0) to accept Stantec’s revised BPP and recommend it to the BCC for approval.

F. IRC Beach Restoration Project Updates – Mr. Charest/Ms. Ariotti

(3:20 PM) Mr. Charest reviewed the progress on easement approvals, stating that 100% approvals remained the goal in all beach sectors but specifying that some properties were still at risk of being skipped in the current Sector 3 Phase 1 project. (See Attachment 1 for a summary of Mr. Charest’s report.) He then reviewed the Sector 7 easement status, noting one signed easement and one declination since last month’s report to the committee. Mr. Charest added that the density and size of plants on the Sector 3 dunes had been increased. Mr. Ferrell recounted the problems presented by ever-increasing exposure of “hard bottom,” detailing that twenty years ago the beach profile “went out further” from the current shoreline, and voicing that restoring the beach to this earlier profile would cost less money in the long run, protect turtle habitats, and counter “FDEP over-regulation.”

(3:24 PM) Ms. Ariotti discussed the progress in Sector 3 Phase 1, mentioning that 34% of the project was complete and Treasure Shores Park reopened, although she acknowledged that some people were still dissatisfied with the closure of Golden Sands Park and attempted to gain access. (See Attachment 1 for a full summary of Ms. Ariotti’s report.) Chairman Barney asked how last week’s winds had impacted the effort, and Ms. Ariotti declared that escarpments had developed and some construction time was lost, specifically noting that Monday, March 9th was a “weather day” for the contractor. Mr. Hendricks inquired as to how many beachfront properties had been skipped thus far due to declined easements, and Ms. Ariotti replied that only one had been bypassed thus far. Mr. Ferrell offered positive feedback on the reconstructed dunes, mentioning that they were “good for people and good for turtles.” Chairman Barney asked for clarification about how much time remained in the construction season, and Mr. Charest explained that the end of April would be a “hard-stop” date, with daily monitoring for non-interference with new sea turtle nests until that date. Dr. Cox declared that at high tide in the Summerplace community, the water laps at the seawalls and no beach is visible.

G. Sea Turtle Updates – Mr. Bergman

(3:33 PM) Mr. Bergman detailed that no sea turtle nests had appeared on IRC beaches so far this season. He then commented on an increase in turtle strandings along the Atlantic coast, particularly juvenile green turtles and sub-adult loggerheads; he mentioned the possibility of high winds being a contributing factor to the strandings. (See Attachment 1 for a summary of Mr. Bergman’s report.)

Update from the Sebastian Inlet District (SID) – Mr. Gray

(3:35 PM) Mr. Gray reported that recent storms had degraded the northern Sector 2 beach repairs completed in February, resulting in erosion, ten-foot escarpments, and an overall lowering of the beach profile by two-to-three feet. South Sector 2 saw lesser damage, with no escarpments formed.

Status of County Beach Parks – Mr. Kirwin

(3:36 PM) Mr. Kirwin announced that Wabasso Beach was currently closed for Disney’s dune restoration project, and revealed that Seagrape Trail would be closed until Friday, March 19th, for another private dune repair project. Mr. Barney asked whether workers could still park at Wabasso Beach, and Mr. Kirwin commented that the County was allowing beach contractors and other workers from nearby establishments to leave their vehicles inside the park, thereby opening as many spaces as possible for visitors.

Commissioner's Matters – Commissioner Earman

(3:38 PM) Commissioner Earman asked how the County's beaches had weathered the high winds of the past ten days. Mr. Charest replied that some significant escarpments had formed due to the harsh storms. Chairman Barney wondered whether the FWC would ask the County to "knock down" the escarpments to improve turtle nesting grounds, and Mr. Charest remarked that an open line of communication existed between FWC and the County staff, and that sometimes such requests are made. Commissioner Earman then disclosed that he would make a trip to Tallahassee on March 16th to meet with County-retained lobbyists and state representatives to advocate for continued beach renourishment funding and wise beach-related legislation.

Committee Members Matters

(3:42 PM) There were none.

Chairman's Matters

(3:42 PM) There were none.

Public Discussion Items

(3:42 PM) There were none.

Adjournment

(3:42 PM) With no further business, Chairman Barney adjourned the meeting.

The next meeting of the BSPAC is scheduled for **April 19, 2021, at 3:00 PM**, in Building B, Conference Room B1-501, at 1800 27th Street, Vero Beach, FL.

Attachments

Attachment 1 -- Beach and Shore Advisory Committee Updates from the Coastal Engineering Division, March 15, 2021 (E. Charest)