

Captiva Community Panel
MINUTES
Jan. 10. 2023

Attending: David Mintz, Tony Lapi, Margarethe Thye-Miville, Ann Brady, John Jensen, Sandy Stilwell Youngquist, Jay Brown, Bruce McDonald, Linda Laird, Bob Walter

Audience: 32

Meeting convened at 9 a.m. After introductions and a reminder that public comments could be submitted via the Q&A option, the Dec. 13, 2022, minutes were approved unanimously (Mintz/Jensen).

Solid Waste: *Amanda Condomina and Doug Whitehead, Lee County Solid Waste:* Update on debris removal on Captiva. Two to three double barrel collection vehicles per day, have collected 157,000 cubic yards of debris as of yesterday, estimate we still have 160,000 CY to go. We'll keep collecting until it's done, encouraging people to keep pushing debris out to the right-of-way but not where it impedes the roadway. Encouraging people with debris on private property to contact the state to assist in removal if necessary. Crowder Gulf can collect mixed piles, but requires them to separate debris in appropriate groups for disposal, slows down the process. Have to be careful with landscapers and vegetation debris, since land clearing is not eligible for FEMA reimbursement. Mintz: Expect an increasing amount of vegetation debris in the next few weeks as people and landscapers get into the second phase of cleaning up properties.

FDOT: *Katie Sherrard, Florida DOT:* Presentation on rebuilding plans for Sanibel Causeway. Lots of questions on repairs, showed extent of damage to causeway island from Ian. Concerns about access to islands and making the causeway overall more resilient. Very fluid situation, coordinating with communities, Lee County and permitting agencies. But have a relatively clear direction on path we're headed. Want to make causeway more resilient, not just put back what was there before; some new laws and funding partnerships to help us do added resiliency measures. Surge from Ian was approximately 12 feet at tollbooth, with wave action on top of that of about 8 feet... so Ian did exceed the storm event design for the causeway. That's informing some of the resiliency designs we're considering, such as adding sheet pile walls along the roadway as well as protecting the sides of the roadway with mattresses (buried baskets filled with rocks). Looking at potentially protecting the Gulf side with additional riprap, and raising the roadway on the islands about two feet. All this is part of the evaluation and discussion with communities and permitting agencies to make a final determination. The data we collected from Ian establishes a new baseline or minimum criteria for us... but we cannot build a causeway roadway to withstand a storm surge of 12 feet without building a bridge (which we'll discuss in a minute). Also taking into account projected sea level rise, that's the two feet increase in the roadway. Trying to develop a design so that, in the event of a surge that high, the integrity of the causeway would not be breached. Explained what sheet pile walls are, steel sheets that can be from 30 to 60 feet long that are vibrated into the ground alongside the roadway. We'll be doing that along the roadway approaching the bridge that washed out as well. The three bridges held up very well, we did multiple inspections – aerial, visual and underwater – to check on the integrity of the structures. Where we had problems was on the approaches to the bridges. Once the integrity of the protections for the roadways started to fail, it was a domino effect that led to the washouts. So we'll be installing the sheet pile walls, backfilling and compacting to ensure there are no voids and the roadway is stable. The sheetpile walls will maintain the integrity of the roadway in any future overwash condition, making it a more resilient structure. Ian was somewhere between a once-in-100-years storm event and once-in-250-years storm, so we are designing to accommodate that kind of impact and surge. We're also looking to add green infrastructure where feasible, mangrove plantings and the like, both to protect the islands and help shield the structural

improvements we have planned. We're working with the permitting agencies on a final design to look at various alternatives... especially since a "no build" option was not feasible. We looked at putting back what was there before vs. designing for the new 100-year-storm criteria. We also looked at building bridges over the remains of the vulnerable causeways sections, which did not work with the timeframe we were given to complete work by the end of 2023 and would be what was deemed an excessive design. Much of the work we're doing now should fit within whatever final design is agreed upon by the communities and permitting agencies, so it will not be wasted. We are looking at wrapping up our Alternatives Analysis within the first quarter of 2023, currently we're working on our 30% plans, essentially concept plans. Then we'll meet with the local agencies and permitting agencies, to finalize our design and apply for permits by the end of the first quarter of this year. On a typical project, it usually takes about a year to get permits to begin construction, so we are on a very expedited schedule. Our goal is to begin the permanent repairs within six months, so summer 2023, which would cut the permit timeline in half. Our goal for completion of the permanent repairs is late 2023. *Comments:* Including before-and-after images in what you're planning to give people a better perspective. Is beach parking along the causeway going to be reinstated? *Sherrard:* We are working on the alternatives, including costs and pros and cons of each design option. These will be presented to Lee County, which has jurisdiction over the roadway. Once we know what resiliency measures they would like to move forward with, we can complete our 30% plans and put together visual graphics for the public – where we can include before-and-after images. As for parking, we have been coordinating with county Parks & Rec on improvements they had planned for those areas prior to the hurricane. Funding can be an issue, since some improvements may not qualify for Federal Highway Administration funding but might be reimbursed by FEMA. So we're looking at what might be done and how it might be funded... that's why it's a very fluid situation. *Question:* Is this work now being done considered temporary? *Sherrard:* Yes, but we're ensuring that any work done now will be adequate for whatever final design is approved. We received an emergency permit to repair the roadway to enable the causeway to reopen, and another temporary permit from the Corps of Engineers to install the sheetpile walls. That will carry us through to the point when plans are finalized and we can submit to the agencies for the permanent permit. *Question:* Do you have estimates of costs to rebuild this bridge with the resilience improvements you described, as well as the cost of building a bridge across the entire expanse? *Sherrard:* We're not there yet. Once we have all the options laid out, we can calculate the various costs and have a better idea of the total cost of repairs. Our initial estimate was somewhere around \$100 million. *Question:* Do you expect any shutdowns of the causeway during this period? *Sherrard:* We will not restrict access to the islands, but we may have times where we will need to slow or move traffic to accommodate work being done. Hopefully we'll have more complete plans to discuss by early March.

LCSO: *Lt. Mike Sawicki:* With the causeway open, it's bringing a fair amount of traffic to the island. There are few businesses open, but not many, and not a lot of parking available, so we're seeing people driving out to check out the island then turning around and leaving. Not an increase in crime, just more traffic to manage. Have been surprised at the number of people who don't know they can't go to the beach, despite all the media coverage, notices on websites, etc. Remember to check your security systems and properties, many of them are more exposed than we're used to.

CFD: No one available to comment. Chief Pawul noted prior to the meeting that property tax receipts are coming in slower than usual. Observation that tax deadlines were extended due to the storm, which would impact speed of payment.

South Seas: *Bob Walter:* Not much new, still in restoration and debris cleanup. Trying to put everything back together. *Question:* Is anyone renting properties? *Walter:* We're not offering anything, perhaps people are doing it on their own. Not much is open right now. Most of the HOAs are saying June 1 to get units back, and it will be later in 2023 before we start renting units. *Question:* Where is all the debris from employee housing going? *Walter:* It's gone, no longer on the island.

CEPD: Administrator Daniel Munt: Linda Laird has been reappointed as a commissioner at yesterday's meeting. Aptim made its preliminary presentation of the vulnerability analysis, it's been loaded to our website. Finally, on the beach assessments the deadline to pay those in full has past and the tax collector is processing any refunds necessary for owners who paid both assessments. Anything received by the CEPD after the cutoff date was returned to the owner. *Question:* Where do we stand on replacing the sand lost in Ian? *Munt:* We have applications to both FEMA and the Corps to see who will fund what, and we anticipate another renourishment project in close to a year. We lost about 500,000 cubic yards, which is less than we placed on the beach during the last project. Discussion of losses and getting a presentation on that at a future meeting. *Munt:* The county is concerned about replenishing sand and its impact on Blind Pass, so we will work to develop plans that will keep everyone happy.

Additional updates: *Mintz:* The governor signed three pieces of hurricane relief legislation... disaster recovery, insurance and toll relief. The deadline for property taxes being due has been extended along with the phased discounts. Property tax refunds... if your house was uninhabitable for at least 30 days, you can get a refund for 2022 taxes on both homestead and non-homestead properties. It's based on the portion of the year the structure was not habitable (number of days divided by 365), and applies only to the taxable value of the structure, not the land. It must have been uninhabitable for at least 30 days, and to get a refund you have to pay your full property taxes first. Information and forms on at the Lee County Property Appraiser's website. The maximum number of days is 95 and, for Captiva residents, there's less here than meets the eye because it applies only to the structure value. The bill also allocated funds for the Florida Housing Finance Corporation to assist in the repair or replacement of housing, re-entry and insurance deductibles. There was also \$250 million in funds to DEP to assist with beach erosion and water infrastructure. The insurance legislation reduces the time for insurers to pay or deny a claim, used to be 90 days and now is 60 days. Reduces the time to review and acknowledge a claim from 14 to 7 days. Reduces the time to conduct a physical inspection from 45 days to 30 days, and reduces the requirement to pay undisputed amounts of benefits from 90 to 60 days. It reduces the time for policyholders to report a claim from two years to one, and from three years to 18 months for a supplemental claim. It also makes it harder to qualify for Citizens Insurance, which is the insurer of last resort for property insurance. If you are now covered by Citizens, you'll need to get flood insurance coverage as well by 2027. The final bill was toll relief, for anyone using a SunPass that records 35 or more transactions per month will be eligible for an account credit equal to 50% of the amount paid for those transactions. Discussion. Tax refund applications must be filed by April.

Commissioner Ruane update: After Ian, we're removing debris that historically has not been our responsibility... even with FEMA reimbursement, the county is responsible for 25% of the cost. During the special session, legislators approved a measure making the state responsible for that 25% share. They also passed property tax refunds based on loss of use due to storm damage and toll relief based on usage. I've just left the governor's press conference on proposed clean-water initiatives because I had to drive to another meeting. I've also been working on the county's Long-Term Recovery Task Force, and will be testifying to both House and Senate committees in the next few weeks. We've been working to reopen the islands and island businesses when they're ready, letting everyone recover at their own speed. *Question:* How can Captiva have input into the task force? We have a number of projects that we'd like to pursue to help recovery, so maybe in the future we can discuss how to work with the task force going forward. *Ruane:* We've been talking to legislators about funding that would support some of those efforts, such as beach restoration. If there are people who want to serve in the various branches of the task force, contact my office to get involved. We expect about 10 branches with 10 people on each committee, plus subcommittees; we envision this as a long-term project but expect the committees may meet on a weekly basis. Discussion of how he sees the task force organizing itself. *Question:* Is there anything the county or the governor can do to lift the curfew on Sanibel or make it more reasonable? *Ruane:* We're working to balance the need for reopening to what the city and the citizens are able to handle.

Election of 2023 officers: *Mintz:* Because we have a good relationship between the current officers and the county and Sanibel, which is vital to our recovery, I propose that for continuity the existing officers should be renewed for 2023 (Jensen/Laird), unanimous approval. To replace Michael Lanigan as secretary, McDonald was nominated for the office (Mintz/Laird), unanimous approval.

Ian beach update: *Nicole Sharp:* Went through a presentation on how Ian impacted the beaches. Discussion of volume lost and how various segments of the island were impacted, how they are moving forward seeking funding options for renourishment via FEMA and the Corps, as well as the potential for state funding from the special session legislation. FEMA will replace what's lost, while the Corps and the state are more likely to fund restoring the constriction template volume which is a higher number. So you have two branches of funding: Federal, which is either FEMA or the Corps, and state. The state has been more proactive in asking communities what they need in terms of funding. *Question:* Will you be looking at piggybacking on nearby projects to reduce the cost of mobilization? *Sharp:* Yes, we coordinate with the dredgers when projects are out for bid. *Question:* Since this could take a year to accomplish, is there any remedial action we should be doing in terms of building up the dunes to prevent some catastrophic event from occurring before we can renourish? *Sharp:* We are looking at options with the CEPD that the commissioners and the community might find acceptable. Trucking in sand is expensive, but do-able. Putting in riprap is considered a permanent structure and would require more extensive permitting. Discussion of options.

Pawul fund-raising: *Brown:* Background on the kinds of costs Chief Pawul is facing to restore is home destroyed by Ian, something like \$200,000 after insurance. He was there for the island after the storm, so we need to be there for him now. Have developed a plan to send out a fund-raising letter signed by a group of island sponsors and supporters to solicit donations on his behalf. Not a panel project, but panel will handle logistics. Have reached out to fire commissioners to ensure this is legal, they passed a resolution in December and provided us with the form any donor will need to sign showing there was no quid pro quo for any donation. *Question:* Have any other Captiva first responders been similarly affected? *Brown:* No. *Question:* Will 100% of the donations go to Pawul? *Brown:* Yes, complete pass-through. Discussion: Need to clarify 501c3 OK to do this, look at other suggestions made during the discussion, how checks will be made out and delivered, no credit cards to be accepted. Motion to support this effort (McDonald/Mintz), unanimous approval. Donation by date certain. 60 days after letter released. Unanimous.

Captiva Drive revegetation: *Jensen:* How to keep vegetation away from the shoulder once things start growing back in. Committee met. Spoke with landscapers on trimming and City of Sanibel on how it keeps vegetation in check. What are our options: Dirt, shell, asphalt, gravel, grass? Talk to the county on their preferences are what they are willing to do. Discussion. Need to remind property owners that new rules require vegetation be kept at least two feet horizontally and eight feet vertically away from shoulder/edge of pavement. Distinction between considering a new bike path vs. preserving the shoulder space that already exists. Discussion.

Ordinances: *Mintz:* Received proposed text changes from county staff for the pending four ordinances, did not have the opportunity to thoroughly review them but will have that for the next meeting. We can discuss proposal, vote on whether to accept or modify them, and work to get this approved by the county commission before this season ends.

Wastewater: *Brown:* Status is Sanibel has to complete two projects – how to handle the increased effluent from Captiva, and an economic analysis on the impact to their finances and how to set an appropriate rate structure for the new customers. The county has already agreed to fund both projects by allocating funds to the panel to pay to the city. Also need a final determination whether South Seas will be

part of any wastewater project. Adamant they can stick with FGUA plant. But need a final determination. Then we need a good idea of public support for the proposed project, including possible public financing, cost to property owners, etc.

Stormwater: *Laird:* Update on revising the management plan proposal, pursuing funding from the Deepwater Horizon recovery funding. Waiting on an updated proposal from Kimley-Horn, figuring out how we coordinate with the wastewater project and the Village sidewalk effort.

Budget: *Gooderham:* Revised budget presented in December with input from that meeting, revised how to show county funds that are essentially a pass-through so as not to include them in general revenue. Still projecting a deficit for next year, but we have healthy reserves and have already seen a number of generous donations. Discussion on coordinating resend of donations letter with sending out Pawul fund-raising letter. Motion to approve as presented (Jensen/Lapi), unanimous approval.

Iguanas: *Jensen:* Alfredo back on island, coming out every week. Working on hotspots for iguanas, but covering entire island. Will work with him to develop a plan for next panel meeting?

Comments: *McDonald:* Been trying to replace recycling bin, county contact info not working and Waste Management office is closed.

Meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.

-- *Ken Gooderham*

Meeting video online on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/A58oQYkMY4E>