

Captiva Community Panel
MINUTES
Feb. 14, 2023

Attending: David Mintz, Jay Brown, Ann Brady, John Jensen, Ken Gill, Tony Lapi, Bob Walter, Sandy Stilwell Youngquist, Linda Laird, Margarethe Thy-Miville

Audience: 18

The meeting convened at 9 am. Following introductions and roll call, the Feb. 14 minutes were unanimously approved (??/??).

Lee County Commissioner Kevin Ruane: Discussed Florida DOT presentation to BoCC on Sanibel Causeway repairs. He has been spending time in Tallahassee meeting with legislators in advance of the upcoming session, to ensure recover funding is included. Special session appropriations were significant, helping with storm recovery (including revenue replacement) and beach restoration. Local entities can now apply for funding to replace revenue lost during the storm and its aftermath. . Also planning a federal lobbying trip in March. Debris cutoff date for Captiva was Feb. 13, but working with property owners to continue to remove storm debris (vegetation and construction) as necessary – but working to keep it out of the right-of-way so restoration crews can complete their work. Chairing Long-Term Recovery Task Force, which will begin its work in earnest shortly. Will be looking at entire range of issues, especially infrastructure. Storm showed we need to get more resilient on a variety of fronts. Mintz followed up with some of the Captiva-specific requests he’s been working on with Commissioner Ruane, including stormwater management, the Village sidewalk and Captiva Drive shoulders.

LCSO: Lt. Mike Sawicki provided an update about parking issues the deputies have been seeing as more traffic returns to the island. Contact us if anyone is trespassing on your property, whether you see them in person or via a security camera (and make sure your system is operational). A brief discussion about debris removal followed.

CFD: Chief Jeff Pawul reminded everyone that we’re in the dry season and, especially with the storm vegetation debris, you need to be watchful for potential fires. Fire district is looking at revenue replacement options as tax revenues are only at 65% of our normal collections for this time of year. Also discussed FEMA loan options, which have to be repaid within five years. Still working on FEMA reimbursements. Probably looking at a roof replacement for the station due to storm damage. Finally, crews will be cleaning and repainting fire hydrants to prevent further rust and damage from storm inundation. Discussion of CFD’s effort at reopening roadways after storm, was that part of your duties or just the right thing to do? Pawul said the duty is to reopen roads at least so emergency vehicles have access to conduct search and rescue, but they were able to do more because they had access to some heavy equipment they typically can’t access in that situation. Pawul also expressed his appreciation for the fund-raising effort being undertaken on his behalf.

South Seas: Bob Walter was asked about FHUA’s plans to harden the wastewater treatment plant, as well as the status of long-term development plans for the property. He said FGUA is seeking funding, and that permitting delays have slowed some of the demolition and repair efforts.

CEPD: Daniel Munt noted the district submitted appropriation requests for dune walkovers and a new beach vehicle, \$400,000 for a Phase 2 vulnerability assessment study and just over \$6.8 million for a restoration project to repair storm damages to the beach (which is about half of the anticipated project cost). Other funding for the restoration could come from FEMA or the Corps of Engineers. Munt noted

some additional efforts, including defining the authority to undertake some of the sea level rise projects we anticipate, preparing the Hagerup lot for reopening, and aerating the beach prior to turtle nesting season. Lapi noted Sanibel was planning to place sand in front of the power pole on SanCap Road to better protect it, and that the Blind Pass dredging project was still on schedule.

SCCF: Matt DePaolis provided an update on water quality, noting that red tide blooms were seen offshore with limited fish kills. Nutrient levels were rising in the estuary, as has been the case since the storm. Also seeing impacts from increased salinity of freshwater ponds from the storm inundation. Keeping an eye on the height of Lake Okeechobee and the increased releases to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries. Talking to the district board to get the levels safely down before rainy season to avoid massive discharges. Some Everglades funding to improve water quality and fund water releases and reservoirs on the docket for the upcoming Legislature we're watching as well. Concerned about some efforts to reduce permitting and redefine sprawl that could be detrimental. Discussion of the new Lake O release protocol, which is not in effect yet but will kick in over the summer.

County updates: Mintz directed people looking for pre-storm aeriels to the Lee County Property Appraiser's website (leepa.org). Also can find process for requesting property tax relief at that site as well.

Pawul fund-raising: Brown provided an update on the status of donations, which will continue until March 31.

Captiva drive shoulders: Jensen provided an update on discussions with Lee DOT on vegetation along the roadways, noting the Land Development Code requires it be kept two feet horizontally and 8 feet vertically away from the roadway. Will be meeting with county staff to review options.

Captiva ordinances: Mintz reviewed the status of four ordinances specific to Captiva covering parking, noise, golf carts and fertilizer. He reviewed the proposed changes to the original language offered by county staff, explaining why and what impact he saw those alterations having. A motion to accept the proposed changes was unanimously approved (Gill/Jensen).

Wastewater: Brown provided an update on the ongoing Sanibel studies and possible next steps. Potential funding options were briefly discussed.

Stormwater: Laird updated the status of potential funding sources for the stormwater management study. She has been talking to people about conditions post Ian to help incorporate those impacts in future planning. The need for a hurricane debriefing was discussed, coordinated with the panel and CEPD in hopes of drafting a final document on impacts and lessons. Laird is also working on a synthesis of the three vulnerability assessments into one document.

Iguanas: Jensen provided an update that trapping continues and payments to the trapper have begun.

Administrator salary survey: Brady presented her findings on nonprofit salary comparisons, which showed that the increased compensation approved by the panel was in line with what other nonprofits were paying given the differences in time and responsibilities. Laird suggested a one-time bonus be considered solely for the post-Ian efforts to inform and update the community. A motion to approve a one-time \$5,000 bonus was unanimously approved (Mintz/Laird).

Verizon: Brown noted that Verizon had said the small cell towers were in permitting with approvals hopefully by May.

Financials: No questions.

Public comment: None offered.

The meeting adjourned at 11:55 am. A video of the meeting is posted online at <https://youtu.be/XdKkcDiXE9g>

-- *Ken Gooderham*

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