

Captiva Community Panel
MINUTES
May 9, 2023

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

Audience: 13

Meeting convened at 9 a.m. After introductions and a roll call, the April 11, 2023, meeting minutes were unanimously approved (Jensen/Laird).

Lee County Commissioner Kevin Ruane: Legislative session wrapped up, budget is on the governor's desk. We had what looks to be a good session based on funding, but more important is we've been asked to submit a five-year capital improvement plan and budget – what we need to happen in the next five years, what things can happen in each year and when funds will be needed. County is holding 16 town hall meetings to get an indication of what the community potentially requires. For the grant we received from the Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, the agency determined our unmet need was \$1.1 billion. We're working on an action plan to demonstrate we have an unmet need much larger than that, more like \$10 billion. Described HUD funding timetable of verbal notification, written notification and developing an action plan. We have gotten verbal notification, but not written. During the 120-days after we receive the letter, we will work the communities to develop and submit our action plan. I believe our action plan will be so comprehensive it will require billion and billions of dollars to meet our needs. One of our plans would be to connect Captiva to Sanibel's sewer system, and I've been working with Mayor Richard Johnson about what the city is missing, what transmission lines were impacted by the storm. Discussion of state budget process and when funds might be available. We've had meetings with Timbers Resorts and they're 100% committed to the Sanibel process, they're feeling a lot of disconnect with FGUA. It's an opportunity, we'll look at what a buyout might look like. And of course we're looking at what's needed to restore the beaches as part of this. But first we have to get the budget signed by the governor... we've worked with his staff to make sure he understands we need every dime that's been allocated to us. *Question:* The \$30 million mentioned for transmission lines were for those damaged by the hurricane? Once those are repaired, then we can look at the cost of expanding the collection system to Captiva as part of the five-year CIP? *Ruane:* Yes, we need to confirm the \$30 million is sufficient for the necessary repairs. *Question:* The \$1.1 billion includes workforce housing, which may not be built on Captiva and Sanibel but will help house island workers – so it's in the islands' interest to support that. *Ruane:* Absolutely. We just finished a project in Cape Coral where, by reducing costs and pursuing various credits we were able to stretch the funding further than we expected. With the \$1.1 billion there will be many opportunities to expand and multiply that... because that much funding won't go very far for any type of workforce housing in the Lee County market. *Question:* The CEPD has a \$13 million request for beach renourishment, going directly through the Legislature. Anything you could do to support that package would be appreciated. *Ruane:* Between the funding allocated in the special session and other funds allocated to Lee County, I believe we'll be able to address all the beach renourishment needed within the county. *Question:* What can be done to encourage to have the hurricane declared a qualified federal disaster. *Ruane:* That was done in other disasters, we can hope it happens here. That would allow taxpayers to declare your complete loss, dollar for dollar with no limitations. Now that the Tallahassee session is over, we'll be pivoting to go to Washington to pursue both funding and such a designation. Discussion of process.

LCISO: Lt. Mike Sawicki: I was out the other night with Code Enforcement on their sea turtle lighting surveys, and they found about 75 locations in violation. So a reminder to check your turtle lighting and

make sure you're in compliance. There are a lot of violations due to the foliage loss, places that would have been OK if the vegetation was in place. Look at your home not just straight on but from the sides, you might find lights on the side of the house that are now visible from the beach. Code enforcement staff also sent me information about window clings to remind rental visitors that turtles dig the dark. There's also a group, the Sea Turtle Conservancy, that's offering a lighting retrofit grant program, where they will assess your lighting, work up a plan, then offer a grant to qualifying homes so most of the cost is covered by the grant. We're also on the doorstep of hurricane season again, a good time to look at your readiness plans. Also consider changing your security codes or your hidden-key location if you've been giving those out to contractors who've been working on your property. Check your security systems, especially your cameras which are very useful for us in detecting, solving and prosecuting crimes. *Question:* What time of night were the lighting surveys done? *Sawicki:* We started after 9 at South Seas, and worked our way down the island until probably 2-2:30. We also noticed a lot of those lights were on all night, so you might want to consider putting some on timers – helps with compliance and saves you some energy costs. Discussion of how code enforcement measures light and notifies those in violation.

CFD: *Chief Jeff Pawul:* No truth to the rumor that I'm leaving the department and the island, must have been confused with other chiefs leaving on Upper Captiva and Fort Myers Beach. We not have a Lee County ambulance stationed full time at the district. Thanks to everyone who played a role it making that happen.

CEPD: *Executive Director Daniel Munt:* Yesterday the board approved Aptim's proposal to conduct one-year post-construction physical monitoring. Besides fulfilling the requirements of our permit, this should give us additional insight into the recovery of our beach by comparing it to the post-storm survey done in October. It will also give us a baseline for beach condition going into hurricane season. The other good news was from our lobbying firm updating on the status of our legislative appropriations request. The request of \$400,000 for Phase 2 of our planning and design for coastal resilience has been approved, subject to veto at this point although we have no indication that's forthcoming. I'd ask for a letter of support from the panel to accompany our request to the governor's desk. Finally, the next CEPD meeting will be in person on June 12, 1 p.m., at the Civic Association. *Question:* Will we get the funding we need to restore the beach to its pre-storm condition? *Munt:* Of the \$13 million estimated to restore the beach, we have received notice we're receiving 48% of that, about \$6.3 million. In our legislative appropriations request, we asked for an additional 52% of the total. We also have our request under review with the Corps of Engineers, hoping for an update soon. Discussion clarifying the funding sources and status. *Munt:* If the USACE picks up the project, it will be funded through them and constructed by them. They may not support it since Captiva does not have the parking or easements required by them, but we have to go through their process prior to going back to other funding sources. If we don't get the additional funding from the state or the Corps, we'll have to go back to other sources, including the property owners. A one-page explanation of the funding options and status was suggested to clarify the issue for Captivans. *Munt:* As was already mentioned, it's sea turtle nesting season, so be sure to remove your items from the beach. We have eight nests already, as well as our first nesting shorebird colony in 10 years.

SCCF: *Coastal Resilience Manager Carrie Schuman:* San-Cap Citizens for a Resilient Future have been holding community events, with another one set for May 22 at BIG Arts 6-8 p.m. focused specifically on emergency response. Lt. Sawicki will be there for some Captiva representation. As Commissioner Ruane mentioned, the legislative session has ended, and there are two bills we're focused on right now: SB 540, which says if a citizen brings a comprehensive land use legal challenge against a city or county and they lose, that citizen would be on the hook for the prevailing parties' legal costs. This effectively ends the ability of Florida citizens to participate in local land use decisions, because most people will not be able to take on the risk of being liable for those legal fees. There already is legislation that covers frivolous lawsuits, so there are protections already in place to protect governments from illegitimate claims. The next bill is SB 170, which allows local governments to be sued by businesses that may feel impacted by

enacted ordinances. It's triggered if a business suggests it has experienced impacts of more than \$50,000, then whatever act or ordinance being challenged can't move forward until the lawsuit is resolved. That could have an impact on a number of environmental initiatives. Finally, in the budget there's a line item that funds a University of Florida IFAS study focused on the effectiveness of seasonal fertilizer application. We don't have an issue with the study, but there's phrasing attached to this that will ban new or amended ordinances limiting the use of fertilizer for a year. The fact that this is in the budget bill is an inappropriate way to pass legislation – it was added at the last minute, bypassing traditional channels and committee review. We also have concerns about what it could mean for water quality.

South Seas: *Bob Walter:* As many of you know, Starbucks opened in late February. In April the marina started selling gas and the like for local boaters. We're hoping to have food trucks servicing the main beach area in early summer, and to get CPC open perhaps in mid-July. T-dock construction started in March and is going very well. We're targeting September for a majority of the HOA repairs to be completed, plus the Bayview North pool (including the slide pool and Tarpon Bar) and Club Captiva Beach (formerly Sunset Beach). In November looking to have the golf course completed, around Thanksgiving. In late 2023, having the Harborside Bar & Grill and Redfish Grill ready. In early 2024, hope to have the Bayview Pavilion and Event Lawn done. One thing we don't have an answer on is the Harborside hotel rooms, conversations are still going on regarding the 50% rule. We may have to bring down those buildings, which we're not really excited about. Revetment work has begun along Redfish Pass (showed two photos). In 2015 we had a washout there and put in about 75 feet of these retaining wall piles, which did well during the hurricane. So we're installing about 1,800 linear feet of these panels from the entrance at the jetty all the way around to the turn where everyone fishes. They'll be backed up with riprap, back-filled and covered with landscaping to look all natural. In terms of the water feature we've discussed in the past, here's an image overlaying what's being proposed in relationship to the entrance, Tennis Villas. Finally, this is the lake closest to Lands End, it will end up being about 30% larger than what was previously there and much deeper, able to handle more runoff from the golf course to keep it from going out into Pine Island Sound. *Question:* When do you expect to see a return to normal rental activity? *Walter:* If our hotel room have to be rebuilt, it will all be handled by third parties, and they're saying they can most of these units back in September. In terms of full room capacity and services, maybe Q1 2024 – to have about half of all rental units in service. Discussion.

County updates: *Mintz:* Following up on the five-year CIP Commissioner Ruane mentioned, in our work on the Planning & Capacity branch of the Resiliency Task Force we keep hearing from people to think big, that this is a once-in-a-generation funding opportunity from the state and federal government in response to the hurricane. I've been beginning to put together an CIP overview for Captiva of everything we've been talking about for the last number of years... and that's going to come to more than \$100 million in requests. For central sewer, it's about \$20 million for the Captiva collection system and about \$19 million to upgrade the Sanibel system. We don't have a number for the cost of including South Seas in this system, the cost of shutting down the FGUA plant and any upgrades that collection system would need... so let's say we're at \$50 million just for the sewer piece. We have \$200,000 for a stormwater management design study, but we don't yet know what it will cost to implement a stormwater project. We may need \$13 million for beach restoration if other funding falls through, and there's \$400,000 for sidewalk construction in the Village. We have tentative approval of funding for resiliency planning, but we don't know what the cost would be to implement a resiliency plan. Finally, if we look at burying the power lines it's probably \$15 million to \$17 million – and that brings us to close to \$100 million. Discussion of the various projects and funding options, whether a taxing unit for a sewer collection system would be necessary if it was entirely funded by the state and federal governments. Discussion of the hurricane's possible impact on existing septic systems due to inundation, and costs and issues with an islandwide inspection of septic systems to assess any storm problems. *Youngquist:* Perhaps the storm surge left sludge on top of the drainfields that impacted their operation. The health department came out

to inspect the commercial properties, but have they done that residentially? *McDonald*: They do inspect the performance systems.

Ian debriefing: *Schuman*: Ian debriefing recap: Joint meeting held by panel and CEPD on April 10. Heard about initial conditions from our fire and police crews, also gave everyone there an opportunity to extend their gratitude to the first responders. Daniel Munt was able to discuss storm protection benefits from dunes and beaches, and updated us on the beach condition and restoration plans. Linda Laird presented a timeline of how the response unfolded and some initial thoughts on what went well and where energy needs to be devoted in the future. Lastly, we used an online interactive tool to gather some community feedback. We had 50-60 people in person and about 20 online, and we gathered some additional responses using follow-up emails and a Google form. A video from the meeting was also available online afterwards. The following summary was provided:

Summary of Captiva Community Data Collected April 2023

Collection methods:

- Survey presented during Captiva Community Panel, Captiva Erosion Prevention District co-sponsored April 10 Hurricane Ian Debriefing using Menti
- Post-event survey with same questions, collected through April 30th using Google Forms

Question 1 – 50 Respondents

Pre-storm would you consider yourself (choose all that apply):

- Full-time resident – 26%
- Seasonal resident – 56%
- Local Business Owner – 10%
- Visitor – 4%
- Employed on island – 8%

Question 2 – 48 Respondents

We'd like to understand how you were impacted by Hurricane Ian. Please choose the following that apply.:

- Short-term displacement (less than 30 days) – 23%
- Short-term displacement (30-90 days) – 25%
- Short-term displacement (91-120 days) – 21%
- Longer-term displacement – 17%
- Business interruption, loss of income – 40%
- Difficulty navigating insurance/claim process – 44%

Question 3

What additional impacts did you experience that we haven't already captured?

Summary of Answers: A portion of those who answered this question reported they had no additional impacts to share beyond what was captured in Question 2. There were a variety of other impacts people described experiencing. Some people did not have access to the supplies they needed after the storm. Loss of property included reference to personal belongings with some more specific mention of assets like cars. Landscape damage was reported by multiple respondents. Some of our respondents experienced loss of community or interruption to their standard community structure. Mental health impacts were experienced including depression and PTSD. Community members had insurance difficulties that included insurance companies that went out of business just before the storm, rising insurance costs, and difficulty navigating the insurance process. With regards to actual repairs, contractors were hard to locate, and people had additional challenges like understanding how much to raise their house or having to address pre-existing structural problems that became evident during repair. Debris removal was a

challenge for at least a couple of the respondents. A few people voiced access challenges including overcharging by boat captains, and the feeling that there was dependence on Sanibel to have access to Captiva. Some people voiced difficulty working from home and other aspects of resuming their life due to issues of internet connectivity, poor cell service, and interruption of other utilities. Additional impacts include

Question 4

In what ways was the post-hurricane response on Captiva effective?

Summary of Answers: There were some general themes that were evident in the answers around what people thought went well. Many people thought first responders were excellent, with most referencing police and fire response specifically. The level of communication was a common theme with respondents making specific reference to communications that went out from the Captiva Community Panel, the City of Sanibel, the Captiva Civic Association, and some that occurred on social media like Facebook Groups. The quick restoration of access to Captiva was important to people with most people specifying the Causeway restoration, but one additional mention about clearing roads. Respondents mentioned debris removal was effective. The restoration of other services like mail service through the post office, availability of food through FEMA and some other local places, and recovery of utilities like Century Link, water, etc also came up in community responses. Some people also highlighted the collaboration that occurred between organizations and the help that came from within the community itself.

Question 5

What should be improved about the post-hurricane response on Captiva?

Summary of Answers: Restoration of telecommunications, especially internet and phone service, was one of the most suggested improvements for post-storm response. In some cases, respondents suggested communications could be improved but their answers were general enough so it's unclear if they were referring to restoration of telecommunication services or improved public engagement with information post-storm. A few people specifically thought post-storm communications could be better. One person brought up the idea of having more access to photos capturing the state of their home beyond aerial imagery. Other suggested improvements included beach cleanup, beach and utility resilience, information on rebuilding for homeowners, increased security, plan for mail deliver, stockpiling of supplies for first responders, ability to charge phones, and early island access options.

Question 6

What should the Community Panel and CEPD be working on to improve our future?

Summary of Answers: Most respondents focused on actions that would provide Captiva longer term resilience in a variety of ways. Several people suggested the need for resilience planning/a resilience plan. Others advocated for restoration or other ways to obtain longer-term beach and dune resilience. Some answers were specific to making utilities like power lines more resilient. Other focuses included improved telecommunications, conversion from septic to sewer, better drainage, more engagement with new renters, better plans around debris removal, maintained relationships with the County and State, and update and regular revisiting of emergency plans.

Vulnerability Assessment: *Laird:* We've completed three studies: By Cheryl Hapke, by South Seas and by Aptim. Each of them has their strengths and weaknesses, but if we could pull together a summary of all three that could be very useful. I'm going to work on that over the summer. Then we have to have a Phase 2 study on what we need to do about it. CEPD will be putting together a Request for Proposals to put out to potential vendors, to define the deliverables we want from the study. *Mintz:* We need to look at Santiva, where there's the potential for flooding and washing out the road... that's not covered in any vulnerability analysis. I understood from a recent CEPD meeting that there's a county plan to help fortify that roadway before the next hurricane season, but we as a panel have never been advised on it. *Lapi:*

Agreed, let's contact Steve Boutelle to find out who to ask. *Laird*: Someone from the City of Sanibel should be there as well. Discussion.

Resiliency: *Laird*: A real issue was telecom, we need an overall plan to ensure it works better in emergency situation and in general overall. We may need to look at a consultant to help design a better system, I don't think we can get it from one vendor. If the panel is OK with it, I'll investigate if that kind of person exists and how one should develop a plan.

Verizon: *Brown*: As you remember, the plan was to install five small cell towers about 40 feet high to boost the signal to the main tower. The Verizon representative says all that's left to do is the electrical permitting, they've gotten everything else through the county.

Captiva Drive vegetation: *Mintz*: Recap of vegetation plans to ensure the shoulder is more walkable and bikeable, a two-foot buffer between vegetation and the edge of pavement and an eight-foot overhead buffer. The county has agreed to trim that area a number of times a year, and they will send a certified letter to anyone who has large rocks or trees in the buffer area... many of the problem areas were handled by the hurricane, so there's only a few left to address. We also mailed all the Captiva Drive property owners a letter outlining this plan. So we're not extending the bike path, not cutting into people's landscaping, we're just maintaining what the existing Land Development Code says to allow a reasonable amount of pedestrian and bicycle access along Captiva Drive.

Wastewater: *Brown*: Recap of status, waiting for studies from the City of Sanibel to be completed. Will allow us to have a more accurate assessment of costs, etc.

Stormwater: *Laird*: Waiting on a proposal from Kimley-Horn.

Iguanas: *Jensen*: Alfredo comes out every Tuesday, notify us if you want him to come onto your property. Need to follow up with the county on reimbursement.

The meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m. (Jensen/Lapi).

-- **Ken Gooderham**

Meeting video link: <https://youtu.be/o7Ohpqwik9o>