



Captiva Community Panel

## MINUTES

Jan. 14, 2025

**Attending:** David Mintz, Ann Brady, John Jensen, Margarethe Thye-Miville, Tony Lapi, John Wade, Ken Suarez, Sandy Stilwell Youngquist, Linda Laird, Michael Bennett

**Audience:** 26

### Summary:

The meeting convened at 9 a.m. David Mintz was elected as the new president of the panel, with Bruce McDonald as vice president, Tony Laffey as secretary, and Sandy Stilwell Youngquist as treasurer. The panel welcomed new members John Wade, chairman of Captiva Erosion Prevention District, and Mike Bennett, president of the CCA Foundation. A roll call confirmed attendance, and the minutes from the Dec. 10, 2024, meeting were reviewed and approved unanimously (Jensen/Lapi).

Sgt. Rich Zeltman reported ongoing parking difficulties due to the closure of public beach parking lots on Captiva, advising property owners to use signage to deter unauthorized parking. A traffic incident at Jensen's Curve highlighted the need for responsible driving and pedestrian awareness. Requests for improved signage and pathways from the Department of Transportation have not yet yielded results. Additionally, inquiries about the South Seas Resort's potential permit for towing vehicles were raised, with Speaker 8 offering to follow up on these matters.

Wade provided an update on damage assessments from Hurricanes Milton and Helene, noting a loss of approximately 300,000 cubic yards of sand, amounting to an estimated \$12.7 million in damages. However, many costs will be mitigated by the upcoming Ian project, set to begin on May 1, which will add an additional 200,000 to 300,000 cubic yards of sand. The hiring of Paul Trittek as interim director and Evan Cutler as a consultant to modernize back office systems was also announced. Furthermore, \$50,000 was authorized for repairs to the Hagerup parking lot, with plans to be operational by Feb. 1.

Legal developments regarding the South Seas redevelopment were discussed, with a court validating a 2003 settlement agreement that caps development at 912 dwelling units. The CCA's motion for summary judgment was argued recently, with the judge expressing confidence in the settlement's enforceability. South Seas is pursuing a rezoning application, with hearings scheduled for Feb. 14, 20 and 21, where public participation is encouraged.

The panel budget for 2025 was presented as balanced but lacking discretionary funds for organizations such as Protect Captiva. A motion to include an additional \$10,000 in the budget for potential contributions passed unanimously (Lapi/Jensen). The meeting concluded with discussions on stormwater management, wastewater processing, and community events, including the first annual iguana hunt. It adjourned at 10:30 a.m.; video link for the meeting is <https://youtu.be/gdGyjLCOi3M>.

## Chapters & Topics:

### **Parking Challenges and Traffic Safety Updates**

Sgt. Rich Zeltman addressed the persistent parking issues caused by closed public beach lots on Captiva, urging property owners to implement signage to prevent unauthorized parking. A traffic crash at Jensen's Curve, involving a visitor and alcohol, highlighted the importance of safe driving practices, especially in areas with pedestrians. Speaker 8 also mentioned ongoing requests to the Department of Transportation for improved signage and pathways.

\* Safety concerns regarding the Jensen curve and signage issues.

**Damage Assessment and Project Updates:** Wade discussed the final damage assessment from Aptim Engineering, indicating a loss of about 300,000 cubic yards of sand due to Hurricanes Milton and Helene. The total estimated damages amount to \$12.7 million, but many costs will be mitigated as the Ian project has not yet commenced. An additional 200,000 to 300,000 cubic yards will be added to the spring project, with no anticipated impact on the timeline.

**Red Tide Update and Dune Management Discussion:** Laird mentioned the Aptim report's findings on beach loss, while John confirmed the development of a dunes management manual to assist property owners with erosion protection guidelines. SCCF's Allie Pecenka reported on the red tide situation, noting low to medium concentrations and wildlife impacts, including minor fish kills. The group discussed the need for a plan to address potential fish kills resulting from red tide, with Wade and Laird indicating that CEPD would play a role in cleanup efforts.

**County South Seas Redevelopment Rezoning and Legal Update:** Mintz discussed the ongoing legal proceedings regarding the South Seas redevelopment, noting that a court has upheld a 2003 settlement agreement that restricts development to 912 units. The CCA's motion for summary judgment was argued recently, and the judge indicated support for the settlement's validity. Upcoming hearings on the rezoning application are scheduled for Feb. 14, 20 and 21, where South Seas will present its case and Protect Captiva and others will offer rebuttals.

Lapi asked if the 912 units included employee housing, and an unknown speaker confirmed this. Mintz explained that the 912 units consist of various types, including 640 units owned by associations, 140 employee housing units, and 107 hotel units. He noted that while the number of units is fixed, the intensity of use can increase with larger units, which could lead to greater potential for development.

Mintz discussed the appeal process for South Seas and Lee County, indicating it could take 12-18 months due to a backlog in the court system. He explained that both South Seas and the county have the right to appeal, with Protect Captiva retaining an appellate attorney to defend the circuit court's decision.

**Budget Review and Approval for 2025:** Gooderham provided an overview of the 2025 budget, indicating it was balanced but did not include discretionary funds for organizations like Protect Captiva. Mintz proposed adding \$10,000 to the budget for potential future contributions, a suggestion that received support from others. A motion was made and seconded to approve the budget with the additional funds.

**Discussion on Meeting Format and Technology Upgrades:** Gooderham highlighted that upgrades at the CCA facility would take time due to budgetary issues, and the yoga class remains scheduled for Tuesday

mornings. Lapi expressed willingness to facilitate in-person meetings, while also noting the difficulties of hybrid formats. Mintz recommended continuing with Zoom until the CCA can implement effective hybrid technology. Bennett will contact the CCA concerning a timeline for seeking to reserve the Tuesday morning slot for the panel.

**Stormwater and Wastewater Updates:** Mintz updated the group on the finalists for the stormwater engineering study, which includes Collective Water Resources and Weston and Sampson Engineers. The project is funded by HUD grant money and will be managed by the county, with plans to form a committee involving community members once a contractor is selected.

**Iguana Hunt Report and Community Discussions:** Youngquist reported on the first annual iguana hunt, highlighting its success with 63 iguanas caught despite inclement weather. Jensen emphasized the community's interest in repeating the event and suggested implementing safety measures, such as identifying participants with vests. They discussed the need for better planning and logistics for any future hunts.

**Action Items:**

- Sgt. Zeltman Wade will find out if South Seas has applied for a permit to begin to tow or disable vehicles inside the resort.
- Wade will provide a timeline for the beach renourishment project as it becomes available. Wade will provide a report on the iguana control expenditures and the relationship with Alfredo. Wade will produce a dunes management manual for property owners regarding erosion protection.
- Allie Pecenka sent an email address to report any fish kills or wildlife impacts observed on the beach.
- Youngquist will prepare a detailed plan for the next iguana hunt, including logistics and community involvement.
- Mintz will contact Chief Pawul to discuss the post-hurricane assessment and potential community meeting. He will include the Captiva Erosion Prevention District in discussions regarding the post-hurricane assessment.
- Mintz will inquire with the county about the signage for the Jensen curve to ensure safety for pedestrians.

**Key Questions:**

- Who is responsible for removing dead fish in the event of a significant fish kill?
- What feedback was received from participants regarding the first iguana hunt?
- What are the potential legal and logistical issues associated with organizing the next iguana hunt?
- How can the community prepare better for future hurricanes based on lessons learned from past events?
- What types of vehicles are currently on the beach, and are they authorized for use?