

***Captiva
Community
Panel***



MINUTES

Feb. 11, 2025

Attending: David Mintz, John Jensen, Bruce McDonald, Mike Bennett, Ann Brady, Tony Lapi, Margarethe Thye-Miville, Ken Suarez, Sandy Stilwell Youngquist

Absent: Linda Laird, John Wade

Audience: 18

The meeting convened at 9 a.m. Following introduction, the Jan. 14, 2025 minutes were unanimously approved with minor corrections (McDonald/Jensen).

Summary:

Discussions began with a focus on the need for clarity regarding ongoing legal matters, with participants emphasizing the importance of accurate information to prevent misunderstandings. Following a roll call to confirm attendance and establish a quorum, the group approved the minutes from the previous meeting, noting a minor correction. Deputy Christine Zumburum highlighted ongoing parking challenges in Captiva, particularly issues caused by contractor vehicles that obstruct emergency access and pedestrian safety. She has requested “no parking” signs from Lee County DOT for a hazardous area near the Jensen curve and raised concerns about sand on roadways affecting pedestrian safety.

SCCF addressed the significant red tide bloom impacting local beaches, with health alerts issued for several areas. Allie Pecinka discussed the observed fish kills and the request made to the Army Corps to reduce water flows from Lake Okeechobee to help mitigate the bloom's effects. Although the situation is serious, it is not expected to reach the catastrophic levels seen in 2018.

Ongoing monitoring will continue, and updates will be provided as the situation evolves. LCSO staff will communicate information regarding parking cones at the Jensen curve, which are to remain in place until “no parking” signs are installed, while safety concerns regarding road clearance for pedestrians and bikers were reiterated.

Captiva Fire District training is currently taking place in South Seas Island Resort buildings set for demolition, and residents were reassured not to be alarmed by the activities. The state has introduced the Elevate Florida mitigation program, offering financial assistance for property elevation projects, although questions arose about its implications for residents with existing contracts. The group proposed forming a subcommittee to engage with the Department of Transportation regarding hurricane-related infrastructure projects, particularly in vulnerable areas like Jensen's Curve and Santiva.

Participants expressed the need for community input and collaboration to address these infrastructure challenges.

The meeting concluded with discussions on upcoming hearings related to building permits at South Seas, emphasizing the importance of community attendance and input. David Mintz clarified public participation requirements for the hearings. The group also discussed the potential impact of new condo developments on ocean views for South Seas Club timeshare owners, with an emphasis on managing density through upcoming hearings. Overall, the meeting underscored the need for community engagement in addressing local issues and infrastructure projects.

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m. (Jensen/Lapi). Video link: <https://youtu.be/MFjY3yTjROg>

Chapters & Topics:

Parking and Safety Concerns in Captiva:

LCSO Deputy Christine Zumbrum highlighted the persistent parking problems in Captiva, exacerbated by contractor vehicles following recent storms. She noted improvements since the opening of the Blind Pass parking lot but emphasized the need for better regulation, especially near Jensen's Curve, where she submitted a request for no parking signs due to safety concerns.

Red Tide Bloom Update and Impact Assessment

Allie Pecinka with SCCF noted that the ongoing red tide bloom has led to health alerts for several beaches, with reports of extensive fish kills in areas like Captiva and Fort Myers Beach. The severity of the situation has prompted a request to the Army Corps to lower water flows from Lake Okeechobee to reduce nutrient levels. While the bloom is concerning, it is not expected to reach the destructive levels seen in 2018.

Parking Concerns and Signage Updates

Deputy Zumbrum will inform the community about the contractor parking situation, especially along Andy Rosse Lane. Sergeant Zeltman indicated to her that the cones by the Jensen curve were repositioned after a complaint, and there is agreement that they should stay until no parking signs are put up. There is currently no timetable for the installation of these signs, and Mike Bennett's previous requests for signs were addressed quickly.

Updates on Training and Elevate Florida Mitigation Program:

Captiva Fire District training is being conducted in South Seas Resort buildings set for demolition, with a reminder for nearby residents not to be alarmed by the activity. The Elevate Florida mitigation program has been introduced, allowing eligible property owners to apply for funding to elevate their homes or for relocation costs, with applications now available online. Chief Pawul will offer a more extensive review of the program at the March 11 panel meeting.

Hurricane-Related Infrastructure Projects Update:

The meeting addressed hurricane-related infrastructure projects in Captiva, specifically the Jensen's Curve and Santiva areas, which are vulnerable to storm damage. A proposal was made to establish a subcommittee led by Tony Lapi, Mike Bennett, and Marguerite Thye-Mivilleto communicate with the county Department of Transportation and the City of Sanibel manager about project details and funding.

Beach Renourishment and Community Safety Concerns:

CEPD Vice Chairman Rene Miville said that Great Lakes Dredge & Dock will mobilize for the next beach restoration project in June, with sand placement scheduled for July as part of beach renourishment efforts. Allison-Hagerup Park is undergoing modifications, but safety concerns were expressed regarding an adjacent condemned property owned by Susie Henry, which has not seen any action since November. CEPD requested panel assistant in reaching out to Henry to address the safety hazard.

County/South Seas Redevelopment Rezoning and Legal Update:

David Mintz said Judge Schenko's ruling confirmed the county cannot issue building permits exceeding 912 units at South Seas, a decision that the new owners plan to appeal. They are also applying for a rezoning to develop additional units, including hotels and condos, with a hearing set to begin on Feb. 14. Lee County staff is expected to support this application, but the final decision will rest with the hearing examiner and the Board of County Commissioners. The group emphasized the significance of community presence at hearings scheduled for Feb. 14, 20 and 21, which also allows for representation through notarized authorization if necessary.

David Mintz explained that to speak at the upcoming hearing examiner meetings, individuals must attend the public portion of the hearings on Feb. 20 or 21, as the public will probably not have the opportunity to speak on Feb. 14. He also mentioned that there is no official time limit for speakers, but relevance and non-repetition of previous comments will be considered.

Concerns were raised about the height and placement of proposed new condos near the South Seas Club, with Ken Suarez explaining that developers must follow state DEP guidelines regarding the Coastal Construction Control Line. The upcoming county hearings will provide an opportunity for property owners to voice their concerns. David Mintz added that the height restrictions are primarily related to density, suggesting that developers may opt for a spread-out development rather than taller buildings.

Other items:

Mike Bennett reported that "No Parking" signage at Jensen's Curve has been partially installed, enhancing safety for motorists. Jay Brown provided an update on the wastewater management situation, indicating delays in the city of Sanibel's economic study regarding charges for Captivans.

Action Items:

- Ken Gooderham will correct the misspelling of Tony's name in the minutes.
- Christine Zumbrum will follow up with Sergeant Zeltman regarding the cones at Jensen's Curve and provide an update.
- Jeff Pawul will provide a more concrete update on the Elevate Florida mitigation program at the next meeting.
- Tony Lapi, Mike Bennett, and Marguerite Miville will form a subcommittee to work with the county on infrastructure projects related to Captiva's storm recovery and evacuation.
- Paul Trittek will confirm CEPD's use of Turner Park for upcoming mobilization efforts with Sanibel.
- Ken Gooderham will draft a survey for community feedback regarding hurricane experiences and priorities. He will gather ideas for the survey's content from Sergeant Zeltman, and Chief Pawul.
- Ken Gooderham will follow up with the CCA regarding the reservation of meeting space for next fall.

- Ken Gooderham will provide an update on the implications of the recent state legislation related to sewer conversions and wastewater requirements before the county commissioners' transmittal hearing on Feb. 19.
- Jay Brown will chair the stormwater committee (with Linda Laird and Sandy Stilwell Youngquist also serving) and reach out to contractor Johnson, Miramaran, and Thompson to set up meetings regarding community concerns about stormwater.

Key Questions:

- What is the timeline for the “No Parking” signs to be installed in the area south of Jensen's?
- What specific concerns does the Sheriff's Department have regarding hurricane preparedness?
- What are the next steps if the hearing examiner recommends more than 912 units for South Seas?
- What is the timeline for other appeals on South Seas rulings?
- What is the status of the economic study regarding wastewater charges from Sanibel to Captiva?
- What are the requirements for attending the upcoming hearings to be permitted to speak?