



Captiva Community Panel
MINUTES
May 13, 2025

Attending: Linda Laird, Jon Rosen, David Mintz, John Wade, John Jensen, Sandy Stilwell Youngquist, Ken Suarez, Michael Bennett, Margarethe Thye-Miville

Absent: Bruce McDonald, Tony Lapi

Audience: 22 at peak

Meeting convened 9 a.m. The May 13, 2025 meeting minutes were unanimously approved (Jensen/Wade).

Summary: The Captiva Community Panel convened on June 10, 2025, at 9 a.m. The minutes from the May 13, 2025, meeting were approved unanimously after a correction regarding opposition from the county attorney to a ladder truck deal with South Seas was addressed. LCSO Deputy Chris Lusk provided a report on the new hurricane season, emphasizing the importance of monitoring weather conditions. Despite the summer season leading to a shorter agenda, several critical topics were discussed, including storm preparedness and community safety.

Lusk highlighted the necessity of verifying the identity of workers on properties during storm events to prevent unauthorized access. He also raised concerns about increasing scam calls related to overdue bills, advising attendees to verify any such requests directly with organizations. Lusk reinforced the need for storm preparedness and encouraged attendees to seek assistance as needed.

Chief Jeff Pawul from the Captiva Fire District discussed the complexities of assessing property damage post-storm and the ongoing budget preparations, including an ISO study evaluating fire department metrics and the need for a ladder truck.

The discussion included updates from David Mintz on the South Seas rezoning situation, with both Lee County and South Seas appealing a circuit court ruling on density limits. The panel's attorney is reviewing a public records request from South Seas, which was characterized as a fishing expedition. The legal history surrounding the density limit was clarified, with assertions that hotel units have historically been included in the established limits.

Mike Bennett provided insights on an environmental study for a beach access project, while Jay Brown reported on the selection of JMT Engineering for a stormwater management plan, also raising concerns about limited community input.

The panel also discussed ongoing stormwater management studies aimed at addressing flooding issues, with a focus on identifying problem areas and improving drainage systems. A follow-up meeting was planned to address a missed update, and Marguerite was tasked with collaborating on a fundraising plan for the upcoming year.

The panel considered revisiting the topic of annexation with Sanibel but decided to postpone it due to concerns about community division. Additionally, issues regarding turtle code enforcement were raised, leading to an agreement to invite an environmental code enforcement specialist to the next meeting for further clarification.

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m. Video link for the Zoom recording is <https://youtu.be/1KdL45lyX2Q>.

Chapters & Topics:

Storm Preparedness and Scam Awareness

Deputy Lusk discussed strategies for maintaining security during storms, highlighting the need to confirm the identity of workers on properties. They shared experiences from past storms where this practice helped prevent issues. Additionally, Lusk warned about prevalent scam calls regarding overdue bills and warrants, urging individuals to verify such claims by contacting the relevant organizations directly.

Hurricane Preparedness and Fire District Updates

Lusk highlighted the need for proper storm season preparations and offered support to those who may require it. Chief Pawul from the Captiva Fire District discussed the challenges of accounting for properties and residents after a hurricane, mentioning efforts to improve communication regarding occupancy status. He also provided updates on budget season, an ISO study, and recent legislative impacts on fire departments.

Hurricane Season Communication Strategies

Mintz inquired about the effectiveness of cell service during hurricanes on Captiva, highlighting previous communication challenges. Pawul acknowledged that while the current service is adequate, it is restricted to the firehouse, where a Starlink satellite system is installed as a backup. They discussed the need for additional Starlink systems to improve communication access for residents and visitors during emergencies.

John Wade, chairman of the Captiva Erosion Prevention District, announced the hiring of Brighton Heard as the new general manager. The CEPD board is accepting applications for a vacant position and discussed the upcoming beach project, which is on track to start mobilizing in July. Additionally, there are concerns regarding state funding shortfalls for beach nourishment, with expectations that the county may need to fill the gap.

South Seas Rezoning Update

David Mintz discussed the ongoing appeals related to the South Seas rezoning, highlighting that Lee County and South Seas are both appealing a circuit court ruling on density limits. The hearing examiner's decision is anticipated by the end of June, after which a public hearing before the county commission will be scheduled. Additionally, South Seas has filed a lawsuit against the CCA, which the CCA's legal team considers to be without merit.

Mintz explained that the 912-unit limit for South Seas encompasses both hotel and residential units, supported by historical zoning approvals and legal agreements. Ken Suarez inquired about the rationale behind some residents' beliefs that hotel units should not be included, suggesting a potential misunderstanding of the legal definitions. Mintz dismissed these claims as meritless, emphasizing that the settlement agreement clearly includes hotel units.

Infrastructure and Stormwater Committee Updates

Mike Bennett reported on the Infrastructure Committee's activities, highlighting the county's environmental study for a beach dune/road protection project and the anticipated engagement of an engineering firm. He also discussed communication with Sanibel's deputy city manager about potential mitigation projects (especially in the Santiva area), which are currently hindered by funding issues with FEMA. The timeline for the beach project is estimated to extend into 2027.

Stormwater Management Discussion

The committee, led by Jay Brown, focused on the challenges of stormwater management, particularly the inadequacy of existing drainage systems during recent rainfall events. Sandy highlighted the need for effective communication of specific flooding issues, while John Wade pointed out that the drainage systems may be below sea level, complicating water flow. The discussion also touched on the importance of maintaining clean drains and the potential for innovative solutions like underground tanks. Mintz confirmed they would follow up on a missed update meeting and take charge of organizing future meetings.

Margarethe Thye-Miville is to work with Ken Gooderham on a fund-raising plan, with a report anticipated for the August meeting. Gooderham noted that while expenses are generally within expectations, there is a need for fund-raising in the fall.

Discussion on Annexation and Turtle Code Enforcement

The panel debated the inclusion of annexation with Sanibel on the July agenda, with several members, including Bennett and Suarez, expressing skepticism about its relevance and potential to distract from pressing issues related to South Seas. Ultimately, the consensus leaned towards postponing the discussion, recognizing the divided opinions within the community. The conversation then shifted to concerns about aggressive turtle code enforcement by the county, with Brown and Suarez highlighting the need for clarity on enforcement practices.

Action Items:

- Deputy Chris Lusk will monitor the weather channels and keep the community informed about storm preparations and safety measures.
- Chief Jeff Pawul will keep the community updated on the processes for accounting for people and property after a storm.
- John Wade will coordinate with other organizations on the island to explore the possibility of setting up a permanent Starlink system for better communication during storms.
- Mike Bennett will invite the Deputy County DOT Manager Doug Busby to discuss the environmental study and potential projects related to beach access.
- Jay Brown will hold a meeting with the stormwater management consultants and county staff to discuss stormwater issues and clarify project deliverables.

- Sandy Stilwell Youngquist will communicate the specific problem areas and damages related to stormwater management at the upcoming meeting.
- Jay Brown will set up a meeting with Sanibel to discuss the status of the wastewater rate analysis study.
- David Mintz will follow up on the memo from Sanibel City Manager Dana Souza regarding the update meeting that was expected last week.
- Margarethe Thye-Miville will begin to set up the elements of a fund-raising plan for the coming year with Ken.
- David Mintz will invite Paula Quezada, the county's Environmental Code Enforcement Specialist, to the next panel meeting to discuss turtle light violations.

Key Questions:

- What measures are in place to ensure the safety of workers on properties during a storm?
- How will the Captiva Community Panel address the public records request from South Seas?
- How can the community ensure that stormwater drains are maintained effectively?
- Should the fire department be invited to the upcoming meeting regarding stormwater management?
- What are the implications of the turtle light violations being enforced more strictly?