



Captiva Community Panel
MINUTES
Sept. 9, 2025

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

Audience: 33

Summary: The meeting convened 9 a.m. The Aug. 12, 2025, minutes were unanimously approved (Rosen/Jensen).

Sgt. Zeltman addressed the community on boating safety following a recent accident, emphasizing the importance of caution during the upcoming South Seas Captiva Triathlon (when Captiva Drive will be closed for roughly two hours) and the Island Hopper event (which will increase activity on local roads). The fire district update included news of ongoing firefighter testing and the addition of three new positions to enhance response capabilities. Fire Chief Jeff Pawul also announced the acquisition of a new ladder truck, reinforcing the department's commitment to public safety.

Lee DOT's Doug Busbee and Avelino Cancel provided details on the Sanibel and Captiva Drive Resiliency Project, currently in the pre-design phase with a budget of \$3.25 million. Construction is expected to start by December 2026, aiming to strengthen the road while minimizing disruption to beach access. Additionally, CEPD's John Wade and Brighton Heard discussed the beach erosion project currently under way, discussing the renourishment plans, sand placement totals and expected financing. The district plans to hold public hearings to gather community input as the project progresses.

David Mintz reported on legal developments regarding the South Seas redevelopment and rezoning, where a judge limited the number of units but an automatic stay on that finding was imposed due to appeals. The status of various legal efforts tied to the rezoning were detailed. Concerns were raised about the Rauschenberg Foundation's planned property sale, with community initiatives forming to explore preservation options. Jay Brown updated the panel on the stormwater project, which is currently in the modeling phase, and discussed the need for a working group for the wastewater project. The nominating committee is preparing recommendations for at-large positions, while fund-raising efforts were proposed, including a welcome cruise event to support community needs.

The meeting adjourned at 10: 40 a.m. Video link for the meeting is https://youtu.be/TY3yA_OGiH4.

Chapters & Topics:

Boating Safety and Upcoming Events on Captiva Island

LCSO Sgt. Rich Zeltman highlighted the critical need for boating safety after a recent accident near North Captiva. He informed attendees about the South Seas Captiva Triathlon scheduled for Sept. 28, which will close roads from 6:45 a.m. to 9 a.m. Additionally, the Island Hopper event will take place from Sept. 19-21, leading to increased pedestrian activity in the area.

Fire Chief Update and Safety Reminders

In an email update, Fire Chief Jeff Pawul announced that firefighter testing is currently under way, with plans to hire three new firefighters to improve response capabilities. He also addressed a tragic boating accident near Upper Captiva Pass, offering condolences to the affected families and urging the community to revisit safety protocols. Additionally, a new ladder truck contract has been finalized, which will replace an aging apparatus and enhance emergency response.

Infrastructure Project Updates

Lee DOT's Doug Busbee and Avelino Cancel discussed the Sanibel and Captiva Drive Resiliency Project, which is in the pre-design phase and awaiting the selection of a design consulting firm. The project is grant-funded, with an estimated budget of \$3.25 million, and aims to enhance road resilience while maintaining community access to the beach. Public communication will be prioritized throughout the project.

Project Update on Beach Erosion and Restoration Efforts

CEPD's John Wade and Brighton Heard provided updates on the beach erosion project, noting that the board has capped the project at 1 million cubic yards of sand. Financing is in place, including a \$25 million loan and grants totaling \$13 million. The final cost is estimated to be between \$26 million and \$31 million, with a clearer picture expected by early next year.

County Code Enforcement Update

Several code violations occurring in Captiva were highlighted, such as improper signage, rental duration requirements, and lighting issues. To address these, a reminder letter will be drafted by Ken Gooderham to inform residents of the Captiva code requirements; this will be reviewed by the panel in October, and will cover existing requirements that have not been enforced due to the hurricanes of recent years. The goal is to promote voluntary compliance rather than resorting to enforcement measures.

County South Seas Redevelopment, Rezoning, and Legal Update

David Mintz reported on the legal proceedings regarding the South Seas redevelopment and rezoning, where Judge Shenko limited the total development to 912 units (including hotel units) but where an automatic stay was placed due to ongoing appeals. The CCA's request to vacate the stay was denied, but it will receive advance notice of any building permit requests, which allows the board to take action if necessary. Additionally, a petition for a writ of certiorari has been filed to challenge the Board of County Commissioners' recent rezoning approval.

Rauschenberg Foundation Property Sale and Community Preservation Efforts

Dvaid Mintz announced that the Rauschenberg Foundation announced it is selling its Captiva property due to the financial burden of maintaining it post-hurricanes. The property, approximately 20 acres, has attracted interest from developers, but there is a growing community effort to purchase it for public use. Sandy Youngquist expressed her commitment to preserving the property in honor of Bob Rauschenberg's legacy and mentioned reaching out to county officials for potential funding. Youngquist and Tony Lapi will lead an effort to look into preservation options.

Stormwater and Wastewater Committee Updates

Jay Brown reported that the contractor managing the stormwater project has decided against involving citizen groups during its progress, opting instead to present results upon completion. The engineers have completed the initial modeling phase, which identifies distress points on Captiva Island related to rainfall and flooding. The project is anticipated to take approximately one year to complete.

Nominating Committee Update

Tony Lapi, as chair of the nominating committee, is responsible for presenting recommendations for two at-large positions at the October meeting. Mike Boris has been contacted and is available, while Jim Berg has not responded. Lapi said the committee will rank four candidates and share the results with David Mintz before the meeting, as Lapi will not be able to attend the October meeting.

Fund-raising and Event Planning Discussion

Margarethe Thye-Miville emphasized the need for fund-raising and proposed a welcome cruise event for the last quarter of this year, suggesting that Captiva Cruises be contacted for support (including a discussion on how to cover some of the cruise costs in recognition of the slow summer season island businesses have endured). The panel discussed charging a minimum contribution of \$100 per person, with Sandy Youngquist and Tony Lapi volunteering to provide food. The group also considered reaching out to new donors and exploring grant opportunities to support their initiatives.

Action Items:

- Doug Busbee will provide updates on the infrastructure project to the community as it progresses. He will send his contact information to the panel members for direct communication regarding the infrastructure project.
- Michael Bennett will communicate with Doug Busbee regarding the infrastructure project and report back to the Captiva community panel.
- Brighton Heard will provide a notice to Sunset Captiva residents if sand needs to be placed over vegetation during the dredging project.
- Ken Gooderham will draft a reminder letter regarding the Captiva code requirements for residents.
- Jay Brown will provide brief reports after meetings with engineers regarding the stormwater project.
- Jay Brown will follow up with Sanibel regarding their side of the working group for the wastewater project within the next week.
- Tony Lapi will present recommendations for the two at-large positions on the panel at the October meeting. The committee will rank the candidates for the two at-large positions and forward the results to David Mintz ahead of the next meeting.
- Ken Gooderham will contact Captiva Cruises to discuss potential dates for the welcome cruise event, and will prepare the end-of-year solicitation letter for review.
- David Mintz will reach out to the Preservati family to see if they would be willing to renew their donation.
- Margarethe Thye-Miville will contact the CCA concerning the Kat Epple event, and work closely with Ken Gooderham to ensure budget needs are met for upcoming events.