



Captiva Community Panel

MINUTES

Nov. 11, 2025

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

Audience: 36

Summary: The meeting convened 9 a.m. The Oct. 14, 2025, minutes were unanimously approved (Jensen/Lapi).

The meeting began with a welcome to participants and acknowledgement of Veterans Day, followed by introductions. LCSO Sergeant Rich Zeltman reported an increase in visitors to Captiva, emphasizing the need for motorists to be cautious due to heightened pedestrian traffic. He also mentioned the introduction of new radar equipment to monitor speeding, urging a focus on road safety as the season approaches.

Diana Wilson provided updates on Island Water Association's proposed rate and fee adjustments, expressing appreciation for the opportunity to engage with the community. She outlined challenges faced by the utility – including inflation and the effects of recent storms – and discussed the importance of maintaining a resilient water system. Wilson highlighted that a small percentage of members account for a significant portion of water usage, underscoring the need for effective resource management. Mark Koelmel elaborated on the complexities of forecasting future water demands, noting the shift from linear trend analysis to probability curves to better accommodate various potential outcomes.

The proposed rate adjustments from Raftelis suggest a 21% increase for the years 2026, 2027, and 2028, although the actual increase in monthly bills would be modest. Koelmel emphasized that even after these adjustments, the utility's rates would remain competitive compared to regional averages. Wilson addressed ongoing challenges with water management on Captiva Island, particularly the limitations of the reclaimed water system and low water pressure in certain areas. Plans for hydraulic improvements are in progress to enhance water delivery and pressure, with future projections accounting for potential increases in demand.

Discussions also covered the Rauschenberg property purchase and the community's preference for preservation over development. Concerns were raised about the transparency of the community investor's bid for the property, with calls for more information before supporting the acquisition. The panel acknowledged the need for community collaboration in fund-raising efforts for conservation and discussed the potential for federal or county funding to assist with stormwater management costs. The meeting concluded with updates on various projects, including the Captiva Drive project and upcoming community events, emphasizing the importance of open discussions while being mindful of audience engagement.

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m. Video link: <https://youtu.be/Lx9W0TGULYq>.

Chapters & Topics:

Updates and Introductions

The meeting began with greetings and introductions, including a special mention of Diana Wilson from the Island Water Association. David Mintz outlined the agenda and requested a motion to approve the previous meeting's minutes. Sergeant Rich Zeltman provided a report on the increasing number of visitors to Captiva and emphasized the importance of road safety as the season approaches.

Island Water Updates and Community Engagement

Jon Rosen introduced Diana Wilson, who provided updates on Island Water's proposed rate and fee adjustments. Diana highlighted the utility's recent challenges, including inflation and storm damage, and discussed the importance of maintaining financial health and resiliency. She also shared insights into the utility's operations and membership demographics.

Mark Koelmel highlighted the importance of understanding water usage for capital planning, noting that past linear projections are no longer reliable. The team has shifted to using probability curves to forecast future demands, considering factors like increased property sizes and the salinity of private irrigation wells. The capital improvement plan focuses on enhancing system resiliency and capacity to meet projected demands.

Proposed Rate Adjustments Overview

Koelmel discussed the proposed rate adjustments from Raftelis, highlighting a 21% increase for the years 2026 to 2028. The increase translates to a modest \$6.20 rise in the monthly bill for a domestic consumer in 2026. Additionally, the current rates remain competitive, as the utility is positioned at the low end of regional water utility rates even after the proposed adjustments.

Wilson addressed questions regarding the use of reclaimed water for irrigation, explaining that the current system lacks the capacity for expansion. She highlighted the low water pressure issues on Captiva Island, attributing them to high irrigation demands and undersized infrastructure. Plans for hydraulic improvements are in place to address these challenges.

* Discussion on the impact of new developments on water pressure and supply.

Discussion on Water Usage and Irrigation Regulations

Mintz emphasized the critical role of water access in post-hurricane recovery and inquired about the alignment of irrigation practices with county regulations. Koelmel indicated that proper enforcement could lead to a dramatic decrease in the 60% of water currently used for irrigation. Mintz added that the county lacks the staff to enforce these regulations effectively, suggesting a community dialogue as a potential solution.

Koelmel outlined the proposed rate increases of 21% for three consecutive years, emphasizing the uncertainty in future demand and revenue projections. A public hearing by the City of Sanibel is scheduled for Dec. 2 to approve these rates, with notifications being sent to members and made available online. Koelmel added that future increases beyond 2028 are expected to be significantly lower if current projections hold.

County South Seas Redevelopment and Rauschenberg Property Update

Mintz discussed the ongoing legal matters surrounding the South Seas Redevelopment, noting that Judge Schenko's ruling limits the resort development to 912 dwelling units, including hotel units. Lee County and South Seas have appealed this ruling, and a condition requiring

notification to the Captiva Civic Association about building permits is upheld. Additionally, the Rauschenberg property is under consideration for sale, with community investors aiming to preserve the land while addressing the fire department's interests.

Discussion on Rauschenberg Property Development and Community Concerns

Mintz outlined the community's understanding that South Seas was involved in due diligence for the Rauschenberg property, raising concerns about potential development. The fire department's justification for purchasing 9.81 acres for emergency services was highlighted, but Wade expressed skepticism about the community's support for this decision, particularly given the financial burden it may impose. The identity of the investor was also questioned, with Wade seeking clarity on their intentions.

Wade raised issues about the lack of transparency surrounding the community investor and the potential implications for the property development. Suarez countered that the investor's anonymity is standard in real estate and that their commitments would be subject to scrutiny. Mintz added that the foundation is aware of the investor's intentions regarding property preservation, while Brown questioned the legal obligations of the investor to follow through on their promises.

Wade highlighted the community's preference for conserving the estate rather than allowing development, mentioning the Lee County 2020 fund as a potential resource. Mintz shared optimism about a fire district referendum in February passing, which would facilitate discussions among community leaders and the developer to maximize land preservation. However, both speakers recognized that some level of development would likely be necessary for financial reasons.

Mintz highlighted the importance of community involvement in fundraising for conservation projects, noting that various organizations, including SCCF and Ding Darling, are prepared to contribute. Laird proposed a motion to reaffirm the panel's support for an anonymous bid, while Wade expressed concerns about the bid's terms and the financial implications of a necessary stormwater retention pond. The discussion underscored the urgency of moving forward with the project.

Updates on Bid Decisions and Wastewater Management

Mintz mentioned that the foundation is likely to make a decision on the buyer soon, following interviews with bidders. Brown reported that the stormwater project is on schedule, with a draft report expected in April, while the wastewater working committee is set to meet to reassess project costs and explore alternatives to septic systems. There was also discussion about the potential use of treated wastewater for irrigation in high-demand areas.

Infrastructure Updates and Community Events

Mike Bennett provided an update on the Captiva Drive project, noting that the county is selecting a contractor and that homeowners may have concerns about beach access due to ongoing work. Margarethe Thye Miville announced the "Welcome Back" sunset cruise scheduled for Dec. 1, highlighting a new sponsorship from Bank of the Islands. She also mentioned a fund-raising event at the Captiva Community Center in February, "Notes and Narratives, Captiva Soiree," aimed at spotlighting Captiva's natural beauty and Robert Rauschenberg's long legacy on the island. It was noted that a vote on the Nominating Committee's slate of panel appointments will be held during the December meeting, with panel officers to be selected at the January meeting. The panel's 2026 meeting schedule and budget will also be discussed in December.

Key Questions:

- What is the timeline for the IWA capital improvement projects discussed?
- How will the proposed rate adjustments impact the average consumer?
- What measures are being taken to ensure the reliability of water supply during peak demand?
- How will the new development proposed by Timbers Resorts affect water pressure and supply at South Seas?
- How will the community ensure that the investor's commitments regarding the Rauschenberg property are legally binding?
- What will happen if the community cannot raise enough funds for preservation?
- What are the specific terms of the bid from the community investor?