



Captiva Community Panel
MINUTES
April 14, 2026

Attending: David Mintz, Jon Rosen, Bob Rando, Michael Bennett, Jay Brown, Ken Suarez, Margarethe Thye-Miville, Linda Laird

Absent: Bruce McDonald, John Wade, Sandy Stilwell Youngquist

Audience: 31 at peak

Summary: The Captiva Community Panel convened its April session at 9 a.m. with roll call and unanimous approval of the March minutes (Bennett/Rosen). The panel heard a law-enforcement transition: Sergeant Rich Zeltman announced he will leave his Captiva post and introduced Sergeant Adam Winton as his successor. Winton summarized his investigative and marine enforcement background and offered to learn local rules and answer outstanding questions. The panel recognized a life-saving response by Deputy Lusk and Fire/EMS and heard that no crimes had been reported on Captiva since Winton took over as of yesterday.

Discussion then moved to public-safety and operational updates including resident concerns about e-bikes and scooters and the sheriff's office commitment to enforce applicable bicycle and traffic regulations and monitor problem behavior. Fire district briefings covered multi-day drone testing for life-raft delivery, use of the Rauschenberg helicopter landing area for short-term operations, upcoming staffing announcements and hurricane-season planning. CEPD reported an upcoming workshop, completion of dune-path GPS mapping for enforcement, vegetative enhancements, and a \$500,000 state grant application. SCCF updated the group on estuary salinity (improved due to recent rains) and an accelerated EAA reservoir timeline (about 2029) were discussed for salinity balance. The panel heard about a variance request for 14865 Mango Court, with limited questions and no community objections.

President David Mintz covered extensive legal matters including a South Seas appeal scheduled for April 30, related filings and motions, discovery disputes, and a motion to disqualify Judge Shenko. Financial and property items noted included an unpaid-bill suit against South Seas alleging roughly \$621,000 owed, the Rauschenberg sale reported near \$45 million, and a newly recorded 47-lot condominium plat that raised questions about lot sizes, RS1 zoning, and STRAP number assignments that the group agreed to investigate and clarify for residents.

Infrastructure topics closed the meeting: a ransomware hack has delayed stormwater modeling pushing public reports into summer, wastewater provider options to be re-evaluated once South Seas capacity needs are clear, short-term sand-maintenance plans for the Tween Waters stretch bike shoulder, and formation of a Bayside Resilience committee with Linda Laird volunteering to chair temporarily and work intended to begin by the May meeting. The panel noted reduced Development Committee activity and interest in fundraising assistance. Mintz confirmed that the "Protect Captiva" legal-fund had signed an agreement to pay litigation fees for a pending public-records lawsuit against the panel.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 a.m. with no public comments. Video link for the meeting is: <https://youtu.be/aW5lgdj4mnU>

Chapters & Topics:

Sergeant Zeltman's successor

Sergeant Rich Zeltman announced he will be leaving his Captiva post this week but remains with the sheriff's office and introduced Sergeant Adam Winton as his replacement. Zeltman expressed gratitude for his two years on the island and indicated he will remain available. Sergeant Winton introduced himself, described his investigative and marine enforcement experience, and stated he looks forward to community engagement and to learning local issues and regulations. He shared contact details, said he will rely on on-island deputies for support, and asked the panel to raise questions he can follow up on when needed.

The panel and attendees thanked Sergeant Zeltman and welcomed Winton, acknowledged the importance of visible patrols, and commended Deputy Lusk and Fire/EMS for a recent life-saving response to a juvenile medical emergency. Sergeant Winton reported that no crimes had been reported on Captiva since he assumed the role as of yesterday.

Captiva Fire District — e-bike and scooter concerns

Captiva Fire District's Jeff Pawul noted multiple resident inquiries and recent accidents involving e-bikes and scooters, noting increased traffic from Sanibel and at least one nearby fatality that drew attention. Sergeant Winton explained legal distinctions between pedal-assist e-bikes (treated as bicycles) and pedal-less electric bikes (treated as motor vehicles), said state law is still evolving, and stated the sheriff's office will enforce applicable bicycle and traffic regulations and monitor the issue.

Pawul described multi-day drone testing for life-raft delivery and noted boat-based training is planned, emphasizing the drone's larger size to carry flotation payloads. He confirmed recent use of the Rauschenberg helicopter landing area and indicated short-term continued access while the property's future is decided. Pawul also reported completion of new-hire testing and upcoming office work and hurricane-season planning to be addressed in later meetings.

CEPD meeting logistics and workshop announcement

Brighton Heard said a regular CEPD meeting was canceled for lack of quorum and announced a replacement workshop to be held Thursday, both in-office and on Teams with website linkage. He reported ongoing installation of ropes and bollards by Bob Johnson nearing completion and said unplanted dune paths have been GPS-marked for county use. Heard asked property owners to notify the office if historically used paths were missed so they can be added to the comprehensive list, and requested reports of high foot-traffic areas lacking signage.

Coastal Vista is designing vegetative enhancements for public entrances and a presentation is expected after the upcoming workshop; CEPD has applied for \$500,000 in state funding to support additional plantings. Heard reminded residents that the Australian Pine removal program runs through the end of June and that the office can dispatch a trapper for iguanas.

Mintz noted the Lee County Board of County Commissioners approved a dredging plan and funding for Blind Pass, with timing dependent on when the county decides dredging will not be immediately undone by shifting sand. Participants referenced possible target years (2026–2027) but acknowledged some uncertainty about exact scheduling.

SCCF estuary and reservoir update

Matt DePaolis reported estuary flows rose above the 350-cfs target to over 500 cfs after recent rains, which helps during the oyster spawning period though salinities remain below optimum. He described coordination with the Water Management District and Army Corps and announced \$2 billion in additional funding will accelerate the EAA reservoir timeline to roughly 2029, which should reduce harmful discharges and support salinity balance.

Community review — Mango Court variance request

Brittany Mechlin presented plans to renovate a corner property on Mango Court, including landscaping, a pool, window replacements, and a front 14x24 bedroom with bathroom that requires reducing the Mango Court setback from 25 to 17 feet under TFC-2 zoning. Panelists asked about septic capacity and were told existing septic meets current flow plus the added bathroom; no audience objections were voiced and Gooderham agreed to draft minutes for her county submission.

Appeal logistics and livestream details

Mintz described the April 30 oral argument location in Fort Myers and explained how to access the livestream through the Sixth District Court of Appeal calendar. He estimated the case will be the second argument that morning and advised attendees to expect a likely start shortly after 9:00 am with roughly 20 minutes per side.

Mintz explained that judges often form views from briefs and clerk consultations before oral argument, and that questions during argument may indicate the court's thinking but not guarantee outcomes. He advised that public attendance is unnecessary because Law Day will likely draw crowds and the argument can be streamed.

The panel for the appeal was identified as three judges—Hon. Mary Alice Nardella, Hon. Patra T. Brownlee, and Hon. Roger K. Gannon—and Protect Captiva's counsel considered the panel competent to address the case's complexity. The group discussed that decision timing is unpredictable and can range from weeks to months after argument.

Zoning-challenge petitions and related scheduling

A petition by 20 petitioners including several associations to invalidate the prior zoning approval is before Judge Shenko, who issued an order to show cause and expected responses shortly, with the petitioners and CCA having 30 days to reply after that response is filed. The speaker projected oral argument on that petition would likely occur in June or July given the court's schedule.

The dispute centers on whether CCA's update stating the 912 limit includes hotel units was accurate; Judge Shenko denied CCA's preclusion motion without prejudice and allowed discovery to proceed for now. South Seas later filed a motion to disqualify Judge Shenko based on his prior statements about hotels being included in the 912, and that motion is pending. The meeting also covered canceled depositions in public-records litigation, pending easement/amenity suits by associations, an Aquatic Builders lawsuit seeking roughly \$621,000 payment on a \$5.44 million contract.

Rauschenberg subdivision and STRAP questions

A recent story reporting that the Rauschenberg property sold to South Seas for an amount reported near \$45 million (less than the highest offer from another bidder) was discussed, with related partnership ownership updates.

Speakers reviewed a newly recorded plat for the Gulf portion of the Rauschenberg property showing a 47-lot condominium within the Captiva Beach Homeowners Association and noted that many lots appear smaller than the RS1 zoning minimum of 7,500 sq. ft. The discussion covered uncertainty about who issued STRAP numbers, how the property appraiser posted the subdivision on its website, and whether that subdivision affects what the county would approve for development given the Captiva plan and zoning. Participants emphasized the need to clarify the relationship between the recorded plat, STRAP assignments, and county land-use approvals before drawing conclusions about buildability.

Audience members thanked Mintz for ongoing updates and asked where the plat could be viewed online and whether the recorded plat resembled older historic plats from the 1920s. Speakers confirmed the LEEPA website shows aerial views and STRAP numbers for the properties and noted the recorded plat is similar to but not identical with century-old plats, which have been superseded by zoning and the comprehensive plan.

Stormwater and wastewater

The county-hired stormwater consultant's computer was hacked, causing significant damage and a delay to the stormwater model and final report that was expected by month's-end; the consultant now expects at least a multi-month delay into the summer. Because of the delay, stakeholders will not have a final model to evaluate or present at a public meeting for several months, which may require interim measures for immediate flooding concerns such as on Binder Drive.

Kimley-Horn produced a plan to make the FGUA plant more sustainable and potentially expand capacity, prompting reconsideration of using FGUA instead of Sanibel's Donax WWTP facility due to Donax's higher cost estimate. The group agreed that evaluation of FGUA versus Donax must wait until South Seas' final unit count is known, and participants noted FGUA currently may lack sufficient capacity and that county policy toward FGUA as not being a preferred wastewater processor is an additional complicating factor.

Bike-path sand hazard and short-term maintenance

Residents reported the Tween Waters stretch of the bike path is unusable from sand carried by wind and beach access, and trimming work by the county left sand uncleared on the shoulder. The group discussed pursuing a short-term maintenance program with CEPD or local vendors to keep sand off the shoulder and avoid bicycle accidents, and agreed Mintz would follow up with CEPD and Mike Bennett on a maintenance plan.

Bayside Resilience Project formation

The panel opened discussion on the Bayside Resilience Project and confirmed prior agreement to form a committee to attempt to restart the program. Linda Laird volunteered to chair the committee on an interim basis and volunteers have come forward to work with her and the panel. The group is preparing a funding proposal to identify initial pilot projects for Bayside resilience.

Mintz said he will speak with Laird offline, will introduce volunteer names, and aims to get the committee operating by the May meeting. The chair acknowledged volunteers and the group affirmed proceeding with the plan.

Development Committee update and fundraising interest

The Development Committee reported little to update. Thye-Miville noted a second committee member, Mike Mullins, is interested in helping with fundraising and has a preliminary idea under development.

Mintz announced that the agreement with the CCA Foundation for Protect Captiva Legal Fund has been executed and will cover legal fees for litigation involving the panel, alleviating those expense concerns for the panel.

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