

PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Pineda Causeway Boat Ramp

Regular Meeting

November 14, 2001

A Regular Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Department Pineda Causeway Boat Ramp Referendum Committee was held on Wednesday, November 14, 2001, at 6:00 p.m. at Pelican Beach Clubhouse, Satellite Beach, FL.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Ayn Samuelson
Mark Leslie
Herb Richter
Ken Vilardebo
Al Vazquez

MEMBERS ABSENT

Gary Hanlin
Mary Ann Kise

STAFF ATTENDING

Chuck Nelson, Parks and Recreation Director
Bill Ross, Parks and Recreation, Construction
Karen Palus, South Area Parks Operations Manager
Tina Webster, Administrative Secretary

PUBLIC

Michael Walther, Coastal Tech, A&E Firm
Melynn Chiariello, Coastal Tech, A&E Firm
Linda Olson, Environmental Services, Inc.
Frank & Carol Moore
John Fergus
Lorraine Gott
Sheri Willoughby
E. Dalton
D. Dalton

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Leslie, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m. Mr. Leslie asked for introductions.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Vilardebo asked to make an addition to the minutes. He read the additions he would like to add. Mr. Nelson mentioned that the typical minutes for committees are done in this manner and that the additions would be representing Mr. Vilardebo's opinions of how the meeting went and not necessarily reflecting the opinions or comments of all that were present at the last meeting. Discussion ensued. Mr. Nelson said he would allow Mr. Vilardebo to add an amendment to the minutes reflecting his personal opinions of the last meeting and not reflecting the opinions of the committee as a whole. He also stated that all the committee members have the opportunity to do a follow up should they feel it necessary. Ms. Samuelson made a **MOTION** to approve the minutes adding Mr. Vilardebo's opinions as an addendum to the minutes. Also mentioned was mangos should be mangroves. Mr. Leslie seconded the motion. **UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.**

STAFF REPORTS:

Mr. Nelson mentioned that a title search of the property is being done. The results should be available at the January 2002 meeting. Mr. Vilardebo asked the name of the Title Company. The name of the title company handling the title search will be made available to the committee members. Ms. Palus asked the committee if they wanted to continue to meet on the first Wednesday or go back to the first Monday of the month. Location has been an issue but may be able to utilize Ascension Church. Discussion ensued. The Committee decided to stay with the original meeting day of the first Monday of every month. The next meeting would then be January 7, 2002 at Ascension Catholic Church. Mr. Leslie made a **MOTION** to keep the meetings on the first Monday of the month. Ms. Samuelson seconded. **UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.**

NEW BUSINESS:

Project Review:

Mr. Nelson turned the meeting over to Mike Walther, Coastal Tech and staff. A member of the public asked how public input effects the project. Ms. Nelson stated that the Committee has the option to listen to the public and make a decision on what they feel is appropriate for this project and that decision would then go to the South Area Advisory Board and then to the Board of County Commissioners who have the final approval. It was also asked if the committee had the opportunity to choose a no-build option. Mr. Nelson explained yes, but the Board of County Commissioners would have the final approval of that decision.

Mike Walther, Coastal Tech

Provided two conceptual designs (idea) based on the evaluation and reports of the site. One fulfills the project as proposed in the Referendum and the other is a reduced design. After the Committee has approved a concept, the A&E firm will then come back with a preliminary design for approval and then a final design. Mr. Walther introduced Ms. Olson, Environmental Services who has performed an environmental assessment of the site.

Ms. Olson introduced herself to the committee and provided her job history and experience. She surveyed the site and delineated the boundaries. She mentioned that the site is a historic spoil island; mostly wetlands with patches of uplands; species located on wetlands and uplands are identical, dominated by Brazilian Peppers; in her opinion there is very little wetland function; the area is the lowest quality of wetlands as determined by the state.

Mangroves along edge of water; no nesting or permanent habitat present; did a sea grass survey of entire area and determined there is a sparse density of sea grass (1 or 2 little sprigs of grass about every 18 inches) in the finger lagoon; more sea grass is evident on west side of finger area; looking at map provided by A&E firm, the wetlands are marked in green. There are about 50% wetlands and 50% uplands. The site was a spoil site and the soil was placed unevenly thus causing this result. Have initiated coordination with Federal and State requesting verification of wetland and upland jurisdiction. Have not received a response from the US Army Corps (federal) at this time. Did meet with Mary Kutz, St. John's River Water Management District (SJRWMD) on site, who followed up with a memo stating that this site has the lowest quality of wetlands she had every seen with no value or threat of endangered species.

A member of the public questioned the hiring of Ms. Olson. She explained she was hired by Coastal Tech as a team member of the A&E firm for this project. The public member had the opinion that Ms. Olson could be bias, since she is essentially hired as part of the A&E firm. Mr. Walther mentioned that Ms. Olson is a respected Environmentalist in the community and her position is not of a bias manner but of her findings based on her education and experience. He mentioned that her findings were verified by SJRWMD as well and will also be confirmed during the permitting process. Discussion ensued.

A public member asked about the findings reflecting any impact to manatees. Ms. Olson stated that her assessment did include the manatee issue and will need to be considered prior to development. Ms. Olson's role is to characterize the site for environmental issues, which she has done. The manatee issue will need to be addressed in the permitting process. Discussion ensued. Ms. Olson snorkeled the area and did not see any manatee however, the state has documented the concentration of manatees in this area. There was no endangered plant life other than the Mangroves. A tree survey was done and results found a couple of oaks and a dense area of Australian Pines(an exotic, invasive species), which provide a buffer to the local neighborhood; one or two palmettos; a few cabbage palms; and a fringe of mangroves, which are protected.

A public member questioned the impact to the manatees as environmentally sensitive. Ms. Olson mentioned that there is not enough sea grass density in the discussed area to support the manatees and therefore there is no threat to the endangered species. She re-iterated that manatee protection would be addressed through permitting and any stipulations would need to be followed. The A&E firm has done no specific monitoring of the manatees at this time. Discussion ensued regarding the utilization of the area by manatees and the narrowness of the canal. Ms. Olson re-iterated that the State and the County track the manatee use.

A public member spoke regarding the muck. Mr. Walther mentioned that samples would need to be taken and tested to determine the apparent muck.

Mr. Vilardebo read a document as approved by the Brevard County Commissioners (1981), which states "motioned by Commissioner Schmitt, seconded by Commissioner Roberts to accept the Warranty Deed from Tortoise Island Partners, Ltd. for the property adjacent to Pineda Causeway which are environmental sensitive lands. Motion carried Unanimously. " He asked if development would stop until clarification has been made regarding this statement. Mr. Nelson said the statement is been researched, there could be many different reasons why it was stated in that manner. Ms. Olson stated that at the time the Warranty Deed was accepted by the County the conditions of the property may have been different and over time the condition of the property may have changed. Mr. Vilardebo read another letter (attached) regarding manatee impact from the Department of the Army. Mr. Nelson asked if the report was for the entire County or just this particular area. Mr. Vilardebo could not confirm if it was relevant to the County or just the area.

Mr. Vilardebo also spoke regarding the area being designated as Aquatic Preserve. This information was questioned as to what the boundaries are and who has determined this information. Mr. Vilardebo was not sure. This information would need to be confirmed. Mr. Nelson mentioned that this information would need to be addressed through permitting and if these items proved to be true then more than likely permitting would not be approved. Mr. Walther re-iterated that the information discussed by Ms. Olson is her assessment of the land in its present condition. Mr. Walther mentioned that he investigated the area to determine if it was a preserve. His research indicated that this particular area was not a preserve and therefore dredging would be allowable for this project. His firm does have confirmation from SJRWMD of the preserve boundaries and will share that information with the County.

A public member spoke regarding the past research done by the City of Satellite Beach of this area and commented that the findings were very positive for developing this area. Mr. Vilardebo mentioned that a house and a few docks were not on the current aerial provided by the A&E firm. Mr. Walther stated that there were no plans to re-do the aerial at this time.

Mr. Walther spoke regarding the two conceptual ideas he provided. One offers two lanes and one offers four lanes (as proposed by Referendum). He explained the ideas (copies of the plans are attached). Mr. Walther mentioned that the finger area was chosen to minimize impacts; water quality not as good in this area; dredging will need to be done to increase channel depth and will improve water quality; very thin layer of vegetation along the shoreline.

Ms. Chiariello discussed the property. She explained that the design is by Brevard County codes and the California Boating Standards. The requirements of parking are 25 parking spaces per boat launch. There is ability to petition to reduce the number of parking spaces. Stated that with any development there is usually some type of community impact. This has been identified and recommended based on the impact: channel depth will need to be increased to meet the standard depth of 4 ft.; discussed Brazilian Peppers and mangroves; dredging the area will increase the grass density to the west side of the finger canal (as recommended by SJRWMD). Mr. Vilardebo made a statement that in dredging only 1/2 way, a trap would be created for the manatees. Mr. Walther mentioned that it is currently happening now. The sea grass is close to the access of the channel.

A public member questioned the bird nesting area. Ms. Chiariello mentioned that nesting was not evident. Mr. Vilardebo noted that the firm did not see any manatees either. Ms. Chiariello stated that there was a difference between seeing a manatee and evidence of nesting. Public member questioned this stating that the birds are always there. Ms. Olson asked the kind of birds that are usually observed and mentioned that the birds will roost but wading is currently not available in this area. This area is not designated as a rookery. Mr. Vasquez asked if anything could be done to make the bird area more desirable to the birds. Yes. There is a potential of making a wading area and stable trees through this project to create a better habitat for the birds than what is currently there. Public asked what would be evidence of a rookery? Ms. Olson mentioned that in her

opinion if a rookery were present there would be nests. Ms. Walther mentioned that this is an idea of what could be addressed with mitigation. Mr. Vasquez asked for metrics of usage in comparison to the development. Ms. Olson mentioned that all that information would be coming with permitting.

In an effort to minimize residential impact, the 4-lane boat launch design provides a 90 ft. buffer of vegetation all the way around the property. Brazilian Pepper would be removed and replaced with natural vegetation in phases. Ms. Chiariello mentioned that the County has strict landscape requirements: for every 10 parking spaces must have 100 sq. ft of green space. She mentioned that the parking be permeable for a more natural look compared to asphalt; height of utility poles will need to be FAA approved; operating hours have not been decided, typically boat ramps are open 24 hours; she has been in contact with Patrick Air Force Base (PAFB) and have discussed the possibility of sharing current utilities; public member mentioned that he has spoke to PAFB and they have a serious concern with security and safety with this project; Ms. Chiariello mentioned that she has been in contact with them and they are receiving information on the project and the meetings; there was a question of property belonging to PAFB or DOT and that is not clear at this time. DOT owns the right-of-way and PAFB is researching the property ownership.

Discussed traffic issues- looking into a right turn only lane and one-way traffic flow for parking. Discussion ensued regarding launching in the finger area, which would be safer than launching into channel; all required signs would be posted as required by SJRWMD. Mr. Vasquez asked if the four-lane plan could be considered to have two motorized lanes and two non-motorized lanes thus allowing paddlers an access ramp and limiting motorized boat launching.

Mr. Vilardebo asked about protection of the shoreline referencing the boats getting stuck if the dredging is done. Mr. Walther suggested that the possibility could be there; the firm did consider this and the bank would need to be stabilized to reduce this possibility. Mr. Walther then discussed the landscape buffer on each side of ramp. Parking areas to be pervious, roadway paved; 90-ft buffer from any improvement to shoreline; height of buffer has not been determined. Existing Pepper is about 15 ft. and Australian Pines about 40 ft. The majority of the pines will remain. Between 90 to 140 ft of buffer from communities. Mr. Vasquez spoke regarding septic. Sewer is a preference but availability has not been determined.

Two-lane design: Discussion ensued regarding moving parking closer to Pineda. Question of having pull through for parking. Mr. Nelson mentioned that he directed the A&E firm to take the pull through out thus reducing the impact area and allowing more buffer space. Discussed water table; need of percolation tests and elevated sand fill. Mr. Leslie-how dredged area across from ramp would be stabilized. Mr. Walther mentioned using channel markers and coquina rock between mangroves and the channel itself. Mr. Leslie had a concern of the water depth when pulling out of finger area and heading west to access the Grand Canal. Mr. Vilardebo mentioned that there are only two deep accesses to the Grand Canal for large vessels, which are the very southern and northern entrances, and with the increased traffic flow could cause mishaps. Mr. Vilardebo also asked that the County look at an alternate site to develop. Mr. Nelson asked him where an alternate site might be between Eau Gallie Causeway and 520. He suggested improving existing sites instead. Mr. Nelson mentioned that the County is improving the existing sites as well.

Public member commented that he did not own a boat but believes after working with the City of Satellite Beach to provide access for the public to the Banana River, that there is a need for a boat ramp. There is no other property available; mentioned that the causeway provides a buffer from the winds; it is a sheltered harbor; the only other close boat access is Eau Gallie; and he supports this project.

Ms. Samuelson excused herself from the meeting due her attendance at another meeting.

Discussion ensued regarding different elements to create buffers and the intention of providing buffers is to eliminate public access. Mr. Vilardebo asked if the property would be fenced and Mr. Nelson noted that it is a possibility to fence the County's side of the property.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Leslie asked that the County put a hold on any further work until the title search of the property has been done. Mr. Nelson mentioned that Parks & Recreation would stay in contact with PAFB as well.

PUBLIC INPUT:

Public input occurred during the meeting as described above. Additional input is noted below:

- A member of the public stated that he believes the boat ramp project is a bad idea due to density of manatee utilization and security & parking issues for PAFB.
- A public member stated that there is a need for a boat launch for boaters. He asked the County to contact the Wing Commander of PAFB to find out if they have any opposition to this project. He believes this project will drastically improve the area even with the development of the boat launch.
- An active volunteer to the City of Satellite Beach spoke regarding the importance of providing access to Samson Island for launch points. The island would get more use if people could get to it. She believes the County has gone through great lengths to have limited impact on the community; the national security issue is temporary and may not be an issue by the time the boat ramp is completed; she supports this project and believes it will become an environmental jewel and the manatee issue being addressed through permitting.

Mr. Vilardebo made the statement that people built homes in Tortoise Island with the understanding that the area was an environmental preserve. He does not believe that people would build million dollar homes next to a boat ramp. If this project comes to fruition, he believes that mitigation should be the highest priority. He believes this project will be a magnet for boaters, increasing traffic, and does not believe that this area is compatible for this. It was asked if this would be the final improvement to area, should this project move forward. Mr. Nelson stated that the County Commissioners can overrule any decision that they have made in the past but mitigation is a recorded easement and is much harder to change and would need state approval to change.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Vasquez made a **MOTION** to adjourn and Mr. Leslie seconded. **UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.** The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m. Due to the Holidays the next meeting is scheduled for January 7, 2001 at Ascension Catholic Church.