

SIESTA KEY ASSOCIATION MEETING

April 2, 2015

WELCOME

President Michael Shay called the meeting to order. A quorum was present: Beverly Arias, Helen Clifford, Deet Jonker, Joyce Kouba, Catherine Luckner, Michael Shay, Robert Stein, and Paul Wilkinson.

MINUTES

The February minutes were approved.

ATTENDEES: 35

COMMUNITY REPORTS

Sheriff's Office

Capt. John Walsh expressed appreciation for the fine work of Sgt. Scott Osborne, presenting him with a plaque for ten years of outstanding service on Siesta Key. Sgt. Osborne is being transferred to north Sarasota County.

Lt. Debra Kaspar reported that extra staff from the Sheriff's office was brought onto Siesta Key to discourage crime during Spring Break. By ramping up the presence of the Sheriff's Office, they were able to keep crime to a minimum, indicating they had put the right people in the right place at the right time. High school students flood into Siesta Key during the month of April, which can result in waves of juvenile crime. The Sheriff's Office is working to prevent the buildup of crowds of hundreds of students. Only 1 aggravated battery was reported in March, compared to several last year. 1 burglary was reported compared to 10 last year. No car burglaries.

Sgt. Chris Laster of the Mounted Unit said that men on horses have been working large events as well as Spring Break. It has been pretty calm. A lot of it has to do

with presence. We are very fortunate here compared to other counties. The mounted unit had 26 arrests.

Code Enforcement

Michael Shay reported that John Lally continues to work on illegal rentals.

GUEST SPEAKER

Commissioner Charles D. Hines

Sarasota County Board

Sarasota County Update: Current & Future Capital Improvement Projects

Commissioner Hines distributed a handout to the audience: *Sarasota County Citizen's Guide to the Adopted Fiscal Year 2015 Budget.*

Public Safety is the #1 issue. It is appropriate that the Sheriff's Office is the biggest item in Sarasota's budget. We can have the greatest beaches and parks, but if they are not safe, what do they mean? Commissioner Hines recently attended the Florida Association of Counties, and found Sarasota is in good financial shape. We are still 30% down from the height of 2005-2006, yet we have \$200,000,000 of capital projects without raising taxes. Other counties are astonished at our successes. We have refinanced every single loan we have, lowering the interest rate each time, resulting in huge savings. Sarasota is AAA rated. Commissioner Hines stated that as bad as the recession was, he didn't see people bailing out of Sarasota unless they lost their jobs.

The Commissioner highlighted the following projects:

New Gulf Gate Library, 7.7 million

Hurricane-proof County Emergency Operations and 911 Call Center, 15.5 million

Blackburn Point Park and boat ramps, 4.4 million

Bee Ridge Road East extension, 34 million

Emergency communications radios with extension to Manatee, 32 million

Siesta Key Beach improvements, 21.5 million

4 hurricane-proof fire stations, 18 million

Honore Road resurfacing, 10 million

Upgraded athletic fields, 12 million

New Tax Collector and DMV office, 5 million

Dona Bay project, 12 million

Commissioner Hines credited the Sheriff for reaching out to the community and being responsive. The Sheriff's office needs during the next 5-7 years would cost \$90-100 million, yet everybody says, don't raise our taxes! How do we pick What Do We Want Vs. What Do We Need? I have asked the sheriff: what do you need in the next 2 years? In the next 5 years? Can you break it down into smaller pieces? Can we wait until we save up the money? We've got choices to make. Other communities are raising taxes in order to stay even with basic services such as water, sewer, fire, ambulance, etc.

Commissioner Hines sees finishing the LEGACY TRAIL into downtown Sarasota, at a cost of \$30-40 million as a want. The County Commissioners granted the City of Venice an extra one million dollars towards Venice Beach Re-nourishment Project because the project cost more than anticipated. Is this a sustainable model?

The Commissioners work for the public and need input regarding what do we need and what do we want.

Our total County Budget is over a billion dollars.

The public had the following questions and comments:

What about Private Property benefiting from beach re-nourishment? Expensive condos and hotels should throw in a little money to help fund the re-nourishment of beaches that front their buildings. The rules for the City and County should be the same.

Turtle Beach Re-nourishment? If we don't get State money this year, Turtle Beach probably won't happen.

Reopen Midnight Pass? Could sand from opening Midnight Pass be used for Turtle Beach re-nourishment? The cost of keeping the channel open is prohibitive. The State has turned us down. Nora Patterson emphasized that the State not only said "No," they said "Hell no."

The Tourist Development Tax has sky-rocketed. Most goes to beach re-nourishment and maintenance. Can't we build something that our full time residents can use as well as tourists?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Environment

Catherine Luckner

The Army Corps released an updated environmental assessment for the proposed Big Pass dredge plan to re-nourish Lido Key. Catherine said this was a 2004 assessment that is no longer valid. This is not a complete application. ACOE is attempting to make both federal and state applications concurrent. It is our job to find anything that is incomplete, lacking in information, or incorrect. Significant changes from the initial presentation have been made. The bulk of the sand will be taken from the center of the pass, with the second source following the current northern shoreline channel. The ebb shoal will be a backup. The proposed groins would be 9 ft. wide, 4 ft. tall above the berm, and go out into the Gulf approximately 400 feet abutting a seawall. Both groins start and finish at two commercial properties, meaning that people would not be able to walk the beach. It would effectively destroy the walking beach on Lido and create a private beach between the groins for the properties at the south end of Lido. The third groin has been held for possible future implementation. Our job is to raise questions about things that are inconsistent with the coastal management and the State plan for coastal wildlife and beach management. A meeting will be held April 15 for public input. The estimate is to begin beach filling in the fall of 2015.

OLD BUSINESS

2015 Great American Cleanup: Michael Shay reported that 33 volunteers contributed over 53 hours of work cleaning up Ocean Boulevard, Higel Avenue, and Midnight Pass Road.

Roundabout: Bob Stein reported that no decision has been made. 92 people have commented after receiving the first mail out. Another mailing will be made to nearby residents. A decision should be made by summer.

Siesta Key Village Municipal Lot: Michael Shay reported that currently there is no ordinance against trucks being parked in that lot. However, SKA and Siesta Key Village Merchants Association will soon be meeting with the County Commissioners. They will propose a bill to restrict truck parking in the Siesta Key Village Municipal Lot. Hopefully that bill will be passed quickly.

NEW BUSINESS

Stickney Point Bridge Repair – An FDOT meeting will be held Tuesday 5 to 6:30 at St. Boniface.

Pedi cab Regulations are being considered after a driver was arrested for passing counterfeit bills and was found to be an unregistered sex offender.

ADJOURNMENT

Michael Shay adjourned the meeting and invited all to the next SKA monthly meeting on May 7, 2015, at 4:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Kouba

Secretary, Siesta Key Association

SKA minutes reflect the column written by Diana Colson and published in the Siesta Sand newspaper with additions by the association secretary.

