

SIESTA KEY ASSOCIATION MEETING

Thursday, December 1, 2016

CALL TO ORDER

Bob Stein called the meeting to order. A quorum was present: Harold Ashby, Joyce Kouba, Catherine Luckner, Dan Lundy, and Bob Miller. Bob Stein announced that since the meeting is dedicated to the Big Pass dredging project, anyone wanting to raise an issue to SKA should write their contact information and issue on a pad at the back of the room and an SKA Director will contact you.

Also, the January meeting date will be changed from the first Thursday to the second Thursday, January 12, 2017.

COMMUNITY REPORTS

Sheriff's Office

Sgt. McGregor

Sgt. McGregor reported that it has been a quiet month. The pub crawl and Crystal Classic went off without a hitch. The first Siesta Key Seafood Festival and Santa Stumble events take place in December. SKA donated \$250 to the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Gift of Giving fund for the family chosen by the Sheriff's Office for the holidays.

BOARD REPORTS

Membership

Bob Miller

Membership is going well and is on pace with last year. SKA needs your support. Please renew your membership for 2017.

Bicycle Initiative

Harold Ashby

SKA has created a cycling map of Siesta Key which will be distributed throughout the Key in December.

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Kelli Pond, Sarasota County Department of Health

in partnership with Tobacco Free Florida

Kelli is the point of contact to create a tobacco litter prevention program in Sarasota County. Siesta Beach used to be smoke free; however, the State of Florida has preempted authority to regulate smoking on local beaches. Residents can contact our State legislators regarding ability to have delegated authority for smoking regulations on local beaches.

**Dr. Stephen Leatherman, “Doctor Beach”
Earth and Environmental Science Professor
at Florida International University**

Dr. Leatherman did not appear as a paid consultant. He has an interest in preserving Siesta Beach as one of the top beaches in the country.

Dr. Leatherman’s comments were primarily general to dredging and beach erosion, rather than on specific details of the proposed project for Lido Key. He emphasized that coastal science modeling is imperfect. The models make assumptions. Large dredging projects generally result in some unexpected consequences. He recounted one dredging project near Kiawah Island, South Carolina. Similar to Siesta Key, Kiawah Island has sand coming to it from the north where a shoreline was eroded. US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) modeling projected no negative impact from dredging a large channel. However, Dr. Leatherman accurately predicted that the dredging project would result in a small bird island disappearing. Later, a golf course on Kiawah Island began eroding.

Sand has become a highly desirable and expensive commodity, and as such, may be subject to illegal mining and theft. Although Lido Key needs sand, Siesta Key cannot sacrifice its buffer for another area. Do no harm.

Dr. Beach then opened the floor to questions and comments from the audience:

What do you recommend? An environmental impact study (EIS) should be completed. Ecological factors, flora, fauna in the existing environment needs to identified. Then an analysis of what might happen if things are changed.

Unexpected consequences may occur. If a project is set for 50 years, you can’t

change it. If things are happening that are detrimental to Siesta Beach, you need to be able to change course.

How much excess sand is out there? It is usually not excess sand. Sand builds up and then moves southward in the system. Take a little bit of sand, perhaps a few hundred cubic yards, and see what happens. Then if there is no harm over a period of years, take a little more. Do not go into a major dredge project with the expectation that nothing detrimental is going to happen.

Might special interests be promoting this project in the guise of public interest? Possibly. The short-term cost of getting sand is less, the closer the sand. However, the long-term cost may be that Siesta Beach may not be what it is today.

How confident would you be if the EIS showed no indication of negative impact? There are so many variables connected with coastal science including waves and currents. The equations are not perfect. Every place is a little different. The models make a lot of assumptions. Treat the project as an experiment. Try a smaller project. Be wary of digging large, deep channels; there is an equilibrium, holes will fill in.

Is 1.2 million cubic yards of sand a small amount? No.

Could putting this amount of sand on Lido be a problem for Siesta? Too much sand is not usually a problem.

An attendee reported that his experience with the USACE jetties, groins, and beach renourishment in New Jersey was problematic including munitions pumped onto the beach. The DEP should be protecting the public interest however the DEP is subject to influence from special interests.

Dr. Leatherman is giving extra credit in his beach rating for non-smoking, a good safety record, and good non-motorized access. He further stated that cigarette butts are long enduring because they are not captured by most raking devices and filters do not degrade.

Why have we not had an EIS? How could giving a small amount of sand be good? Dredging a deep channel could make a major change in the natural dynamics. If you have to give something, take a little sand from the shoal. That would have less effect. Try not to disturb the natural dynamics. If a USACE dredge project is set for 50 years, it will be hard to change. An attendee was adamant that no sand should be removed from the shoal.

An attendee reported that at the recent DEP public meeting, there appeared to be an influence on the DEP to move this project forward. SKA has been providing the DEP with alternative professionally supported solutions to find a project that would solve Lido's problem yet not harm Siesta Key.

ADJOURNMENT

Catherine Luckner adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Kouba

Secretary, Siesta Key Association

Next SKA monthly meeting is January 12, 2016 at 4:30 pm.