

SIESTA KEY ASSOCIATION MEETING

Thursday, October 4, 2018

CALL TO ORDER

Gene Kusekoski called the meeting to order. Present: Gene Kusekoski, Joyce Kouba, Erin Kreis, Catherine Luckner.

MINUTES

Joyce Kouba

A quorum was not present.

COMMUNITY REPORTS

Sheriff's Office

Sgt. Jason Mruczek

Sgt. Mruczek reminded all to keep their car doors locked. Comments from the audience: Cases have been reported of someone knocking on the door to test to see whether someone is home. Sgt. Mruczek recommended leaving a TV, lights, or radio on and using motion detector lights. Sgt. Mruczek was not aware of a second crash into the wall at the 90 degree Higel/Siesta intersection. He will check with the City and advise of any information he finds. Another driver drove into a service box at that intersection, but was located because his license plate was left behind.

New Utility Poles

Gene Kusekoski

A resident asked about the new, larger utility poles being installed near the Village. FPL responded to SKA's inquiry that the larger poles were required for 3-phase electricity and for hurricane resistance. Utility lines could be put underground at resident expense.

County Commission Candidate Forum

Gene Kusekoski

A County Commission candidate forum is being held at the Gulf and Bay Club on October 31.

GUEST SPEAKER

Jon Thaxton

**Senior Vice President for Investment
Gulf Coast Community Foundation**

What can we do to help mitigate red tide severity?

Red tide is naturally occurring algae, called *Karenia brevis*, which is always in the Gulf. Red tide blooms initiate about 40 miles off shore on the floor of the Gulf. Winds bring Saharan desert sand, which is full of iron, to the Gulf. The iron becomes available as a nutrient to *Karenia brevis*. Many variables affect the blooms including storms, nutrients, sand, water temperature, upwelling, and salinity. Although we might like to eliminate *Karenia Brevis*, we do not know what role red tide plays in maintaining a healthy marine system. Cells are brought landward via currents and wind. Once the cells reach nutrient-rich water along the shore, the bloom can intensify. The artificially-created nitrogen that man creates for fertilizer is the form of nitrogen that *Karenia brevis* thrives on. Unused nitrogen becomes available in the Gulf via storm water runoff. Reducing the negative impact of red tide blooms is a complex problem. However, if you are feeding the bloom, it will spread further along the coast and persist for a longer duration. We do not have good historical data about the spread and duration of red tide blooms. We do have good data relating to the amount of man-created nitrogen that we are putting into our marine systems. It is much more cost effective to prevent the nitrogen from entering the marine system than to remove the nitrogen. Our goal should be to reduce the amount of nitrogen we are putting into our waterways so that we have red tide blooms of lesser intensity, covering a smaller amount of area, for a shorter period of time. In 2008 storm water managers in the state of Florida met to improve the criteria used to develop storm water ponds and drainage systems. The goal was to remove nitrogen and phosphorus before it gets to our waterways. These plans were shelved because if those plans were put into effect, there would be additional costs to a few industries. However, we are now experiencing large economic losses from this red tide bloom. We need to consider costs to the whole community, not to industries in isolation. Today, no elected official in Florida would advocate anything that

would compromise our waterways. However, once the dead fish smell is gone and the waters return to turquoise blue, you can be assured that the attack on regulations that keep our waters clean will come under fire. We need to be vigilant in ensuring that the regulations that keep our waterways clean are not compromised.

Questions from the audience:

Sarasota has made huge strides in reducing nitrogen in storm water, what additional measures should we take? Nitrogen trends in Sarasota Bay are still increasing, though at a slower pace; there is still excessive nitrogen that fuels red tide blooms. We do not need new regulations, but need to revisit existing regulations. Improved storm water runoff would be a goal. Storm water systems now eliminate 40% of the nitrogen, 60% would put us in a much more natural nitrogen cycle. Some improvements to our wastewater treatment could be better.

What impact do old septic systems have on red tide blooms? Old septic systems were built before new standards were in place. They do not remove the nitrogen, nor do they remove the coli form bacteria that causes beach closings.

Would a new septic system be an improvement? Yes.

What else should we do? Upgrade the storm water runoff codes and review codes on nitrogen runoff. Community education about the links between nitrogen fertilizer and red tide bloom severity is also a priority. Review land development codes, replace old septic tanks, and improve wastewater treatment are three high priority actions. We do not have a large amount of agriculture; most of the golf courses use best practices. We need better data on nitrogen source and what action has the most cost effective way of removing x amount of nitrogen from getting into the waterway.

What does the Lake Okeechobee release have to do with red tide? There is a theory that when the large blue green algae colony died as it reached salt water, the *Karenia brevis* algae fed on the resultant nitrogen. Then as the fish began to decompose the *Karenia brevis* began feeding off of that nitrogen.

As individuals, what can we do? Individuals should be conscious of how you are applying fertilizers. Use only long release nitrogen fertilizers. Do not use any nitrogen fertilizer during the rainy season. And pick up your pet waste.

How do we know that landscapers are following regulations? We don't. But the professionals must take a course. Also, they pay for nitrogen rich fertilizers, so the least they can put on and keep customers happy, the better they will be. Homeowner use of fertilizer is more of a concern.

Are there any laws requiring native Florida plants? No. You can have non-native plants that thrive in our environment. Fertilizers such as Floricam Dynamite have been developed specifically for Florida. You can purchase these at local home improvement stores.

What is being done to communicate regulations to the community? FPL and Sarasota County water bills can include notices to the public.

An attendee recommended questioning what your landscape company uses and demand natural, low-nitrogen products. This helps create economic incentive for companies to stop using excessive nitrogen.

Is any money available to service workers who are losing wages due to red tide? No. The Community Foundation is looking at how they might be able to help these individuals.

BOARD REPORTS

Siesta Promenade

Membership

Gene Kusekoski

SKA is starting its 2019 membership campaign. Dues will be increasing to \$35 annually. Those renewing or joining before January 2019 will receive membership at the current rate of \$30 annually. Please join as soon as

possible. SKA would like to save the approximately \$1000 cost of postal fees to use for other program.

OLD BUSINESS

Siesta Promenade

Gene Kusekoski

Benderson is looking for 20 units per acre versus 13 allowed by code. Contact Sura Kochman for information on activities of the Pine Shores Neighborhood Association. County Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for November 15 and a County Commission meeting on December 12.

Illegal Rentals

Gene Kusekoski

Longboat Key has modified its rental regulations so that code enforcement can ticket offenders at the time of discovery. In Sarasota, offenders are taken to court, where a fine may be imposed. An attendee asked what can be done about the rentals on Beach Road.

Big Pass

Catherine Luckner

SKA has not received any ruling from the judge regarding our Verified Complaint. We are making plans for presenting our case before the County. We did reach our \$10,000 matching fund. \$40 per member would fund this complaint. If you can help, please do. If you have already donated, thank you.

ADJOURNMENT – Gene adjourned the meeting at 6 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Kouba, Secretary
Siesta Key Association of Sarasota, Inc.

Next SKA monthly meeting is November 1, 2018 at 4:30 pm.