

November 7, 2006
Milton, Florida

The Marine Advisory Committee met on the above date with the following members present: Vice Chairman Jeff Marker and members Dan Wakley, Pasco Gibson, and Billy Kimbrough. Also present were the County Administrator (Hunter Walker), Public Works Director (Avis Whitfield), County Engineer (Roger Blaylock), and Marine Extension Agent (Christina Verlinde). Vice Chairman Marker called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Gibson moved approval of the minutes from the October 3, 2006 meeting; Wakley seconded, and the vote carried unanimously. (4-0)

Boat Ramp Updates – Public Works Director

Archie Glover Road

Whitfield said the Archie Glover Road construction is underway. He said the limerock base is near completion, and he expects the paving to begin within the next few weeks.

Mae Lane

Whitfield said county staff has requested the Engineering Department apply for the permit to build a dock at the Mae Lane Boat Ramp per the Marine Advisory Committee's recommendation. He said Marker has done some investigative work on the adjacent property for possible county acquisition.

Oriole Beach

Whitfield said the county will begin construction of the new Oriole Beach Boat Ramp parking lot located north of the existing parking lot within the next few weeks. He said the first phase will be to clear the area. Whitfield said all of the trees on the lot are either dead, hurricane damaged, or leaning. He said it will be best to completely clear the property and plant some type of trees or shrubs to provide a border on Bay Street.

Wakley said he contacted Barry Koncan regarding the Woodlawn Beach boat ramp improvements. He said Koncan still believes there is no seagrass in the area, and he wishes the area dredged.

Navarre Beach Pier

Blaylock said FEMA has obligated two additional Project Worksheets to rebuild the fishing pier at the current location with the same configuration and design. He said this is very important because it allows the county to maximize the amount of dollars to be used towards an improved fishing pier. Blaylock said the new fishing pier will be bigger and better with removable panels. He said county staff had a meeting with the county's consultant (Post, Buckley, Schuh, and Jernigan), and there is a proposed public meeting scheduled for mid January to receive public input. Blaylock said there was discussion concerning demolishing or leaving part of the existing fishing pier pilings in place to build a linear marine sanctuary, and the consultants felt this is not advisable. He said in conjunction with building the new fishing pier the county will be looking at permitting a site offshore for the marine sanctuary incorporating some of the pier material. Blaylock said the funding in place deals strictly with demolishing the existing fishing pier and reconstructing a new fishing pier. He said there are no state dollars for the Marine Sanctuary. Blaylock said all of the money appropriated to the state park will be used towards putting the infrastructure back in place that the county had before the two hurricanes.

Wakley asked if the only option is to rebuild the fishing pier at its current location. Blaylock said FEMA will only reimburse for what was damaged or destroyed. He said the FEMA reimbursement is the basis for the improved project. Blaylock said the configuration and location of the new fishing pier will be discussed during the public meetings.

Gibson asked if the county plans to operate the fishing pier. Blaylock said this will be a policy decision by the Board of County Commissioners. He said the Board will be gathering information from citizens, vendors, and this committee before making a decision. Gibson said Panama City does a real good job with their park and municipality pier. He suggested Santa Rosa County model the park and pier after Panama City. Blaylock asked if the park and pier in Panama City are operated by county or city government. Gibson said yes. Walker said the Panama City pier has consistently been brought up during discussions, and he will check into how this pier is funded and operated.

Request for Canoe/Kayak Ramp

Whitfield said the Bagdad Waterfronts Florida Partnership Steering Committee is requesting the Oakland Basin Boat Landing in Bagdad service strictly as a canoe/kayak launch (Attachment in File). He said the location of the boat ramp is at the end of Forsyth Street near Bagdad Elementary School. Whitfield said this is a small boat ramp with extremely limited parking.

Gibson said he is against limiting the boat ramp to just canoe/kayak use. He said a small boat can be launched from this boat ramp, and several people currently launch their small boats from this site. Gibson said he does not understand why the boat ramp should be limited to canoes or kayaks. Wakley said this is a county boat ramp, and he has not heard a valid reason to shut down this ramp to small boats.

Verlinde suggested installing signage regarding the hours of operation and no alcoholic beverages. Whitfield said the county can provide signage.

Wakley moved denial of the request to turn Oakland Basin Boat Landing into strictly a canoe/kayak launch and approval of the county installing the appropriate signage; Kimbrough seconded, and the vote carried unanimously. (4-0)

Boating Registration Fee Update/Funding Alternatives

Walker said he distributed a letter from the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission regarding the City of Milton grant

application for the Carpenter's Park North Boat Launch project (Attachment in File). He said the City of Milton was denied the grant so the county funds reserved for this project will go back into the Boater Registration fund. Walker reviewed the Boater Registration fund activity in 2006 and said the available balance at the end of 2007 should be approximately \$470,000.00 (Attachment in File).

Marker said at the last meeting some good ideas were discussed with regard to accumulating funds for waterway access by land acquisition. He said the potential funding sources discussed included the Tourist Development Tax, Franchise Fees designated for Recreation, and a portion of the Gas Tax paid by boaters. Walker said the Tourist Development Tax funds are turned over, by contract, to the Tourist Development Council. He said typically these funds are used for marketing purposes. Walker said Broxson used franchise fee funds designated for recreation to purchase the property adjacent to the Oriole Beach boat ramp. He said these funds are restricted by district and used to fund the parks. Whitfield said a portion of the gas tax allocated to the Road and Bridge Department is used to maintain county boat ramps.

Walker said other Florida counties have voted for taxation to acquire access to water. He suggested a possible partnership with Florida Forever to leverage dollars on a joint project of sensitive lands.

Wakley requested a response from the County Attorney regarding the use of Boater Registration Fee funds to purchase land. He asked if bonds can be used or eminent domain. Walker said with eminent domain the county still has to pay fair market value for property. Wakley said he felt the Boater Registration fees can be increased \$1.00 for land acquisition. Walker said he will check into this. He said a portion of the Boater Registration Fees may be an option as an income stream to secure a loan. There was continued discussion regarding additional possible sources of revenue and partnerships with agencies such as the Water Management District, Florida Forever, Wildlife Management, Garcon Point Bridge Authority, or City of Gulf Breeze to acquire water access for boat ramps.

Marker requested the members brainstorm ideas to take to the Board of County Commissioners in January 2007. He said this committee needs a plan to present to the Board of County Commissioners and suggested this plan be a priority for the next meeting.

Boating Safety/Boating Etiquette Seminar

Marker said he has had a difficult time getting a response from the U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliary. He discussed several boater safety activities that take place during a spring event. Marker suggested striking the word etiquette and replace it with the word fishing.

Gibson said the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission may have someone who can assist with boater safety activities. Verlinde said boater safety is incorporated in several events throughout the year. She asked if the committee is requesting an additional event designated for boater safety. Marker said he is suggesting an event in the early spring before boaters get into full gear. There was further discussion regarding an early spring event on boater safety and vessel inspections. Wakley said the event can take place at the four major boat ramps throughout the county at a different ramp each weekend.

Other Business

Verlinde discussed the draft Santa Rosa County Waterway Management Plan (Attachment in File). She requested the committee members review the draft plan and email her with any comments.

Gibson requested an update on the Oyster Reef Restoration project. Verlinde said the Department of Aquaculture and Consumer Sciences has placed shell at two sites. She said the locations are the east side of Garcon Point Bridge and the east side of East Bay. Verlinde discussed an additional project planned in November on the west side of East Bay on land owned by the Florida Park Service. She described this project in some detail. There was discussion regarding a need to knock down one of the shell piles due to safety and liability issues.

Wakley said he is glad the derelict vessels at Navarre Beach have been removed. There was discussion regarding an additional derelict vessel in the Santa Rosa Shores area.

The next scheduled meeting of the Marine Advisory Committee will be on Tuesday, December 5, 2006 at 5:00 p.m.

There being no further business to come before the committee at this time, the meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.