

January 9, 2007
Milton, Florida

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

Vice Chairman Marker turned the meeting over to Robert Turpin.

Marker moved approval of the minutes from the November 7, 2006 meeting; Gibson seconded, and the vote carried unanimously. (3-0)

Acting Chairman Turpin turned the meeting back over to Vice Chairman Marker.

Boat Ramp Updates – Public Works Director

Marker said Whitfield is an outstanding Public Works Director. He commended Whitfield on his response time to requests.

Archie Glover Road - Whitfield said the paving work on the roadway leading to Archie Glover Boat Ramp is complete and the shoulder work will be finished within the next few weeks.

Mae Lane - Whitfield said the permit to build a dock has not been applied for yet. He said the Engineering Department has been so busy the surveyor has not had time to collect the field data necessary for the permit application.

Oriole Beach - Whitfield said the limerock parking area is complete including the designated parking spaces. He said the county may plant a few trees as a buffer. Marker said an adjacent property owner has expressed some concern with the limerock getting on her property. He asked if the county can mitigate by placing railroad ties along the adjacent property line. Whitfield said there is a grassed area between the parking area and her property. He said he felt the only way limerock will get on the adjacent property is with a storm surge. Whitfield said he will look at the area again.

Woodlawn Beach - Whitfield said Barry Koncan requested a street light at Woodlawn Beach Boat Ramp, and a working street light is now in place.

Bagdad Boat Ramp - Whitfield said a county boat ramp sign has been posted at this boat ramp per the Marine Advisory Committee's recommendation.

Walker asked if there have been any reports on the portable toilets recently installed at county boat ramps. Whitfield said he has not received any comments. He said the county may want to consider placing a portable toilet at the Oriole Beach Boat Ramp. Marker suggested waiting until spring. He also suggested removing all portable toilets from area boat ramps during the winter months to lower expenses.

Turpin also commended Whitfield on a job well done.

William Myrick said he is the liaison for seventeen bass clubs in Escambia County. He provided background information on his pursuit of additional fresh water boat ramps on Escambia and Perdido Rivers. Myrick discussed a potential site for a public boat ramp near the north side of the Highway 90 Bridge. He said there is a two acre site on Escambia River at this location. Myrick said he will provide the information he received from the State of Florida to Walker. He said he hopes Escambia County, Santa Rosa County, and the State of Florida will enter into a partnership to build a substantial boat ramp at this site.

Marker asked if there is boat access to the site. Myrick said yes. He said the property belongs to the State of Florida, and it is his understanding the state will allow usage of the property if maintained by the county.

Turpin said at this initial stage there are several issues that will have to be resolved. He said first there has to be an interest by the county. Turpin said access, traffic, permitting, funding, and maintenance issues will have to be addressed. He suggested Myrick provide the FDOT (Florida Department of Transportation) contact information to Whitfield or Walker.

Myrick discussed the financial benefits of this boat ramp to Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties. Walker said he has concerns with access and competing with the private sector. Marker said the private boat ramp (The Swamp House) in this area may become restricted to membership in the near future. Marker said he will visit the site for further discussion at the next meeting.

Whitfield said there will be major hurdles with traffic turning off of Highway 90 near the end of the bridge and permitting to fill the area. He said the Engineering Department may need to get involved to address permitting issues.

Boating Registration Fee Update/Funding Alternates

Marker requested this item be addressed at the next meeting with Wakley present. Walker said Wakley has resigned his appointment after serving a four year term. He provided an updated report of the activities and balance in the Boaters Registration Fund (Attachment in File). Marker asked if interest earned on the funds goes back into the Boater Registration Fund. Walker said the Clerk of Court is responsible for managing county funds, and he will check into this.

There was discussion regarding the new Navarre Fishing Pier. Walker said there is a public meeting scheduled at 6:00 p.m.,

Monday, January 29, 2007 at the Navarre Middle School to discuss the pier. Gibson said he felt it will be more beneficial to the residents if the county operates the pier. Walker said once the pier is built there will be public workshops to discuss operation of the pier. There was discussion to look at other municipalities to see how their piers are operated.

Marker suggested a portion of the fee collected for use of the pier be used for waterway access. Marker requested the committee members provide concrete ideas of revenue sources at the next meeting so the committee can provide a revenue plan for land acquisition to the Board of County Commissioners.

Boater Safety/Boating Etiquette Seminar

Marker provided information to the committee he received from FWC (Fish and Wildlife Commission) at a recent meeting. He said he met with the Coast Guard Auxiliary about having a one hour boater safety instruction seminar and boat inspections in Santa Rosa County. After discussion it was decided to hold the Boater Safety Seminar on Saturday, March 10, 2007. Walker said he will provide the location at the next meeting. The committee also discussed scheduling boat inspections through the months of April and May at a different boat ramp each Saturday. Marker said the Public Information Office can advertise the seminar and boat inspections on the county's website.

Turpin moved approval of (1) scheduling a Boater Safety/Boating Etiquette Seminar on March 10, 2007, (2) county staff finalize the seminar details, (3) the Public Information Office advertise, and (4) Marker schedule the seminar and boat inspections with the Coast Guard Auxiliary; Gibson seconded, and the vote carried unanimously. (3-0)

Waterway Management Plan Draft Input

Verlinde distributed an updated copy of the Waterway Management Plan Draft to the committee members (Attachment in File). She said she hi-lighted the items she felt were important. Verlinde reviewed the objectives and said Santa Rosa County has already completed some of the waterway needs.

Other Business

Gibson discussed the fill in at the entrance of the canal at the Archie Glover Boat Ramp. He asked if the Interstate 10 Bridge contractor has been approached concerning the canal. Whitfield said permitting and a contractor are required to dredge the canal. He said nothing has gone before the Board of County Commissioners to pursue a dredging contract. There was discussion regarding the bridge contractor blowing sand into the canal entrance with tug boats and barges. After further discussion Whitfield said the Interstate 10 Bridge contract is through FDOT (Florida Department of Transportation), and he will contact FDOT about the channel being filled in by the contractor's activities.

Gibson asked about the derelict vessel off of Garcon Point. Whitfield said the Marine Patrol has been notified, and they are investigating the derelict vessel. He said he will do a follow up.

Gibson said he has found a few more oyster shell clumps. He said evidently the oyster shell deployer just dumped the shell in piles. Marker said these clumps are a hazard to navigation and need to be addressed. Gibson said these clumps will not be productive to oyster bed restoration. He identified the locations of the clumps.

Turpin said a few FWC documents have been released regarding the Ships to Reefs Program. He said Santa Rosa County may have a reasonable chance of obtaining a Navy ship for reef deployment. Turpin said he will provide the information to Verlinde.

Turpin said the National Artificial Reef Plan is in its final draft form. He said this document has been underway for renewal for over ten years. Turpin said it has impacts on programs in Northwest Florida. He said the document is available on-line at gulfcouncil.org.

Walker asked if Escambia County is pursuing permitting of the current reef sites. Turpin said the State of Florida is not renewing the permits of the two large reef sites. He said Escambia County has been asked to take over the reef sites. He said he will be briefing Escambia County Commission this month about those two permits and future permits.

Turpin discussed a reef fish restoration area proposal by a fishing group (Grass Roots) that will be addressing this committee in the near future.

Turpin said there is a RFP (Request for Proposals) from Fish and Wildlife for the Artificial Reef Grant due in March. Turpin said the only projects that can be submitted will be for monitoring of the existing reef sites.

The next scheduled meeting of the Marine Advisory Committee will be on Tuesday, February 6, 2007 at 5:00 p.m.

There being no further business to come before the committee at this time, the meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.