

CHARLOTTE COUNTY
MARINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Charlotte County Administration Center, Room 106B

Minutes
November 8, 2007

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mel Staudmyer, Chair
William Bergman, Vice Chair
Capt. Ron Blago, Secretary
Richard Anderson
Len Harris
Maurice Sabourin
Robert Leonard
Bob DiMuzio
Raymond Rose
Richard Johnson
Skip Mansfield
Anthony Tonz
William Kumm
Gerald Meckenberg
Tom Hamilton
Tim Lynch
Jay Buckley

MEMBERS EXCUSED

David Rubin
Paul Marcuzzo

STAFF

Tom Rapp, County Attorney
Ron Rosiere, Public Works
Missy L. Christie, Env. & Ext. Services
Mike Koenig, Parks and Recreation
Barbara Watkins, Recording Secretary

GUESTS

Sylvester Dixon
Martin Vickers
Cody Denton
Willie Vickers
Robert Hill
Gordon Roman
Cappy Joiner, President, BGFGA
Doug Stewart, BGFGA
Les Hill, BGFGA
Michael Heller
Richard Benson, City of Punta Gorda
Randy Broderon, City of Punta Gorda
Noah Parry, Noah's Marine
Jim Ballew, Charlotte Nautical Mile
Bob Meyer, CCA
Capt. Jamie Allen, Guide
Pete Herber, President, CCA
Dusty Sprague
Michael Werner
Sandy Melvin
Steve Hogan, Guide
Melynda Schneider, DEP, Charlotte Harbor AP

I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL/DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Chair Mel Staudmyer called the November 8, 2007 **Marine Advisory Committee** to order at 9:30 a.m., noting there was a quorum present.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Staudmyer led the members and audience in reciting The Pledge of Allegiance.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by **Richard Anderson** to accept the October 11, 2007 Marine Advisory Committee minutes as written, seconded by **Anthony Tonz**. The vote was unanimously accepted.

IV. REGULAR BUSINESS

Ron Rosiere provided updates regarding the following projects: Pirate Harbor; Buena Vista/Grassy Point Waterways; Northwest Charlotte Waterways; Alligator Creek S-Curve; Manchester Lock Removal; Harbor Heights Dredge Design; Suncoast Waterway Dredge Design; and South Bridge Dredge Design.

Public input – Poll and Troll Zones

Capt. Ron Blago thanked the audience for their attendance and provided a brief history of previous discussions and reports concerning this issue.

Robert Leonard reviewed his proposed Motion recommending to the BCC that no motor zones be established in Catfish Creek, Whidden Creek, and Turtle Bay and further discussed no motor zones and the definition and objective of same.

Sylvester Dixon stated he is a commercial fisherman and a 35 year resident of Charlotte County. He strongly opposes Poll and Troll Zones.

Cody Denton stated he is the owner of a fish company and crab house in Placida and has resided in this area since 1969. He is concerned of the effect on his livelihood if he is unable to poll crabs in Turtle Bay and Catfish Creek and suggested that commercial fishermen be exempt from this ruling as they already travel at slow speeds and know where to navigate so as not to disturb the Seagrass and water bottom. In answer to questions from **Chair Staudmyer** and **Robert Leonard**, it was stated there are 52 commercial fishermen in the county, 4 crabbers in Catfish Creek, approximately 5 or 6 crabbers in Turtle Bay, and 3 crabbers in Whidden Creek. A discussion ensued.

Michael Heller, publisher of Waterlife Magazine, questioned the actual focus of this problem stating he feels the issue of Seagrass and fishing should be kept separate to avoid future disagreements between Environmentalists and fishermen.

Pete Herber commented that courtesy on the water has greatly diminished and it is his opinion, as well as many of the professional guides and members of the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA), that the Poll and Troll project will help this situation. CCA pledges their manpower in any way needed.

Robert Hill, Little Gasparilla Island, spoke about the numerous inexperienced boaters who access these areas and expressed the view that this is an issue that needs to be seriously reviewed and revised. He would like to see more solidified planning in place and agreed commercial fishermen and guides should be exempt. Catfish Creek was suggested as an area for trial testing and it was his view that marked trails would also be beneficial. Further discussion continued.

Melynda Schneider, Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserve, commented she does not see this as a fishing/Seagrass issue as Seagrass is an essential habitat for many fishery populations. She also doesn't see a problem with environmentalists vs. fishermen as each have the same goal of maintaining healthy ecosystems, healthy fishing, and a return of the fish population. She feels access and monitoring are areas that need to be discussed with the key issue being enforcement. **Ms. Schneider** answered questions from the Committee and the audience and stated she is in support of this plan.

Dusty Sprague advised he is a recreational fisherman and although he does not want to impact commercial fishermen, he would like to see better fishing.

Capt. Jamie Allen stated he has resided in Charlotte County approximately 7 years and feels commercial fishermen and guides should be exempt. He agrees with the idea of putting in boundaries for recreational fishing and spoke on the problem of inconsiderate boaters. He also added the issue of narrow areas should be addressed as they pose a potential hazard.

Gordon Roman gave a brief description of his background and feels there needs to be more public communication on this issue. He is in favor of considering limited access to one Bay following the review of some type of scientific input and an evaluation after a limited time. He is also in favor of limited access channels.

Cappy Joiner conveyed his views and suggested the need for better organization and the appointment of a smaller committee. He also feels the Fish and Game Commission should become involved. Boat traffic is another concern he feels needs to be addressed. A discussion followed. It was affirmed to **Richard Anderson** that those who spoke today would be willing to participate on a committee if one was appointed.

Willie Vickers would like to see a committee formed with representation from commercial fishermen and guides as well as knowledgeable people who know the waters. He does not feel there is a problem with commercial fishermen and crabbers but voiced complaints regarding the lack of courtesy on the water by local fishermen.

(A five minute break was called)

Michael Werner stated he is opposed to the plan but if passed, would like to see commercial fishermen exempt. He feels more research is necessary before changes are made as this decision will have a detrimental effect on the livelihood of many who fish and crab in the backwaters. In answer to a question by **Tom Hamilton**, **Mr. Werner** stated he did not see an exemption solving all problems as the county would still need to deal with issues and complaints from recreational fishermen. **Bob DiMuzio** inquired about increased production for commercial fishermen if they would be the only ones fishing these waters. **Capt. Allen** added his view that there have not been boating problems with commercial crabbers and netters in the past. He added his feeling that if a smaller sub-committee is established, half the board should be commercial fishermen and guides. **Sylvester Dixon** pointed out commercial fishermen from out-of-state are not familiar with these waters and would pose the same problems as recreational fishermen. A suggestion was made to exempt only commercial fishermen and guides residing in local counties. A discussion ensued.

Noah Perry is a resident of Charlotte County and the new owner of a local marina. He remarked on the lack of respect on the water and suggested more emphasis be placed on educating people on boater etiquette and location of speed zones. He also mentioned his attempts to get a law passed in Tallahassee to limit the fishing industry to a three county-wide range which would include Charlotte, Lee, and Sarasota Counties and would eliminate many of the problems with outsiders boating. He also suggested buffers around the islands rather than closing off areas and volunteered to be a member of a committee on this plan.

Gordon Roman added that he does not feel commercial fishermen are asking for exceptions to be break the law but rather to conduct their business as usual when future regulations are established.

Capt. Sandy Melvin a guide and tournament fisherman, agrees that action needs to be taken on this issue. He is in favor of a sub-committee with the majority being commercial fishermen and guides. To keep the area scenic, he suggested using buoys rather than poles. He does not want to be denied access to anywhere on the water as this is where he makes his living, however he is in agreement that we are facing a lot more users in this area and need to be proactive on working together. He supports exception for commercial crabbers and agrees communication needs to be improved. Also mentioned was a problem with boats and trailers parked along the side of the road near Placida Harbor. A discussion ensued.

Capt. Robert Hill provided additional comments from original discussions on this topic. He suggested locating and reviewing original documents addressing this issue. **Bob Leonard** suggested utilizing the Marine Advisory website to distribute information and **Michael Heller**, publisher of Water Life Magazine, offered to provide space on his website for communication on this topic.

Chairman Staudmyer closed public input and thanked all those who attended for their comments and concerns. The next portion of the meeting was spent discussing the public's comments and suggestions including the establishment of a sub-committee. **Tom Rapp** will research the authority MAC has regarding the Poll/Troll issue.

ACTION: *A motion was presented by Jay Buckley and seconded by Maurice Sabourin to table the Poll/Troll discussion to the December meeting to allow time for the review of additional materials and legal findings. Following a discussion, the vote was unanimous.*

V. **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS** - None

VI. **NEW BUSINESS**

The new member for Charlotte Harbor Yacht Club has been tabled for the next meeting.

Reappointment of Members

Ron Blago made known the four members who are up for renewal of their term. After a brief discussion the following action was taken:

ACTION: A motion was presented by Tom Hamilton and seconded by Bob Leonard to recommend to the BCC the reappointment of the following members for another four year term: Bob DiMuzio, Raymond D. Rose, Richard C. Johnson, and Anthony Tonz. Motion carried unanimously.

Election of Officers

Chairman:

ACTION: A motion was presented by Bill Bergman and seconded by Mel Staudmyer that Ron Blago be elected as Chairman of the Marine Advisory Board for 2008. Motion carried unanimously. Ron Blago accepted.

Vice Chairman:

ACTION: A motion was presented by Bill Bergman and seconded by Mel Staudmyer that Len Harris be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Marine Advisory Board for 2008. Motion carried unanimously. Len Harris accepted.

Secretary:

ACTION: A motion was presented by Bill Bergman and seconded by Mel Staudmyer that Gerald Meckenberg be elected as Secretary of the Marine Advisory Board for 2008. Motion carried unanimously. Gerald Meckenberg accepted.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS - None

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

IX. LIASON REPORTS

Missy L. Christie asked to be placed on the Agenda next month to discuss sand sources in the Gulf of Mexico and the Abandoned Vessel Program. Concerns regarding an abandoned vessel under the 41 Bridge South were addressed. An brief update of the Abandoned Vessel program was provided.

Mike Koenig apprized the Committee that upon a review of previous minutes concerning boat ramps and the timing of related projects, his department realized that better communication with the Marine Advisory Committee should have taken place. He stated better communication will follow in the future regarding boat ramp and fishing pier closures. **Bob Leonard** had questions regarding Bayshore Live Oak Park and was advised that the tentative date for opening is February of 2008. Park rules concerning fishing will be posted at that time. In answer to a question by **Gerald Meckenberg**, an update was provided for the West County Boat Ramp in Englewood.

X. GOOD OF THE ORDER

Mel Staudmyer expressed his appreciation for everyone's support over the past few years that he has served as Chairman.

Gerald Meckenberg expressed his appreciation for the performance of the outgoing slate of offices.

XI. NEXT MEETING

Thursday, December 13, 2007 @ 9:30 A.M. in room 106B

XII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting **ADJOURNED** at 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Starr

Jane Starr, Recording Secretary