

**CHARLOTTE COUNTY**  
**MARINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Charlotte County Administration Center, Room B-119**

**Minutes**  
**April 8, 2010**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Capt. Ron Blago, Chair  
Len Harris, Vice Chair  
Gerald Meckenberg, Secretary  
William Bergman  
Bill Dixon  
John Homer Fleming  
Tom Hamilton  
Richard Johnson  
William Kumm  
Robert Leonard  
Capt. Tim Lynch  
Fred Mesler  
Raymond Rose  
Scott Schermerhorn  
Mel Staudmyer  
Anthony Tonz  
Cody Vaughan-Birch

**MEMBERS EXCUSED**

Capt. Jay Buckley  
Capt. Maurice Sabourin  
Mike Conlon  
Douglas Donovan

**STAFF**

Commissioner Bob Starr  
Tara Musselman, Public Works  
Andy Stevens, Env. & Ext. Services  
Roger DeBruler, Natural Resources  
Jane Starr, Recording Secretary

**GUESTS**

Jo Mogel, Florida Boating Advisory Council  
Mary McMurray, DEP Aquatic Preserve  
Randy Brodersen, City of Punta Gorda  
Roger Fenneman, PGPD

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

**Chair Blago** called the March 11, 2010, **Marine Advisory Committee** meeting to order at 9:30a.m. noting there was a quorum present.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**Chair Blago** offered opening remarks and led the members and audience in reciting The Pledge of Allegiance.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was presented by **Bill Dixon** seconded by **Len Harris** to accept the February 11, 2010, and the March 11, 2010, Marine Advisory Committee minutes as written. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

*(Cody Vaughan-Birch arrived at 9:38am)*

**IV. REGULAR BUSINESS**

*MSBU Update*

**Tara Musselman** presented members with an update regarding the following projects: Alligator Creek, Buena Vista Area Waterways, Harbor Heights, Hayward Canals, Lewis Creek, Manchester Waterway, Northwest Port Charlotte, Pirate Harbor, Southbridge Waterway, Trout Creek, Suncoast Waterway, and Stump Pass. A question and answer period followed.

**V. COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS**

**Commissioner Starr** commented that to achieve change, regulatory agencies need to be informed and he suggested that members, as a group and also individually, contact the State Legislature regarding Stump Pass as well as other matters where action is needed.

***ACTION:** A motion was presented by Bob Leonard that the Committee direct a letter to each and every Legislative person that affects Charlotte County regarding Stump Pass and the over all lack of attention to any permit request that is made by this County. Len Harris seconded and a discussion followed. Bob Leonard rescinded the motion and made another motion to direct a letter signed by the Chairman on behalf of the Committee addressing the Stump Pass delay. The motion was seconded by Bill Dixon and discussion continued. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.*

**VI. NEW BUSINESS**

A change in the order of the agenda to accommodate staff was noted.

*Abandoned Vessel Program*

**Roger DeBruler** provided members with an update on the Abandoned Vessel Program and made known that a regularly updated website is now available through the Extension Services Department, Natural Resources Division.

*Artificial Reef Program*

**Mr. DeBruler** provided information regarding the Artificial Reef Program and the ongoing projects to date. He stated a grant has been requested for funds that would allow additional materials to be added to the reefs and advised that the dredging at Stump Pass could limit the area where the material could be placed if barges cannot go through Stump Pass.

*Florida Master Naturalist Program*

**Mr. DeBruler** advised that the first class of the Uplands Module will be graduating twenty (20) students on April 16, 2010.

**Gerald Meckenberg** commented on this year's forecast for a heightened hurricane season and inquired whether steps should be taken now to accelerate the removal of the vessels before the storms occur. **Mr. DeBruler** responded that he was been working

very closely with the Sherriff's Department and FWC and that the website previously mentioned also allows citizens to report abandoned vessels that have not been removed. He added that the turn around time from when the vessels are reported until the marine officers respond is very short and he feels the system is working satisfactorily.

*Budget Update – Andy Stevens*

**Andy Stevens** presented members with a handout showing the updated budget summary as well as an update on past year expenditures and discussed how they relate to the current year expenditures. **Mr. Stevens** also announced that he attended a recent WCIND meeting and confirmed that the funds approved for debris removal was awarded and the project should be initiating soon. A question and answer period ensued and additional projects were discussed. **Mr. Stevens** advised that he will be the Liason for the Parks Projects in the coming months.

**Tom Hamilton** commented on available funds and inquired if an additional project request should take place. **Chair Blago** did not feel that was necessary as requests can be made throughout the year and he has already had several people speak to him about possible expenditures. In addition, he advised that reserve money needs to be kept available in case matching funds are needed. **Mr. Stevens** provided additional information and **Chair Blago** reminded members that this is only a proposed budget and has not yet been approved by the Board of County Commissioners. An open discussion ensued and **Mr. Stevens** responded to members' questions and concerns.

**Chair Blago** requested **Mr. Stevens** to advise on the organizational changes that have recently been implemented. **Mr. Stevens** made known that Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources is now the Community Services Department and includes Natural Resources, 4H, Horticulture, and Sea Grant. Pest Management, which includes Mosquito Control and Aquatic Weed Control, is now under Public Works. He added that the Solid Waste Division is their own division under Public Works whereas Mosquito Control and Aquatic Weed report to the M&O Operations Manager.

*El Jobean Ramp Status*

**Chair Blago** provided an update on the progress to date and said it was his opinion the original completion deadline would not be met.

*Parks and Recreation Areas of Mutual Concern*

**Chair Blago** advised that he felt it would be beneficial to have another joint meeting with Parks and Recreation and said he would like to be very specific on the items discussed. He requested that the following agenda items be added as part of the official record.

1. El Jobean
2. Aingers Creek
3. Bay Heights
4. Cattle Point Dock

5. The accounting of the boat ramp parking fees
6. The funding and resources available for kayaks, canoes
7. The immediate purchase of land on the east side of Charlotte Harbor east of Burnt Store Road for a future boat ramp

**Andy Stevens** confirmed that taxes from the sale of canoes and kayaks would not go to WCIND. **Chair Blago** commented that funds could still be obtained from parking fees and other services.

**Jo Mogle** addressed the Committee and provided updates on meetings sponsored by FWC. She reported she has demanded figures from FWC showing the expenses from recorded accidents and search and rescues pertaining to non-motorized vehicles. She added that she would be attending an advisory counsel meeting in Tallahassee and asked if there was any message that the Committee would like her to carry, not as their representative, but as a public citizen that has been appointed to represent the general interests of the boating public. **Chair Blago** asked that she inquire how Charlotte County was selected to be part of the Manatee Protection Plan and to remind them that, to date, boaters have not been responsible for any manatee deaths in Charlotte County. It was also suggested that slow speed zones at Palm Island Ferry be discussed. **Tom Hamilton** asked that this opportunity also be used to discuss Stump Pass and the lack of movement on this issue. **Chair Blago** thanked **Ms. Mogle** for her assistance. **Bill Bergman** added additional comments and stated that he felt, when looking at issues, that scientific data should be looked at first to uncover problems instead of accepting word of mouth.

#### *Day Docks Update*

**Randy Brodersen** announced that the permit has been received and the opening bid is anticipated around May 10, 2010.

#### *East Mooring Fields*

**Mr. Brodersen** advised that the East Mooring Field will be going in off of Laishley Park and is scheduled to go before the Cabinet in Tallahassee on May 25, 2010. With regard to the Westerly Mooring Field, the Best Western Hotel has applied to the Charlotte County Industrial Development Authority for a Recovery Bond and did receive it. They are presently looking for financing.

#### *New Manatee Committee Review*

**Chair Blago** advised that the Board of County Commissioners has approved a local shareholders review committee for people to discuss the FWC proposal and stated that applications are being accepted. **Mr. Stevens** provided members with a handout showing the manatee mortality rate in Charlotte County from 1974 – 2009 and commented on the Manatee Protection Strategy that was developed in 2007. He added that a letter was received from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission encouraging the County voluntarily to create a Manatee Protection Plan. **Chair Blago** commented further and suggested members compare statistics and review the information that is available on the Committee website. He advised that studies show the manatee population has prospered since 2001 and that it is unclear whether

regulations help year round since the manatees in our area are travelers.

**VII. OLD BUSINESS – None**

**VIII. OTHER BUSINESS - None**

**Mel Staudmyer** inquired about the fire boat funded for Charlotte County and asked whether it was still in use. **Commissioner Starr** stated that he would check into it and report back.

**Bill Bergman** asked **Mr. Stevens** if there was a time frame as to when the Manatee Committee needs to be established. **Mr. Stevens** advised that the Board of County Commissioners will be selecting members for the committee from the applications submitted. **Len Harris** confirmed that applicants need to be Charlotte County residents and **Mr. Stevens** clarified that the committee is only to make a recommendation for a Manatee Protection Plan, not to create a plan.

**IX. GOOD OF THE ORDER**

**Bob Leonard** advised that he spoke with a member of the Civil Air Patrol at the Palm Harbor picnic and was invited to go on a sundown patrol. He reported that they covered the entire portion of the Charlotte County Harbor and commented on his observations during the flight.

**Commissioner Starr** asked for suggestions and a consensus regarding a Joint Advisory Board Meeting and stated he was at the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting yesterday when this was discussed. He advised that concerns were mentioned regarding previous joint meetings and he made a recommendation that all three advisory groups, MAC, BSAC, and Parks and Recreation be included and that the Chairman for each committee submit items of interest for the agenda. **Commissioner Starr** also felt a dialog between the three (3) committees would not only be beneficial to all but and would also carry more weight when contacting legislatures.

**Commissioner Starr** commented further on the manatee situation and said he felt they needed to be pro-active so costs and regulations do not get out of hand. **Chair Blago** added comments regarding statewide manatee mortality due to watercraft.

On behalf of **Michael Poff**, **Ms. Musselman** inquired about the FSBA Beach Watch membership. **Chair Blago** stated that the Committee would review a request if the Beaches and Shores Advisory Committee would like to submit one. **Commissioner Starr** advised that he would follow up with Beaches and Shores at their next meeting and added that any recommendation would need to be added to the agenda.

*(Commissioner Starr left the meeting at 10:45am)*

**Chair Blago** commented further on the history of this issue and said the outcome would be very uncertain.

The next part of the meeting was spent discussing the upcoming Joint meeting and

possible agenda topics. **Tom Hamilton** suggested the joint meeting be scheduled before the summer break. It was decided the Chairs from each of the three Advisory Committees would coordinate a date. **Bob Leonard** suggested that the Parks and Recreation staff be included in the meeting. **Cody Vaughn-Birch** added additional comments regarding the priority of agenda items. A discussion ensued. **Chair Blago** reminded members that all are welcome to attend the Agenda Meeting a week prior to the Committee's regular meeting and commented that priorities to be discussed should be added to the agenda at this time. Additional dialog followed.

***ACTION: A Motion was presented by Cody Vaughn-Birch and seconded by Richard Johnson to set a priority list for the Marine Advisory Committee and to add this as an agenda item for the next meeting. Following a discussion a vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.***

**Chair Blago** advised that he would contact the Parks and Recreation and Beaches and Shores Advisory Boards to try to work on setting an agenda for the Joint Meeting.

**X. NEXT MEETING**

The next Pre-Agenda Meeting will be held on Thursday, May 6, 2010, at 9:30a.m., Room B-207. The next regular meeting will be held on Thursday, May 13, 2010, at 9:30a.m., in Room 119.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting **ADJOURNED** at 11:08a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Jane Starr*

Jane Starr, Recording Secretary

/jms