



MINUTES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY MARINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, March 13, 2025

9:30 a.m.

Charlotte County Administration Center

18500 Murdock Circle Room B-106

Port Charlotte, FL 33948

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

2. Roll Call

Upon the roll being called it was determined a quorum was present.

3. Chairman's Comments

A. REMINDER TO ALL VISITORS ADDRESSING THE COMMITTEE: PLEASE SIGN IN. It is helpful when preparing the Minutes. A sign in sheet is provided on the table for your convenience.

B. REMINDER TO ALL MEMBERS STATE THEIR NAME AND ORGANIZATION WHEN ADDRESSING THE COMMITTEE. It is helpful when preparing the Minutes.

C. REMINDER TO ALL MEMBERS, STAFF AND VISITORS TO PLEASE SILENCE THEIR CELL PHONES.

D. REMINDER TO ALL MEMBERS, STAFF AND VISITORS TO PLEASE KEEP CONVERSATIONS TO A WHISPER DUE TO THE RECORDING SYSTEM PICKS UP ALL VOICES/NOISES WHICH THEN THE AUDIO IS NOT CLEAR FOR THE RECORD.

4. Changes to the Agenda – None offered.

5. Citizen Comments on Agenda Items – None offered.

Mr. Russell said I would like to make a suggestion where we are over our budget, if we approve everything on here. As we go down the list if there is something that is questionable that we postpone it and come back to it after we know how much money we got left to discuss it. So, I am making that as a motion.

Mr. Russell makes a motion to postpone and come back to it after on any item that is questionable, seconded by **Ms. Gassett-Shoemaker**. Discussion ensues.

Chair Darden said can I ask why you are asking this at the last minute.

Mr. Russell said if you get something at the beginning that you're maybe iffy on and you would approve it if the money were available when you come back to it. Initially you have other things down the list that is more priority. So, you want to make sure those get funded. If you got the money left and come back to the other ones and say ok, I will approve doing it. If there isn't any money left, you know you don't do it. It's

prioritizing the list because it looks like stuff got on here, I don't know what the method is for getting stuff on here was. Maybe the first group that signed up they got the top of the list and so on and so forth. They might not be the highest priority for the money is what I am saying.

Chair Darden said I understand.

Mr. Russell made a motion to table all items until the end and seconded by Ms. Gasett-Shoemaker.
10 Aye / 8 Nay, Motion passes.

1. Heal Our Harbor – Ambassador Program (\$10,450)

Chair Darden said it's an ambassador program, continuing adult environmental education and volunteer program that seeks to train and motivate individuals to share information with the public addressing the importance and responsible use of precious resources. The training program will consist of classes and field trips, each led by local experts in their field.

Laura Gasset-Shoemaker made a motion to approve and seconded by Betty Campanella.
18 Aye / 0 Nay, Motion passes.

Mr. Hickey said a lot of these required matching funds that were going to be done by the volunteer labor, I have an understanding that is not allowed anymore.

Chair Darden said this will be the last year it will be allowed. WCIND has indicated that they are going to change their code for fiscal year 2027 to not allow volunteer hours. They will be allowed for fiscal year 2028.

Mr. Lombardo said they have two years to spend the money right.

Chair Darden said they have one year to spend the money.

2. Civil Air Patrol – Sundown Flights (\$26,250)

Chair Darden said they provide circumnavigation of Charlotte Harbor and its tributaries to locate boater in distress, gas and oil slicks, changes in water quality or other out of ordinary sights. Can also provide aerial photography.

Robert Hickey made a motion to approve and seconded by Bob Mayes.
16 Aye / 2 Nay, Motion passes.

Mr. Lombardo said I noticed that the amount is the same exact amount that they got last year and it's unused, so this is simply asking us to carry over the funding from last year.

Chair Darden said no sir they apply every year for the same funds. Mr. Darden said the funding you are referring to is for the current fiscal 2025 grant and they still have until September 30, 2025, to spend it.

Ms. Ginsberg said I want to clarify one question; it was brought up at our last meeting this is used primarily for leasing of private aircraft to do these flights. Is that correct?

Chair Darden said yes, it was a fleet of aircraft actually and they're aircraft are rented from them, and they pay for their own gas.

3. Parks and Natural Resources – Military Reef (\$75,000)

Chair Darden said this is a large project with a big scope of work so they maybe coming back later for additional funding, permitting and scope of work.

Dave Vigne made a motion to approve and seconded by Richard Russell.

15 Aye / 3 Nay, Motion passes.

4. Charlotte County Public Works – New Marine Markers (\$5,000)

Chair Darden said this is to install new pilings and day boards for navigation aids. These funds are used to install new pilings related to dredging areas, new projects or areas new to county oversight that would benefit from having new markers installed.

Richard Russell made a motion to approve and seconded by Jenna Ginsberg.

18 Aye / 0 Nay, Motion passes.

5. Punta Gorda Police Department – Boats, DV Removal, Holiday OT (\$109,476)

Chair Darden said funds to purchase new hurricane response vessel, dive equipment, DV removal, OT holidays, special events, netting enforcement.

Robert Hickey made a motion to approve and seconded by Noel Hyde.

18 Aye / 0 Nay, Motion passes.

6. Peace River Sail & Power Squadron – Boater Safety Materials (\$4,000)

Chair Darden said provides boating safety and education classes to the public through the purchase of ABC books and materials as needed by the use of the grant.

Laura Gassett-Shoemaker made a motion to approve and seconded by Charles Wolley.

18 Aye / 0 Nay, motion passes.

7. Public Safety – Fire Rescue Vessel (\$371,546)

Chair Darden said this represents half of the actual cost of the vessel. It will be a WCIND funded project, and Public Safety will pay the other half of the money from their operating funds. They are replacing a vessel to update and enhance our current mission related to search and rescue, firefighting and diver operations as well as emergency medical enabling us to better serve the citizens and visitors of Charlotte County.

Hank Killion made a motion to approve and seconded by Dave Vigne.

Mr. Russell said this is a big-ticket item obviously we got another one right behind it. I am an opponent of granting funds to county departments. They should have their own budget. They should plan for it ahead of time and know how much money they need to spend for these things. They know they've got these issues that they need to replace and instead of us having to support it and wipe out some other things that we need. They have the ability to budget it and get it from the county taxpayers or work around it. These other organizations further on down don't have that ability, they don't have that flexibility. That is something that bothers me, the sheriff and the fire department they have a budget every year. I work in the corporate world and know the old trick every year you got your 5% raise in your budget. But if you don't spend it, now you can't plunk the 5% the next year. So, everybody goes out the last week or two and

spends all of the money. So, they can say we spent it this past year so we gotta get more next year. It's just a trick to get more money that is not needed, because they count their pennies and frugal about things. Plan ahead they don't need to be doing this and now they pass it on us to make up the difference that they think they're going to have. That is my position on it, and I just think this needs to be tempered to some degree. I understand they need some money but that is where I am coming from.

Ms. Ginsberg said to an extent I agree that if we have to that's a place where we can support them to get something faster with leftover money but maybe it's not something we support right away. I don't disagree with you, it's the hard thing about doing this as you said in the order, we are doing it in and you can table it. How do they budget for it on the annual operating basis it will never come out of an operating budget on a one-year basis. Talks about one way or another it is coming out of taxpayer money.

Mr. Lombardo said I move to table this one and seconded Jenna Ginsberg.

Chair Darden said we can have a couple more discussions and scrub the motion and take it to the end. Yes, taxpayers pay for the stuff, but any corporate organization is going to pull money from a different organization if they can save their own money. WCIND funds are from your property taxes and have nothing to do with Charlotte County's annual budget. If we don't apply for these WCIND funds from the property taxes, then another county will. Then the bulk will come out of our budget. Why would we not look for a grant from an external organization to fund our equipment and things? I can see what you were saying if you were talking about using BIF Local or a local tax try to accommodate a lot of different people. This budget even isn't totally exhausted for WCIND and that's where the big-ticket items go. Otherwise, someone else is going to use that money and Charlotte County is going to lose that money.

Mr. Wolley said a month or two ago the Chief appeared and was originally looking for twice this amount of money and they went back and cut their request. But he made a straightforward case for why that boat should be replaced at this particular point in time. As the chairman said this money is coming out of WCIND and WCIND is currently in a surplus situation. So, I don't see any reason to delay this because it's not like there isn't enough money in the pot. So, to me it's a question of whether or not we continue the historic practice that we've had for the last three years that I've been on the committee of funding boats for at least the fire department and should bring it to a vote right now.

Chair Darden agrees.

Dep. Chief McElroy said we did come initially and reached out after speaking to the group and it was a 50% only. The vessel we currently have is smaller in size and what we currently use. We have increased what we do within the organization and how much we respond to in the area. We not only do the normal fire/ems calls that are in the area and waterways. We also house a dive team that has had numerous rescues. Talks about the last time they reached out to WCIND was in 2017, you are aware of the vessel that we reached out to purchase. We are asking for 50% of the vessel is \$743,000 that we are looking at. That is quite frankly on the cheaper side of the vessels that as you look into this process. Moving forward myself that being the lead on this, I hope to not ever come back and ask for a vessel like this. Again, we've outgrown what we have, we are trying to maintain our course and with responding to calls within the area. If you want to know what we do, I will be glad to answer those questions and how this would help our operation.

Mr. Lombardo said what happened with the old vessel.

Dep. Chief McElroy said we would keep it in reserve because a build like this is going to take us almost two years to get built. As we look at it, we are asking for the funds through WCIND, ask for the vessel and then we would keep the old vessel as a reserve. We currently have two vessels right now, Marine 1 is housed out at Gasparilla and the other one is housed here inside Charlotte Harbor area.

Mr. Russell said you mentioned dive teams, do you all not do dive operations in conjunction with the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office dive team.

Dep. Chief McElroy said we have two separate missions; they do a dive search they are doing recovery. We do dive rescues so there is a completely different mission in what we do. We do a rapid response for dive rescue; myself I haven't been apart of four of those actual operations. One was offshore where we retrieved a 17-year-old boy. One was just outside of Gasparilla Pass where we retrieved a 40-year-old man where a vessel capsized. We had two others that I was not a part of. We do use it as a rapid rescue response

Mr. Russell said do you have a communications system that interfaces with the Sheriff's Office on dive team operations.

Dep. Chief McElroy said absolutely so we upgraded our comm system to same comm system that they have so that if we were doing dive operations at the same time, we could talk with them. We also provide medical support when they're doing their searches in canals and body recoveries.

**The motion to table the item was withdrawn and the original motion to approve was raised.
18 Aye / 0 Nay, motion passes.**

8. Charlotte County Sheriff – Vessel, Motors, LE Equip, OT, Training (\$212,528)

Chair Darden said half of this will be WCIND. Some of it, associated with the helicopter equipment, would be funded under BIF Local. The project will enhance safety efforts to provide prompt and reliable law enforcement responses any time emergencies occur in Charlotte County.

Bob Mayes made a motion to approve and seconded by Betty Campanella.

Ms. Ginsberg said I brought this up previously, I have a problem with two items on this grant specifically. Talks about how to decide if we should do some of these projects is if we would spend our own money to do these types of projects. Two of these items include a chart plotter they're asking for. Their priced at \$4,699 which is the model they gave us is about \$1,700 more than the natural retail market for that product. Is the price for a much bigger chart plotter? Specifically, a twelve inch vs. sixteen inches, I think a twelve inch is fine in my mind. But there is \$3,400 there I know that they don't get it if they don't spend it. But if they go get the sixteen inch one or if they're overcharged, then we don't do the actual backup. The second problem I have is that they are putting on the request here, the repair order estimate for an AIS for \$6,500 for each vessel, \$6,499 plus installation. This is an automatic transceiver it allows you to see other vessels directly. A \$6,500 AIS is what you would put on a cargo ship or other vessel, very few vessels in our harbor have AIS. Most of the vessels in our harbor that do are smaller, the only vessel I know of that really comes into the harbor frequently with a class A. Is the cruise ship from American Cruise Lines, every other vessel including the King Fisher Fleet doesn't even have AIS. Most of the commercial vessels, I would recommend in the minimum get a less expensive class AIS which is \$2,800. Still the same class much more appropriate for a smaller vessel, but realistically \$1,000 AIS is still to get the product, still to be able to see other vessels, still to produce the result they want. We are talking about \$10-15 thousand dollars I just

can't see personally spending. You could still give them the chart potter, still give them an AIS but it seems to me that \$11,100 if you want to go to class A AIS or \$14,298 requested here is more than needed to get the job done in a really nice way. That is my personal opinion.

Chair Darden said I would just say as far as cost of things go, we could ask them they are here. I am not sure if they're as technical as you are about the equipment being asked for. I will say that this application had the quotes from the sources for funding. They have established the requirement and the need, and this is a government organization who is going to go through government channels through appropriations to make sure they get several quotes. I am not sure it's appropriate to deny an organization who has their own acquisitions process that safeguards your concerns to deny this.

Ms. Ginsberg said my personal opinion with this \$11 thousand or \$14,298 doesn't add to the safety of our community at all. That extra money and I am an expert in this so I would be happy to talk about it. A discussion takes place on this with several people.

Chair Darden said that a motion to amend the motion if that passes then it goes to the end of the line based on Mr. Russell.

Mr. Russell said the reason that we want to keep the numbers down is because we may approve something, they may not spend it, and the money comes back. Maybe somebody has another project that could have approved the money for. But because the money was gone, they didn't get the opportunity to get the money. Talks about approving stuff and being frugal approving stuff and they're going to need the stuff, and they'll spend it.

Chair Darden said there is a motion on the floor right now.

Mr. McIntosh asks if this equipment would be covered under BIF Local or WCIND.

Chair Darden said bring up the Sheriff's Department and a discussion takes place on this.

Chair Darden made a Motion to amend the Motion to reduce the funding of the Sheriff's Office request by \$11,100 and seconded **Ralph Lombardo**.

5 Aye / 13 Nay

Mr. Glouer said I am an aviation guy, so I hate to say this but noticed as we get down further on the chart here a lot of the stuff is BIF Local. Is there a way to reduce that \$68,000 BIF Local from this to push some of that money down towards the other groups. Is that all aviation stuff or? **Chair Darden** said it's not all aviation stuff it is a lot of stuff, it is some aviation stuff, it is some diver stuff, course and boat stuff. Both discuss this.

Motion to approve was made earlier by Bob Mayes and seconded by Betty Campanella.

17 Aye / 1 Nay, Motion passes.

9. Charlotte County Public Works – Marine Debris Removal (\$80,000)

Chair Darden said this is to remove marine debris such as trees, free floating dock pieces, broken pilings, submerged unnatural objects that are blocking or impeding vessel traffic in navigable waterways maintained by Charlotte County.

Laura Gassett-Showmaker made a motion to approve and seconded by Richard Russell.
18 Aye / 0 Nay, motion passes.

10. Charlotte County Environmental Center – 4th Grade Environmental Education (\$50,000)
Chair Darden said this program is designed to educate thousands of students about our unique Florida water systems and the importance of protecting them. Focusing on second and fourth grade classes, these students will participate in various outdoor activities to better understand the Charlotte County watershed and the organisms that inhabit it.

Richard Russell made a motion to approve and seconded by Zack Gloer.
18 Aye / 0 Nay, Motion passes.

11. US Coast Guard Auxiliary 87 – Patrol Boat Shelter (\$22,011)
Chair Darden said Grant would be used for shelter structure, to protect our boat from storms and general solar damage.

Chair Darden said there is a lot of discussion on this item, particularly in that it is in Sarasota County not Charlotte County and it does not qualify for WCIND funding, they do have a grant application in with Sarasota County. But since WCIND wouldn't fund the shelter, they came to Charlotte County requesting BIF Local fund for this. There was a lot of discussion about shelters and things that are land based that support water based. We discussed prioritizing things if we have to cut something and where would we cut. This item was one of those. For one it's an enclosure land based not on the water. Two, it's in Sarasota County. Do we need to move this to the bottom and talk about it later or do we have a motion on the floor to approve this.

Robert Eckert made a motion that we grant up to \$4,000 for the purchase of a form fitted boat cover for the Flotilla vessel, seconded by Dave Vigne.

Mr. Hickey asks can we change what their ask is, they're asking for a shelter not a cover. It's out of the county that they are storing it at.

Mr. Eckert (the US Coast Guard Auxiliary 87 representative) said he can speak for the organization, and they would approve of the motion for \$4,000 for a fitted cover. He goes on to say the Commission has approved grants for this organization in the past because the areas patrolled are in Sarasota County AND Charlotte County. He said that it's been done in the past, and it's quite common to do that. I don't think that should be a ruling out factor for this.

Ms. Gassett-Shoemaker said I would like to propose that we approve the funding that they've asked for all the education materials to support recreational safety, and we not approve the slab and the building.

Chair Darden said we can't do that they didn't apply for anything else, and a discussion takes place.

14 Aye / 4 Nay, Motion passes.

12. City of Punta Gorda – Pump Out Boat (\$5,000)
Chair Darden said Augments of Dept of Environmental Protection grant to conduct pump out activities with Charlotte Harbor and Laishley Park Marina. The grant also would pay for vessel maintenance and fuel.

Noel Hyde made a motion to approve and seconded by Robert Hickey.
18 Aye / 0 Nay, Motion passes.

13. Learn to Sail – Docking Floats and other items (\$54,600)

Chair Darden said after 3 hurricanes the organization lost boats, equipment and tools that need to be replaced. They also need a hurricane proof enclosure like other sailing schools in the area.

Robert Hickey made a motion to approve and seconded by Noel Hyde.

Chair Darden said we have to cut some money out of this budget, and we discussed in three meetings about what would be the most likely items that would be safely removed from the budget and still allow people to accommodate their needs. This grant application has a shed on it which is a land-based item that would support water-based items. If you have to cut something, it seems to me like this would be the place to cut it. They still get the boat docking floats, and other items to support their sailing organization to include very large boxes attach to the docks. We've had a lot of conversation with the Learn to Sail people. I think we should cut the shelter, the shed and the weather proofing of the shed.

Ms. Ginsberg said what is the cost of that cut.

Chair Darden said it would be \$37,000 it's \$30,000 for the enclosure and \$5,000 for the storm proofing, I guess. That would take \$35,000 off the ticket and would put us in the green. They are also asking for tents for \$2,000 and I don't find that associated with water or land based. The total I recommend a reduction of this and made a motion to reduce this grant by \$37,000 for a balance to leave us \$17,600 and approve a grant of \$17,600.

Chair Darden made a motion to fund \$17,600 which represents their application request minus the enclosure, storm proofing and the tents, seconded by Betty Campanella.

Mr. Killion said once again they use it or lose it; I see \$13,600 under WCIND what on the request is included in WCIND funds.

Chair Darden goes over the items on the big screen regarding this request for WCIND and BIF Local.

Mr. Wolley said if I look at the WCIND for this and a discussion takes place with **Chair Darden**.

18 Aye / 0 Nay, Motion passes.

14. USCGA 98 – Trailer, Communications, Education (\$14,618)

Chair Darden said trailer for patrol/emergency communications radio station & storage for boater outreach materials. Boating safety education materials.

Hank Killion made a motion to approve and seconded by Angus McKinnon.

Mr. Hickey said here we go a trailer is a land-based item, maybe we should reduce and asks what part of the comms trailer.

Chair Darden said there is \$10,459 for the comm trailer and a \$1,200 wrap, they discuss.

Robert Hickey made a motion to cut the trailer and the thing that goes with the trailer out, seconded by **Betty Campanella**.

Chair Darden said we have a motion and a second to recommend county funding for \$3,018 which represents their application request minus the communications trailer and trailer wrap.

Mr. Killion said my only comment would be this is for safety item for all of us for the area is being requested. Yes, it is a trailer yes, it's a land-based item but it's a safety item. If we look at all of the request's safety is fair amount in pretty much all the requests. This is why I feel we should support it because it's safety.

Mr. McKinnon said this trailer covers a multitude of our unit because we have no other place to store it. In fact, it becomes sort of a building if you would have a moveable storage.

Chair Darden said Mr. McKinnon is the representative for Flotilla 98, so he is discussing.

Mr. Eckert said I can speak for our comms trailer, and we use it quite a bit and we use it in order to reach certain areas in areas of our responsibility. We go from Boca Grande all the way up to Manasota Key it's a long distance. A unit in a house won't cover it all, a unit in our station won't cover it all, but we can put out the trailer where our blind spots are, and we can cover pretty much all of it then through our different networks. So, I see the parades and all this other stuff which I see as valuable. That is just a side issue the thing comes down to communications with the vessels that are out. We don't put patrols out unless we have communications. We are covered by Cortez and this guy is covered by Fort Myers; the radio is not going to cover there for their uses. They need the comms trailer it seems to me to be mobile to cover blind spots and to be able to communicate with their boat while it's out.

Chair Darden said to Ms. Gassett-Shoemaker how do they do comms systems.

Ms. Gassett-Shoemaker said we do have a comms trailer and often times it's used during patrols. But mostly we use communications from people's homes, only go out on patrols mostly. A discussion takes place with **Chair Darden** and **Mr. Eckert**.

Mr. Russell said where do you store the trailer when it's not in use, is it in the county.

Carl Moore is with USCGA Flotilla 98 said it will be stored in the Military Heritage Museum they gave us space out back to store it when it's not being used. The other thing I want to say, we lost our other vehicle during Hurricane Milton. Which was a communications vehicle and also stored some of our equipment. That vehicle was used in Hurricane Charley as a primary communications vehicle because of the Coast Guard station in Fort Myers Beach was (inaudible words). That is the same thing this trailer was going to be primarily used and talks about recruiting and getting more members. It is going to boat shows to set up and distribute information about boating safety and education. That also is a part of what it is going to be used for, this trailer is going to be an emergency communications trailer. The Coast Guard wants to set up stations throughout the whole state of Florida so that we don't have any dead spots. Some of the new radios are coming out are going to be fifty watts unit and we can make stations throughout Florida when they need them there won't be any loss of communication. A patrol boat can't go out unless they have communication with a radio station. We also have one radio rpo in our flotilla per house doesn't cover our entire patrol area so that's what this trailer will be used for. We will move it to different spots, so we get the maximum amount of coverage.

Chair Darden said that is a good amount of useful information and was valuable to our discussion.

Chair Darden spoke to the members about voting on this motion and if wanting to give the whole amount don't vote on this motion or if you want to give the \$3,018 than raise your hand.

Chair Darden said all in favor of giving the \$3,018 raise your hand.

4 Aye / 14 Nay Motion fails.

Ralph Lombardo made a motion to approve the entire amount requested, seconded by **Bob Mayes**.

Mr. McIntosh so we are setting a precedence that we provide trailers now in the future for any organization.

Chair Darden said we are not setting precedence we are discussing grant applications, and a discussion takes place.

Mr. Russell said in this instance we are talking about communications and it's important, there is nothing more important radioing in the navy when you lose communications, you're blind or deaf I should say it's important. So, I am all for it. **Mr. McIntosh** discusses with other members also.

Chair Darden said we have a motion and a seconded to recommended county funding in the amount of \$14,618 for the trailer, comm, and education all in favor.

15 Aye / 3 Nay motion passes.

15. Charlotte Harbor Youth Sailing – RIB Cover, Educational Materials (\$7,069)

Chair Darden said these boats are required to facilitate safe access to water sports on Charlotte Harbor also used in rescue and safety support of several major boating events on Charlotte Harbor. RIB boats have been supported by this committee since 2016.

Mike McIntosh made a motion to approve and seconded by **Noel Hyde**.

18 Aye / 0 Nay, Motion passes.

16. Charlotte County Parks – Living Shorelines (\$20,000)

Chair Darden said these devices will be installed on county properties and shorelines and will help prevent future erosion. They also increase habitat for oysters, crustaceans and fish.

Dave Vigne made a motion to approve and seconded by **Mike McIntosh**.

Ms. Ginsberg said my biggest concern with only a year to use the money, as a community that got some parks and issues in it from storms, we're continually told that parks and rec is overwhelmed with the amount of recovery they have from the storms. They don't have time to do repairs, permitting and there are some issues. I don't know how in the next year they're going to take on a new project when there still is so much work and effort to do recovering from the last two storms. Until that work is done, I have a hard time supporting new projects for parks and recreation to be gone in the next year until we get some of the facilities back that have been destroyed. They should focus personally on those facilities.

Mr. Lombardo said the concern I have is that parks and rec listens to the commission, and they basically said don't spend any money relative to the storm until FEMA money comes in. So, my question is this one of the things that they would be allowed to do from the commission.

Chair Darden said I think we have a person here from parks and rec.

Liz Eastes said so this project has already been started, this is currently out with contractors. This is also not anything that was affected because it was not currently already deployed. So, this wasn't affected by any of the hurricanes, and we don't need to get FEMA funding then go for permits. This is already in the permitting process, so we are not looking for FEMA funding.

Ms. Ginsberg said so you permitted this to go forward without funding then.

Ms. Eastes said there was previously grant funding by this committee.

Chair Darden said the large-scale projects come for funding and then the next year they will get additional funding and then the additional funding instead of asking for \$300,000 that they can't spend in a year. They will stage the project to provide that flexibility.

Mr. Wolley said just for clarification the funding that you're using is the funding that was awarded the \$30,000 in 2023. Because you didn't ask for any money in 24 and you didn't ask for any money in 25.

Ms. Eastes said that is correct, and both discuss.

Mr. Walsh just did the seawall at Harbour Heights are those the blocks they attached to the new seawall were kind of full of holes in places where marine life can attach. Is that what this is for?

Ms. Eastes said that was originally in the scope from previous funding that we got. We actually were able to get some of that funding from FEMA, so we did not have to use that money. We are doing different living shoreline projects that are going to be used specific to each site that are going to be specific to what will work best at that site. So, those seawall panels will not be used in the continuing sites that we are currently in. They both have a discussion on this.

Mr. Lombardo said I apologize you might have answered it, and I didn't catch it, but I noticed you got no funding from 24-25 so what funding were you using for permitting.

Ms. Eastes said that money is currently encumbered.

Chair Darden explains encumbered means that they committed the money and Charlotte County budget and so they are using the \$30,000 that was previously awarded for permitting and whatever such portion of the job whether that be design or feasibility or whatever. They are using this money as it comes, I am assuming Liz that it took those two years to get that \$30,000 used up right.

Ms. Eastes said correct, and there was also personnel turnover, I've only been in this position for, and a discussion takes place.

17 Aye / 1 Nay, Motion passes.

Chair Darden said the next two items are not subject to vote. (Stump Pass Maintenance & Manasota Key Beach Renourishment).

17. Team Punta Gorda – Water Quality Assessment Program (\$21,000)

Chair Darden said gather and analyze data about the degree and nature of impairment (contamination) in the canal system of Punta Gorda. FDEP has designated them as impaired.

Ralph Lombardo made a motion to approve and seconded by **Robert Hickey**.

Mr. Russell asks what are the action items of all the results that have testing and testing? You don't just keep testing, you come to a conclusion, and you institute some action to correct the issue or make recommendations to correct the issue. Does anything come out of these testing that is my question.

Mr. Hyde said I don't know about a direct relationship although I have a feeling there is some there. The City of Punta Gorda has a number of ordinances that deal with the way homeowners have to treat their properties when they live on the water. Regarding grass clippings, fertilization of properties, certain things being put in the canal. Looks like rip rap it's not appropriate for rip rap so there are things that are being done. I can't say it's a direct result of the studies.

Chair Darden spoke to **Mr. Hyde** about answering his question and tells him about the Punta Gorda and County representatives who spoke extensively on the matter at the last meeting.

Mr. Hickey said I attended the meeting at Team Punta Gorda as a rep for the Boaters Alliance. The city is in the process of doing a huge septic to sewer program. They're trying to go to the state for grants because the cost per property owner is astronomical almost unaffordable. It will cost that just had to leave. They needed proof that why did they have to go to the septic to sewer. Well, a lot of the area that they are trying to do this is the area called Charlotte Park. It was built in the fifties and sixties. The septic tanks are in the back yard along the canals, not in the front yard. They have been able not only is it nitrogen and all this, there is actual human fecal matter coming out of the canals into Alligator Creek; which directly flows into the estuary. So, they are using this to try to have the state will give some grant.

Mr. Wolley said I live on the canal, and I agree with Mr. Russell who says that one can test it once and you have the result. Then let's make a plan and move on and do some mitigation or remediation. So, continuously testing and saying that it moves in the spectrum of impaired and if really impaired maybe less impaired. I don't know if that changes the course of action, so personally I opposed to continuing the funding.

Chair Darden said we have the motion and the second to recommend county funding for Team Punta Gorda for the Water Quality Assessment project all in favor.

Aye 10 / Nay 8, Motion passes.

18. Charlotte County Public Works – Maintenance to Navigation Aids (\$90,000)

Chair Darden said this grant would assist in maintaining the existing navigation aids in Charlotte County maintained waterways. Including day boards, pilings, solar marine lights, buoys and signage.

Laura Gassett-Shoemaker made a motion to approve and seconded by **Betty Campanella**.

18 Aye / 0 Nay, Motion passes.

This concluded the review of applications for the FY26 funding period.

Mr. Russell asks if we managed to get the grant recommendations down to the budgeted funding. **Mr. Darden** said we are good.

Chair Darden speaks to **Mr. Wolley** and asks why are you leaving us. **Mr. Wolley** said as much as it pains me to leave this committee and have other obligations that are going to prevent me from making the number of meetings in the course of next year. Rather than getting a letter from Kim kicking me off I thought I would resign. My replacement **Mr. Pase** is here and would like to introduce himself and say a few words.

Jim Pase introduces himself and gives his background with work and life experience. He is looking forward to cleaning up Charlotte Harbor.

Ms. Campanella said why do you want to join this group, **Mr. Pase** said I really want to clean up Charlotte Harbor, I think that's the most important thing we can do.

Chair Darden said did you say you're a boat captain? **Mr. Pase** said yes.

Angus McKinnon motioned to accept Jim Pase as the rep. for Isles Yacht Club seconded by **Bob Mayes**.
18 Aye, Motion passes.

Ms. Campanella said do we have to approve Charlie's resignation. All the members join in the conversation with **Mr. Wolley**.

Mr. Wolley asks about the recommendation going in front of the BCC board on the April meeting to have that done.

Mrs. Sargent explains the documents will then go to Claudia who is the assistant to Commissioner Deutsch. It will then be placed on the agenda, once I find out if it will make it on this month or next. It will probably be on next month's BCC.

Mr. McIntosh said I know we have one citizen and **Chair Darden** said it will be next on the agenda.

Chair Darden said all these projects that we recommended will go to the Board of County Commissioners in April or May. They will take a look at them; they may change anything we decided not to do. If there is more money left in there they may do so. They have the final say on it and once they're approved the grants will become effective as of October 1st of this year. All applicants should be aware and not spend any money until October 1st even if it's approved by the commission in May.

Mr. Hickey said I heard that Steven R. has been removed from all committees.

Mrs. Sargent said I am still sending all the stuff here to Claudia so until the county attorney or somebody higher up lets me know that is what we are still doing.

Chair Darden said if there is a suspension on committee duties then the commission will name another committee member to take on the committees.

8. Citizens Comments –

Leonard Van Eaton said I am a resident of the Sunrise Waterway project, and I would like to speak about the Sunrise Dredging project. I moved here six years ago; I am a sailor, and I have a sailboat. Before Hurricane Ian I had a wonderful time sailing, I am in a Punta Gorda sailing club. We have a lot of activities that I participate in. Since Hurricane Ian I have been severely restricted in sailing, in wintertime when the tides are even lower, I can't get out at all. Not even at high tide at two or three o'clock in the morning. This has been going on for two and a half years. I don't understand what the hold up is, I just happen to have a copy of the project schedule. It is eleven months long from planning and approval to turn over and close out. It has already been two and a half years; we are talking three and a half years. This is why I came here ok; I am 75 this is like unbelievable amount of time that I am alive, and I can't sail my boat. I can't participate in what's going on with the club. There is a cruise coming up and I will not be able to participate in it because I can't get my boat out. It's not a giant boat, it doesn't draw in five feet. There are seven boats in my neighborhood that are severely restricted because of this issue. There are probably thirty boats in my area that are restricted. Because when it's low tide it is like three feet and if you have a motor sticking out the back. It's not safe, the area is broken and needs to be fixed, the area is not navigable. I think it's the county's responsibility to make it safe and navigable. Three and a half years it's ridiculous, something has to be done. I propose you make provisions for emergency dredge when the thing shows up and do it in a timely manner in a month or two. I do believe it this happened in Boca Grande, it wouldn't take three and a half years to make this happen.

Chair Darden said we don't have to entertain comments from public comments but if you would like to get some questions or comments back from us, we would like to provide that.

Mr. Russell said I am the chairman of Buena Vista Waterway Advisory, which sunrise is one of their canals. Ian hit and caused quite a bit of disruption to boat traffic. We proceeded to get bid, and everything lined up. The process takes a long time we got close to getting done, the only thing is we got to price it plus or minus \$400,000 dollars that's not just for Sunrise but the other canals part of the Buena Vista. It goes all the way over next to the Charlotte Harbor Yacht Club doesn't include the Charlotte Harbor Yacht Club. Lister waterway and so on, then these other hurricanes came. What happens is the silt and the sand and the bottom moves and all of a sudden once you had clear sailing. The next thing you know a hurricane has moved over the dirt, now you got a foot draft instead of five feet. So, we are going through it again, we got bids that same work basically just changing places. Over one million dollars now for the same thing that was about \$400,000 a couple years ago. Finally, we are now at the point where they are going forward with it. We have a meeting with the Buena Vista Waterway on July 23rd we are going to have a total update. We anticipate by October everything will be done and the dredging will start. That is what we are projecting if we have another hurricane this summer all bets are off. That's the unfortunate thing, I've lived here since 2013, been here since 2012. We didn't have any hurricanes until 2017, but it's like consistently. We have had like six or seven since then, so every time you think we are done with hurricanes, here comes another one. We are looking at October to have it dredged and in November you should be able to sail out.

Mr. Von Eaton said honestly this is not a one-time deal this is a one-time problem, and we need to fix this length of time it takes to discuss, plan and put out bids then execute this plan. As I said if this happened in the Boca Grande it would not take three and half years to make it happen. We wouldn't plan to have this thing done after the next hurricane. We should get it done now and we should have a plan in place, so when the shoring happens it's taken care of quickly not eleven months, not three years but quickly.

Mr. Russell said we only have two bids to have the thing dredged, normally you like to have more than three. That is because there are few people out there qualified to do the dredging and there in lies part of

the problem. There are a lot of canals that need to be dredged, so the prices went up and the workload increased. So, you know you can't hold a gun to somebody's head and say you got to do our canal first.

Chair Darden said is there a dredging person here.

Mr. Hickey said to Mr. Von Eaton and tells him on the process and what they have gone through for two and a half years. Because we had recent hurricanes after the application, now they have to go out and do bathometric surveys and go way out to change the bids. I feel you and I don't have a sailboat; I have a trawler style boat, and I am hitting bottom in three feet of water. Unless it's high tide and it's unfortunately the bureaucracy of the Army Core of Engineers. The shortage of people bidding on things, the amount of total damage in the area is frustrating.

Mr. Von Eaton said so you are saying I should move.

Mr. Hickey said that may be, I don't know what to tell you. I have been waiting two and a half years for a dredge and it's all permitting, finally it got approved.

Mr. McIntosh said is this mainly in the canal where your restriction is or is it in the entry way up to your neighborhood or both.

Mr. Von Eaton said it's at the Sunrise Park, the Charlotte Harbor Beach Park. A discussion takes place with many of the members.

Chair Darden said to Mr. Von Eaton to come to the next meeting on April 10th and to add him to the agenda.

Mr. Hyde said question for Mr. Russell, the City of Punta Gorda has what are called maintenance dredging contracts. I am not quite sure how it's determined when the maintenance needs to be done. I know they don't have to go through all this permitting and all these studies. Because it's been done once I guess then they have the authorization to maintain at a particular depth. That saves a lot of the time that Mr. Von Eaton is talking about because it's considered maintenance of the canal. Does the county have anything like that?

Chair Darden said it's like that, like Jenna had mentioned that you have some that have to go to the Army Core of Engineers to get approved and that could take several years. Once the canal is there and you can do maintenance dredges without going through all of that. That cuts down and a discussion takes place.

Mr. Russell said DeWayne Nodine is the one we deal with at the county, he would have been here if we didn't eliminate that part of the meeting today. So next month on the 10th he will be here and please bring that up to him because that is something that has been raised in the county and it's like, so you are right that something needs to be done or at least pursued.

Ms. Ginsberg said in some of our permits, the interior of South Gulf Cove when it was built has a long-standing permit that it doesn't need any Army Core of Engineer permitting our canal. It's a five-year permit from the Locke to the harbor so it depends on the canal, the original permitting how it was done it varies. Some of the permitting is old enough that we don't need to go back through Army permitting and depends each canal is different.

11. Next Meetings

- The next **Pre-Agenda Meeting** will be held Thursday, April 03, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. in the **E. Jay Carlson Large Conference Room. (f/k/a Building Construction Services)**
- The next **Regular Meeting** will be held Thursday, April 10, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. in **Room B-106 in Murdock Building B.**

12. Adjournment

Mr. Russell made a motion to adjourn and seconded by **Mr. Mayes**.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:14 a.m.

Minutes Approved


Jim Darden, Chair