

**Draft Meeting Minutes of the
Lee County Coastal Advisory Council (CAC)**
1500 Monroe Street, 3rd Floor
Conference Room 3C
Fort Myers, FL 33901
February 21st, 2011

Members present: Misty Nichols, Kathy Rooker, Mike Mullins, Kate Gooderham, Hans Wilson, Patrick Geraghty, and Ted Yeatts.

Interested parties present: Thomas Schemenaur, Tom Betts

County staff present: Nancy MacPhee, Robert Neal, Jed Schneck, Michelle Stalnos, and Brandon Dunn.

1. Call to Order

A quorum was determined to be present. Patrick Geraghty called the meeting to order at 10:05 A.M.

2. Approval of Minutes: A motion was made to approve the January 24th, 2011 meeting minutes by Mike Mullins, second by Kate Gooderham with a notation that her voting conflict form was handed in. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Input

None

4. Discussion of Comp Plan Amendment

A copy of the Comp Plan Amendment was handed out to the members by Brandon Dunn. Kate Gooderham noted that she was pleased with the changes. Hans Wilson made a motion to approve the amendments, second by Kate Gooderham. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Beach Status Update

Ft. Myers Beach – Robert Neal said the project is scheduled to start April 15th, 2011.

Sanibel – Robert Neal stated there are no real issues with Sanibel to his knowledge.

Captiva – Mike Mullins noted they prepared a memo which was sent to the Mayor of Sanibel last June regarding sand with the last Blind Pass dig. Mike said they heard back from them asking for a meeting in which Mike believes should be a three party meeting. He needs to get back with them to on a meeting date. He also noted that the subject is regarding the interlocal agreement and believes they have met their sand obligation.

Kathy Rooker said Coastal Planning & Engineering has completed their five year monitoring on Captiva, and also extended it just a little bit back east of the bridge though that report isn't quite ready yet. The monitoring report will be used to evaluate when another nourishment will be needed.

Blind Pass – Robert Neal stated that he had a public meeting on Blind Pass in the beginning of February that went pretty well. They are continuing to monitor the stability of the Pass and evaluate if a maintenance dredge would be needed this summer. There was a sandbar that looked to be about three quarters of the way across the Pass but is now above the water line. Robert noted that overall the Pass is not looking too bad and is positive with the results.

Mike Mullins told the members that there were some theory's being floated with other ways to do it. He was also informed by his wife that she thought she had seen some tire tracks going through to possibly flatten the Pass a bit.

Gasperilla Island – Robert Neal said that there wasn't much of an update, they are seeking federal authorization for a new project around the 2013/2014 time period. As Robert understands, he believes the shoreline is holding up fairly well.

Big Hickory Island - Tom Betts told the members that the Island is pretty stable at the moment, there is one little hotspot at the north end of the island. The breach that they had on the island has now filled in and is closed up pretty well.

Bonita Beach – Robert Neal said that they anticipate moving forward with the design and permitting sometime in March.

Lovers Key – Robert Neal noted Lovers Key is in the same what situation. They have lost approximately half of the volume that was placed.

6. Economic Impact of Beach Tourism Discussion

Mike noted that he was not able to do a cost analysis with the documents he had in his possession so he enlisted in the help of Bill Strong, a beach economist who work as consultant for the CEPD for many years. Mr. Strong produced the report *Economic Impact of Beach Tourism on the Lee County Economy* which was handed out to the members of the CAC for review.

Mike said he thought it would be good to review Mr. Strong's approach on the study and also identify other information that he is unaware about that the County collects. It was also suggested that the CAC recommend to the TDC that a study of this sort should be done, that they get the kind of study that Mike has done a draft on, but get a study that could really be understood. Mike noted it being important that the CAC should be making calls to the County Commissioners and essentially expressing to them what the council thinks about some of the issues regarding the beaches. Not with the intention on trying to put down some of the decisions that have already been made, but they need to understand that no one should want to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. Mike repeated a quote by Kate Gooderham "the beaches were the economic engine of Lee County".

Kathy Rooker noted that as the County is looking to cut back in County government and County budget, and it's important to recognize that the beaches are the counties number one economic factor with the Division of Natural Resources being their only connection. Kathy stated she doesn't want any cutting done with the Division of Natural Resources either. The TDC and the Division of Natural Resources needs to be supported economically.

Bill Strong handed out his report "*Economic Impact of Beach Tourism on the Lee County Economy*" to the members. He went into discussion on how he obtained the data that was used to determine the statistics inside the report. He informed the members that he had to make an assumption as to how often the tourists go to the beach, in which he assumed half their visit. If the visitor is here for eight days, then they visit the beach four times on average. Mr. Strong noted that he based his assumption on those who stay in beach front communities who will go to the beach a lot more than half the time they are here. With that in mind, he noted that on page three of the report he concluded that just under twenty million beach visits are made each year by tourists in Lee County.

Also discussed by Mr. Strong was the average money spent per person per day to come up with the total impact. Table two of his report on page shows figures to be about 2.2 billion dollars. On his last table he looked at the indirect spending. When you look at direct plus the indirect spending its about 3.5 billion dollars that's injected into the economy as a result of the beaches. Mr. Strong stated that

the earnings are just over one billion dollars which is composed of wages, fringe benefits, and the earnings of the self employed. The amount of jobs that were created due to the beach tourism is 41,317.

Hans Wilson questioned if the jobs were determined through formula based on what the earnings were. Mr. Strong stated that its determined by the US Department of Commerce by the Bureau of Economic Analysis using an input/output model scaled down to Lee County. Hans also questioned if the number of jobs created were new jobs or jobs that were sustained. Mr. Strong said that they were not 'new' jobs but jobs that were supported and sustained by beach tourism.

Mike Mullins said his aim is to find out if there has been a better study that has been conducted in the County that would be helpful.

Patrick Geraghty questioned Mr. Strong how he set up his model for interviewing the people he spoke with. Mr. Strong stated for this study he relied on the VCB interviewing.

Mike Mullins said what they need to be concerned with is the cost of the investments that the County is making in the beaches. Mike noted that the costs associated with marketing to bring people to the County are important. The fiscal year from 2006-2010 x amount was spent on nourishment through the TDC dollars that are allocated to projects that are recommended by the CAC.

Mike noted the figures they came up with in regards to jobs sustained in Lee County from baseball represent about 970 jobs verses a little over 41,000 from the beaches.

Kate Gooderham said she wants to make sure that apples to apples are being compared and one of the things that need to be looked at with the spring training topic is, as other people would argue, its not just the spring training. There is an added benefit with the baseball fields with all of the other events they are used for each year. If the two are going to be compared, the members need to look at other benefits of those fields.

Hans Wilson said he wasn't sure that he wants to take a comparison approach on baseball verse beaches. He said what would make more sense would be to identify within the context of tourism, activities that you would identify as tourism such as Red Fish the tournaments and Tarpon fishing that brings people to Lee County. After tourist activities have been identified, then the next step would be to rank them in some fashion.

Thomas Schemenaur noted that the beaches of Lee County is not as highly associated with seasonality as other activities, and beaches gives us a uniform platform on which to attract guests to Lee County. Thomas noted that Tarpon

fishing is great because of its place in the off season being in May and June which extends Lee County's season.

Robert Neal said as he understands, the point of the study from Hans Wilson was to recommend or foresee a shortcoming in beach funding from the County, and before it's recommended we need to see that shortcoming. Lee County has raised the requests from the TDC of two million dollars, not because of concerns from Natural Resources but due to requests from the CAC. Robert pointed out that before anyone say's there will be shortfalls we need to see that there will in fact be shortfalls. If the CAC proceeds with this and does not have a CAC trust fund to secure the funds for beach related projects then money will be put in TDC reserves that takes money away from various projects, museums, or other places.

Mike Mullins informed Robert that what he is saying is correct but would like to point out that something such as baseball where you are putting an interest only bond out there and some day down the road you will have to pay off principle on some of the big loans which will take up everything available in the TDC, and even more.

Patrick Geraghty said the goal should be educating the Commissioners on how important the beaches are. Mike Mullins replied by saying that the members need to educate themselves first. Patrick said that Mr. Strong's report is so strong even putting aside the comparison, and dwarfs baseball completely and certainly anyone who looks at the study can see how important the beaches are. Patrick noted giving the report to the County Commissioners may or may not accomplish what the CAC is looking for. Hans suggested to the members that the goal should be collecting as much factual information as possible that can be presented to the Commissioners, a position paper relative to the CAC's defense for funding regarding beach restoration and infrastructure.

Kate Gooderham told the CAC she would be comfortable going forward with the information that exists right now and requested to get on the agenda for the TDC May meeting. Kate also requested appointments to be made with the County Commissioners during the month of May at the latest before important budget decisions are made in June.

A four part motion was made by Kate Gooderham 1) Give Nancy MacPhee Mr. Strong's study and have VCB staff review it to make suggestions or modifications. 2) Ask for time in front of the TDC at either the April or the May meeting. 3) Make appointments with the County Commissioners and have one of the members meet with each Commissioner during the month of May. 4) Hold a special CAC meeting on April 4th at 10:00 am. Hans Wilson second for discussion and said if the process would be done this way, either a white paper that has unified discussion points so each individual passes the same message

to the Commissioners or preferably a white paper that Pat can take to all five of the Commissioners. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Old Business - None

7. New Business - None

8. State & Federal Update –

Robert Neal said on the State side the budget plan for the DEP has been submitted.

On the Federal side Kate Gooderham noted there was a continuing resolution that moved through the House. There was an amendment presented which would not allow the Corps funding to be used for beach restoration projects.

9. Members Issues – Nancy MacPhee reminded the members that the next CAC meeting will be for the FY 2011-2012 Beach & Shoreline funding request review and will be held at 9:00 am instead of 10:00 am.

10. Adjourn

12:00 p.m.