

November 6, 2007
Milton, Florida

The Marine Advisory Committee met on the above date with the following members present: Chairman Jeff Marker, Vice Chairman Rick Harris and member Matt Hewatt. Also present were the County Administrator (Hunter Walker), County Engineer (Roger Blaylock), Public Works Director (Avis Whitfield), and Marine Extension Agent (Christina Verlinde). Chairman Marker called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Harris moved approval of the minutes from the October 2, 2007 meeting; Hewatt seconded, and the vote carried unanimously. (3-0)

Boat Ramp Fee

Harris said he requested boat fee information from several counties but has not received any response. He said he was recently on a fishing forum and the discussion was on implementing a registration fee and charging boat ramp fees at Navarre Beach Boat Ramp. Harris said he felt the majority of people on the forum were in favor of the fees as long as the fees are not too high and the funds are used for improving water access.

Blaylock said he researched the possibility of boat ramp fees being charged at the Navarre Beach Boat Ramp. He said fees can be charged at the Navarre Beach Boat Ramp, but the revenue collected can only be used for the operation and maintenance of the Navarre Beach Boat Ramp because the grant used to improve the ramp has restrictions. Marker asked if conditions of the grant prohibit using revenue for land purchases. Blaylock said yes. Walker said that condition is only for revenue generated at the Navarre Beach Boat Ramp. He said revenue generated at other County boat ramps can be used to purchase land for water access.

Marker said he was also on the fishing forum and felt people seemed to support fees once they understood what the fees will be used to accomplish. He said some people wanted to talk about using grants to acquire property for new boat ramps. Marker said the problem with grants is by the time you locate the property and then go through the grant process, the land is typically already sold.

Boat Ramp Facilities

Marker asked if the Garcon Point Boat Ramp improvements have started. Whitfield said no. He said staff is waiting on a permit.

Port-A-Lets

Whitfield provided the Marine Advisory Committee with a list of locations in the County where port-a-lets have been placed. (Attachment in file) He said nine of the twenty-nine port-a-lets are located at County boat ramps. Whitfield said none of the nine boat ramp port-a-lets are currently being paid for out of boater registration funds. He said the port-a-let funding is currently coming out of the park budget. Whitfield said it costs approximately \$6,500.00 per year for the nine boat ramp port-a-lets. Marker said County staff expressed interest in leaving port-a-lets at boat ramps year round at the last Marine Advisory Committee meeting. Whitfield said he felt the port-a-lets should be at boat ramps year round. He said he felt the port-a-lets will be used as long as they are available. Whitfield said he does not have a problem paying for port-a-lets out of the parks budget. Harris said he felt it is a good idea to leave the port-a-lets in place year round. Marker said the cost of port-a-lets was significantly cut when the County went out for bids. Walker said the County will be better off leaving the port-a-lets in place year round. He said there has been some vandalism and theft of port-a-lets, but overall there is not a lot of abuse of the port-a-lets.

Other Business

Walker provided the committee the Recreational Vessel Registration Fee Report and the Budget Modification Resolution carrying forward prior year funds. (Attachment in file) He discussed the revenue and expenses of the Recreational Vessel Registration Fee Fund from last fiscal year. Marker asked if any of the income is interest. Walker said yes. He said the interest stays in the fund. There was discussion on the \$50,000.00 expense for a contribution to the City of Milton for the Carpenter's Park Boat Ramp improvements.

Oyster Reefs

Marker asked about the concept of the County placing oyster shell on its own or in conjunction with the FDEP (Florida Department of Environmental Protection) in the future. Verlinde said the FDEP places oyster shell and is currently working with the (FDA) Florida Department of Agriculture placing oyster shell at two sites in East Bay. She said the FDA will be placing more oyster shell in other East Bay locations. Verlinde said she has heard there are permitting issues because berms are being formed instead of reefs. She said she felt oyster shell can still be placed, but only as oyster shell fisheries. Verlinde said she would like to pursue a small NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) Habitat Restoration Grant that requires a 50% match. She said the grant application is due in March.

Harris said he spoke with Sally Couey with the FDEP. He said Couey stated the FDEP does not have a partnership program but the FDEP is willing to work with Santa Rosa County on oyster shell placement. Harris said Couey's concern is where the oyster shell will come from. He said he felt the FDEP is very interested in working with Santa Rosa County on oyster shell projects if oyster shell sources can be found. Harris asked if Agriculture and Consumer Services is willing to help do some near shore oyster shell projects. Verlinde said yes. She said most of the shell has been placed by the Agriculture and Consumer Services people to enhance habitat. Verlinde said good sites for the projects need to be identified and good shell needs to be located. Harris said he talked to Couey about the cove between Garcon Point and White Point. He said this area was covered with reef oysters before Hurricane Ivan, but they are now gone. Harris said he felt the area will be a good oyster shell

project site. Marker said he felt grants need to be applied for and matching funds can be approved if needed.

Marker asked if any grants have been found for dredging at Archie Glover Boat Ramp. Blaylock said the grants department has inquired about possible grants but has not received a response.

Adjournment

The next scheduled meeting of the Marine Advisory Committee will be on Tuesday, December 4, 2007 at 5:00 p.m.

There being no further business to come before the Marine Advisory Committee, the meeting adjourned at 5:27 p.m.