

October 4, 2011
Milton, Florida

The Marine Advisory Committee met on the above date with the following members present: Jeff Marker, Wayne Hawthorne, Pasco Gibson, Rick Harris and Scott Mason. Also present were the County Administrator, Hunter Walker; Public Works Director, Avis Whitfield; Marine Extension Agent, Chris Verlinda; and County Engineer, Roger Blaylock. Jeff Marker called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m.

The minutes of the August 2, 2011 meeting were approved.

DISCUSSION OF BAL ALEX BOAT RAMP

Dr. Mike Padgett, 4340 Hickory Shores Boulevard advised the Committee that the Bal Alex Boat Ramp cement slab is too high to launch boats. He said that if you jack-knife your trailer around you can get your boat off but in most cases you cannot get a boat off a trailer in that location. The water is too shallow. He noted that we should not try to make it work for big boats but since the sea wall at that location is being replaced he suggested that the County leave a gap and dig out that section of wall next to the ramp and make it so that trailers can go off on the sand. He suggested that a smaller slab be poured just level enough to get a vehicle down to the edge of the water. It should be flattened off and dug out under the edge of the bay. He felt it could be the cheapest way to fix the problem. Another option offered would be to tear out the concrete that is currently there with an excavator and reframe it level with the bay or maybe 4 to 6 inches above the bay. He noted it will still get sand on it but it would be better than what we have right now. Also, there is a sign that says the boat ramp will be closed for repairs on the sea wall as of October 10th but since it is already closed the sign does not correlate to the work being done now.

Mr. Harris noted that you can not launch at that location when the tide is low but you can launch at high tide. He asked Dr. Padgett for clarification on the concrete angle. Dr. Padgett said that the concrete does not angle just goes out about 25 feet and drops off. Mr. Harris said that is the nature of the problem with the bay at that location as it is with Florida Town. The bay is just too shallow for a launch. Dr. Padgett recommended again removing the sea wall in that location. Jeff Marker asked Avis Whitfield if removing part of the seawall is possible since the contractor has already started work in that location. Mr. Whitfield said that it would take a change order and he doesn't know if that is possible without a modification to the permit. Mr. Blaylock agreed that the permit would have to be modified. Mr. Whitfield said that this winter when the tides are low the launch can be inspected to see if it would be possible to lower the concrete. He noted that it will be difficult to get equipment to the ramp and to make any modifications you have to catch all the conditions at just the right time during low tide. There is no good way to fix any of the shallow ramps that will be suitable for launching in the winter and in the summer. There are too many variables. Mr. Marker noted that we have a shortage of shoreline with deep water access and when we find shoreline for sale it is too expensive and the neighbors don't want it in their neighborhoods and dredging permits are almost impossible. He noted that if anyone can do something to fix the launch problem it is Avis Whitfield and requested that he look at it for a possible fix. Mr. Whitfield commented that he will see what he can do but noted that the Bal Alex homeowners association does not want any modifications made to the boat ramp. Copies of correspondence received from the HOA were provided to the Committee (see attached). Dr. Padgett stated that he thinks the HOA does not want a deep water launch but would not have a problem with modifications to a shallow launch. Rick Harris suggested that Mr. Whitfield look at the problem and suggested that Dr. Padgett check back with Mr. Whitfield in January.

PROTECTION OF CANALS

Jack Bonney of 817 Dolphin Road, Milton, spoke with the Committee about the Land Development Code and how it relates to water quality protection (see attached). He specifically noted Article Twelve, Coastal Management/Conservation 12.101.00 B, states that Zone-2 is the Shoreline Protection Zone on Escambia Bay, Blackwater Bay, East Bay and the basins and bayous and shall be measured from the mean high water line to a point five (5) feet landward of the mean high water line. He stated that it is the section of the code that protects what goes into the water. He pointed out that on Indian Bayou there is construction that does not comply with the setbacks for the shoreline protection zone. Specifically, expansion of an RV Park on Indian Bayou. The sewer lines are really close to the canal and the swimming pool has zero setbacks to Indian Bayou. Mr. Bonney said that he does not feel that sewer lines should be permitted near the canal. He stated that his issue is that, from a water quality standpoint, he doesn't want a Bayou Texar in Escambia Bay. He does not feel that it is right that Santa Rosa County will allow sewer lines even for RVs to be that close to a canal or body of water with tides that flow in and out. He requested that this Committee make a recommendation to the Planning and Zoning staff to include canals in the appropriate sections of the shoreline protection codes.

After further discussion the Committee advised Mr. Bonney that the duties of this Committee are to make recommendations as to recreational fishing and water activities to the Board of County Commissioners. It is not the appropriate venue for this issue. Members of the Committee can individually ask that the Zoning Board review the codes that apply to this issue but it would not be appropriate for the Committee to make a recommendation to the Board.

No action was taken by the Marine Advisory Committee but the Chairman agreed that water quality is a concern to each member of the Committee and requested that the members give it some thought and talk with their commissioners and if appropriate consider it at a later meeting.

CHAIRMAN/MEMBER ISSUES

Rick Harris thanked Chris Verlinda for putting together the Boating and Waterways Management Workshop. He noted that it was a very positive meeting and there were 8 or 10 people from FWC. They had the opportunity to talk about derelict vessel removal. He said he learned that any law enforcement officer must start the process and if it goes before a judge it will be thrown back until FWC or a law enforcement officer writes a report. They volunteered to come over and meet with our county and city law enforcement officers to clarify the issues. He noted that maybe a half day workshop could be organized for this purpose. He said that he spoke with the lady that actually handles our requests for Boater Registration fees and said that she was open minded about our spending and said that if we have issues we should call her and she will do all she can to work with the County to make improvements to boating and waterway management in our county. He felt that some of the things the Committee has been afraid to ask for funding on from Boater Registration Fees possibly could be used and she encouraged us to call for an opinion. One thing she mentioned that Boater Registration Fees could be used on is bathrooms. Port-o-lets can be paid for from this fund and he recommended that we pay the fees for annual port-o-let rentals from the Boater Registration Fees

so that we can show the state that we have recurring expenses in the event that they try to take the funding from the counties. He made a motion to have staff look into switching that expense to that funding line. After further discussion it was decided to save that money for bigger ticket items and the motion was withdrawn.

PROJECTS / ISSUES UPDATE

Jeff Marker noted that the current Boat Registration Fees are \$231,418.

OTHER BUSINESS

No other business.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting is scheduled for November 1, 2011 at 5:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.