

## **MARINE COMMISSION MINUTES**

**Tuesday January 28, 2020 – 9:30 a.m.**

**Vero Beach City Marina (Pavilion), 3611 Rio Vista Boulevard, Vero Beach, Florida**

**PRESENT:** Chairman, Bill Johnson; Vice Chairman, Brian Cunningham; Members: Daniel Thomas, Clinton Lanier, Ben Trautman, Alternate Member #1 Robert Snyder, and Alternate Member #2 Keith Drewett, **Also Present:** Marina Director, Sean Collins, City Attorney, John Turner, and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Hawkins

### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m. and the Senior Administrative Assistant called the roll call.

### **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

#### **A) October 22, 2019**

**Mr. Drewett made a motion to approve the October 22, 2019 Marine Commission minutes. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

### **3. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

#### **A) Chairman**

Mr. Johnson asked for nominations for Chairman. He said he would like to nominate Mr. Keith Drewett.

Ms. Rita Hawkins, Senior Administrative Assistant, stated that Mr. Drewett is an Alternate Member and is not eligible.

**Mr. Thomas nominated Mr. Bill Johnson for Chairman. Mr. Cunningham seconded the nomination.**

Mr. Johnson said he would be happy to do it again, but his bandwidth is thin. He still works every day and is in town most of the time. He also spends time in Park City, Utah, which is his second home especially when it snows there.

Mr. Trautman stated that he believes everyone is in tune with the Three Corners project and whoever is Chairman will probably want to dedicate some time and be involved with the discussion groups. He said he sent an email to the City Council to find out how the various Commissions will be involved with the consultant that the City hired, but he did not hear back from them yet. It might take a little time to make sure that the work from the prior Council is still being done and addressed.

**Mr. Cunningham made a motion to nominate Mr. Ben Troutman as Chairman. Mr. Snyder seconded the motion.**

Mr. Cunningham stated that he nominated Mr. Trautman because he lives here full time and he is knowledgeable on what is taking place along the waterfront. He agrees that the Three Corners project is going to be a hot topic going forward.

Mr. Johnson stated that he would agree with Mr. Cunningham and that Mr. Trautman would be a terrific Chairman.

Mr. Trautman stated he is willing to take on the responsibility and make sure that they have a voice with the City's plans for the Three Corners.

**Mr. Thomas said with hearing that, he would like to withdrawal his nomination for Mr. Johnson.**

**There were no other nominations. Mr. Ben Trautman was unanimously appointed as Chairman of the Marine Commission.**

#### **B) Vice Chairman**

**Mr. Johnson made a motion to nominate Mr. Brian Cunningham as Vice Chairman. Mr. Trautman seconded the motion. With no other nominations, Mr. Cunningham was unanimously appointed as Vice Chairman of the Marine Commission.**

#### **4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Chris Clark, City resident, stated that he lives on Rio Vista Boulevard and he is in favor of any construction and renovations taking place at the Marina. He offered his support if there is anything he can do to help.

Mr. Johnson asked Mr. Clark what he thought was the biggest benefit to improving the Marina.

Mr. Clark stated that he could have picked any where in Vero Beach to live, but there is nowhere else he would like to be. The atmosphere of the Marina, Riverside Park, the beach, etc., is inviting to him and special.

Mr. Johnson asked if he has been involved with the community around him and does he have a sense of their feelings about the Marina. Mr. Clark replied that he used to live on the west side of town and this area is still kind of new to him, but he thought he should speak out and let them know he supports everything they are doing at the Marina. He said that when he moved here he toured the Marina property and was informed on what work would be taking place.

Mrs. Shotsi Lajoie, City resident, stated that she is in favor of all the improvements, because it is beneficial to the neighborhood and it will be pleasant to come to the Marina after it has been updated.

Mr. Drewett stated that his neighborhood in general is favorable to what is going on at the Marina.

Mr. Michael Giannotti, City resident, stated that he lives on Highway A1A about six (6) blocks from here and he has a high interest in having the facility brought up to speed. He said Marinas are a big asset to a community. If a Marina is properly kept up and the facility is not crowded, it is the best kind of neighbor to have. People typically come to the Marina to check on their boat or take it away, so there are not large crowds of people in the neighborhood.

## **5. OLD BUSINESS**

### **A) Coastal Tech**

Mr. Sean Collins, Marina Director, stated that they have a pre-application meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers on Thursday in Cocoa, Florida. They had a pre-application meeting with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in December. Once they get through these meetings, they can start focusing on the perimeter of what they can work with to set the design and layout.

Mr. Trautman asked if they have a final design. Mr. Collins replied that they have some different layouts on paper, but without knowing the boundaries everything could change.

Mr. Trautman asked if they are still looking at phase one (1) being the structural care of the existing facility and phase two (2) being the boardwalk to the south. Mr. Collins replied that once they get the Master Plan finished they will look at what to tackle first. The layout of the existing docks will determine how far north and west they can go with the docks and the Lagoon area. The submerged lands lease comes from the State, so until they have that information, everything they have on paper could change.

Mr. Cunningham asked when will the project start. Mr. Collins replied probably a year after the Master Plan is done, because it will take some time to get the money, funds, and grants coming in. Once they determine what their boundaries are, they will make a presentation to the Marine Commission and the City Council on what the final design will look like.

### **B) Update on the Vero Beach Rowing Club – Mrs. Shotsi Lajoie**

This item was discussed after item 5-C).

Mrs. Shotsi Lajoie, Vero Beach Rowing Club, reported that the Vero Beach Rowing Club building is almost complete. In about a month, they will be moving their vessels in. They do not have a community grand opening scheduled yet, because they are still working on the inside of the building and installing the boat racks. She announced that they have an increase in membership because of the new building. She said that the Rowing Club always welcomes any feedback or information about safety on the water, which they will pass on to their members. She said that their rule is to not row in the channel except to cross it. They have almost completed their fundraising, so this \$5 million project was totally funded by private donations. The middle school attendance is up four-hundred percent and the high school team competes under a club status, which is more competitive than the scholastic status.

Mr. Johnson asked if there have been any security issues due to the area being accessible to the public. Mrs. Lajoie replied not yet. She stated that their biggest problem is with the cast netters leaving mud on the floating dock. They would like them to clean off the dock with

water so that the rowers are not bringing mud into the boats. They do not have a way to educate the people casting nets, so they welcome any suggestions.

Mr. Drewett recommended that the Rowing Club continue to emphasize safety, because on a couple of occasions he came across rowers in the channel north of the slow speed zone. He said he would like them to think about getting the Lagoon area between the two (2) bridges designated as a slow speed zone, because right now it is a 30-mile per hour zone.

Mr. Cunningham said he thinks there will be tremendous pushback. He said they acquired the current slow zone north of the Barber Bridge when the bridge was being rebuilt. Originally the signs said construction zone, but as soon as the bridge was complete, everything east and west of the channel became a slow speed manatee zone. Everywhere he travels 300 yards before and after a bridge are slow zones and it should be common courtesy, but since it is not posted, people do not slow down.

Mrs. Lajoie suggested that they post speed reduction signs north of the bridge, so when they reach the bridge they are going slow.

Mr. Thomas stated that they have young children and even handicap children out there sailing in small boats.

Mr. Cunningham reported that Indian River County is the only County that does not have slow zones at each of their bridges.

Mr. Johnson said that process might change with the Three Corners project, but it is probably too early to come into play.

Mr. Cunningham said he understands wanting the whole area to be a slow zone, but it will be a tough task.

Mr. Trautman said his first question is who has ownership of the water between the bridges. Is it Federal or State that regulates the channel. Something they can do in the meantime is apply for the Coast Guard to broadcast temporary slow zones when there are events taking place like regattas or sailing events. That might be enough to strengthen their argument for making it a permanent slow zone.

Mr. Clark said due to the recent tragedy with the college rowing team, has the Rowing Club thought about some sort of dedication.

Mrs. Lajoie replied yes. When they have their Community Open House, they will dedicate a boat to Grace, which will be a very elaborate Boat Naming Ceremony.

Mrs. Kate Madigan (spelling might not be correct), owner of sailing vessel Just Desserts, said in regards to the mud on the dock, it might be helpful to post a sign and provide a pail on a long rope, so they can wash the dock off. She asked Mrs. Lajoie if the rowers are taught to look behind them.

Mrs. Lajoie explained that some of the boats have a coxswain who steers and they are looking forward, because the rowers row backwards. She explained what type of training that the

rowers receive from the Rowing Club. There are people that bring their own shells and row in this area, but they are not part of their organization and they do not receive training.

Mr. Clark asked if people would be allowed to keep their vessel at the Rowing Club facility.

Mrs. Lajoie replied yes, but they charge a fee.

A member of the public (no name given) asked if the Rowing Club could work with other organizations to educate the kayakers, paddle boarders, canoers, etc., on safety issues.

Mrs. Lajoie stated that once the building is done she is sure they will have a relationship with the rowers, paddle boarders, canoers, etc. In the future, they will have space to hold meetings where they could teach safety classes. They want to have a good relationship with everyone on the water.

### **C) Derelict Vessels**

This item was discussed prior to item 5-B).

Mr. Drewett reported that they have support from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the Vero Beach Police Department on overboard discharge, so they are patrolling and boarding vessels. To date they have boarded eight (8) vessels and only one (1) had a minor violation. The Y-valve was in the correct position, but not properly secured and they were issued a warning. The patrols are ongoing by the FWC and the Vero Beach Police Department, which is enforcing the City Code. Derelict vessel patrols have begun, but no vessels have been sited yet. The process of removing a vessel starts with issuing a citation for a marine violation, which kicks off the administrative process of contacting the owners and sending registered letters to make a case file against the vessel.

Mr. Johnson reported that during the last windstorm, a vessel broke loose and it is sitting on an island in the sand about a mile south of where it was. It is not in the water and is completely abandoned, so how do they handle this. It is a public nuisance. Mr. Collins explained that before they get to the derelict stage they have to determine if the vessel is at risk and that is for the investigative agencies to determine.

Mr. Giannotti asked if a vessel is left grounded and abandoned, does it become salvage. Mr. Johnson replied no.

Mr. John Turner, City Attorney, explained that a plan is in place to survey vessels on a regular basis and the FWC is training the Vero Beach Police Officers how to do it, so they will not have to depend on the State. Once the Police Officers are certified and trained, they will be able to call in the vessels in a timelier manner, which will be a big step.

Mr. Drewett reported that the FWC is behind in investigating hundreds and maybe even thousands of vessels. The City needs to take things into their own hands and deal with the problems under the City Code.

Mr. Cunningham asked Mr. Drewett what is the level of security for securing the Y-valves on vessels. Mr. Drewett replied that it used to be a locked wire closure, but now they accept zip ties.

Mr. Collins explained that on October 1, 2019, the Marina implemented using numbered tie wraps that are logged, so if they ever did a check and the numbers do not match then they know the valve was opened.

Mr. Drewett reported that the FWC has \$600,000 set aside for the removal of derelict vessels, so the City does not have to pay for it. The FWC used to have a window of time that they would accept grant applications, but they changed the rules and now it is open permanently. They can even apply for a bulk grant if they have several vessels.

Mr. Snyder stated that if boaters have any issues with the rowers, he is normally at the boathouse and they can let him know. He will pass the information onto the Rowing Club Board and the trainers.

They continued to discuss different ideas on how to educate the public in the future.

## **6. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A) Annual Report**

Mr. Trautman stated that they all received a copy of the Annual Report (on file in the City Clerk's office). He asked if there was any feedback.

**Mr. Cunningham made a motion to accept the Annual Report. Mr. Lanier seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

## **7. MARINA DIRECTOR'S MATTERS**

### **A) Tour of the Vero Beach Marina**

Mr. Trautman asked to move the tour of the Marina to the end of the meeting.

Mr. Collins started the tour of the Marina facilities at 11:04 a.m.

Mr. Collins stated that creating a Master Plan for the Marina will make it safer. He pointed out the "Crab Holes" signs posted on the benches along the shoreline. He explained that it might look like grass, but crabs dig under the grass and you can step into large holes. They might rebuild the shoreline and eliminate the natural grass to alleviate that problem. He pointed out that on the south dock the deck boards were weathered, so they flipped all the boards over to spruce it up.

Mr. Drewett asked how are the pedestals. Mr. Collins replied that they are good.

Mr. Drewett asked if they are required to meet the current codes. Mr. Collins replied not right now, but when they rebuild they will.

Mr. Johnson asked if all the finger piers are up to code. Mr. Collins said they address them as needed.

Mr. Collins reported that the main dock and the office building are the original structures that were built in 1936. The cement slab on top is aged and cracked. In 2003, a new dock was added to the west side of the office building and the fuel station was moved further out on the new dock.

Mr. Trautman asked if they have many visitors from up north. Mr. Collins replied yes, and they are doubled up on each mooring buoy. He said in the Master Plan they are looking at adding more moorings.

Mr. Collins explained that if they rebuild the office building it has to remain the same size, so they might move the north and center docks further north and enclose the breezeway to make for enclosed building space. The center dock would run along the north side of the building.

Mr. Collins pointed out the new Jet Ski rentals and the floating docks that were installed for them at the boardwalk dock that runs along the shoreline. He explained that he charges this commercial customer the same price as any other boater, but in the future they might look at different rates for commercial businesses.

At the north dock, Mr. Collins stated that it was built in the early 1960's and it is past its lifespan. He pointed out that the western half of the decking on the dock was redone 20 to 30 years ago. They would like to extend the dock further to the west and north to create more slips. Dredging would be required to accommodate larger vessels.

Mr. Collins moved onto the facilities building and reported that the renovations to the north restrooms were completed in March 2019. They also did some minor maintenance work to the south restrooms. He said the laundry room is well used and it is maintained. The lounge will receive some sprucing up and new furniture in the spring or summer to make it a real lounge instead of a storage area. He explained that above the lounge is an apartment that used to be the Dock Masters living facilities, but it is now rented out. The current tenant has been there for about five (5) years. The kayak racks along the Lagoon will be rebuilt and expanded. He explained that the dingy dock needs to accommodate the 100 vessels in the moorings, so they would like to extend it further to the east along the shore.

Mr. Drewett asked if there is potential for building small boat docks in the Lagoon. Mr. Collins replied yes. It will require some dredging, but it is a well protected area. The entire Lagoon area is City owned, so there is no submerged land lease with the State. There are 14 slips at the current Lagoon dock, but one (1) has been taken over by the mangroves. There is only one (1) empty slip there right now.

Mr. Collins reported that the dry storage building was built in 1969. He explained that when there are 22-foot boats on the racks there is barely enough room to maneuver the forklift in the isle. They cannot find a small enough forklift to fit the current size of the building, so they would like to build a larger building to accommodate more and larger boats.

Mr. Thomas asked how much do they charge for the dry storage. Mr. Collins replied that they charge a monthly fee of \$325 per space.

Mr. Johnson asked if the proposed boardwalk would go through the mangroves to the south.

Mr. Collins explained that the boardwalk will extend out west past the mangroves and then turn south down along the shoreline.

Mr. Collins said if they can extend main docks further west to make more slips, then that will be done first. If they need more space in the future, they will build more slips along the boardwalk. The Marina has ample parking for now, but if they add more docks in the future they will need more parking spaces.

Mr. Collins addressed the floating docks and stated that they are 30 years old. He would like to have them moved further south so they could accommodate 30-foot vessels on both the launching and the recovery sides of the docks.

Mr. Cunningham asked what is the status of the office building that Waddell Insurance used to rent. Mr. Collins replied that they are going to keep it. He explained that it was purchased with grant money, so they would have to go through Florida Inland Navigation District to find a tenant for it.

## **8. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS**

None

## **9. MEMBER'S MATTERS**

Mr. Johnson said there was a parking issue that the Commission discussed a while back. He asked if that was an issue at the Marina.

Mr. Trautman replied that they discussed the parking at MacWilliam Park. He will follow up on the motion they made.

## **10. NEXT MEETING DATE**

### **A) Set the Date for the Next Marine Commission Meeting**

The next Marine Commission meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, April 28, 2020 at 9:30 a.m. in the City Hall, Council Chambers.

Mr. Drewett asked to be excused from the April Marine Commission meeting.

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

The Marine Commission meeting adjourned at 11:26 a.m.

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