

SPECAIL CALL MARINE COMMISSION MINUTES
Thursday, March 5, 2020 – 9:30 a.m.
Council Chambers, City Hall, Vero Beach, Florida

PRESENT: Chairman, Ben Trautman; Vice Chairman, Brian Cunningham; Members: Daniel Thomas, Bill Johnson, 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

Excused Absence: Clinton Lanier

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Trautman called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and the Senior Administrative Assistant called the roll.

Mr. Trautman stated that this meeting was called to go over the draft Master Plan for the Marina. He asked if anyone from the public would like to speak now and if not, the presentation will be heard first and then they will go to Public Comment. There were no comments by the public at this time, so they proceeded to item 3-A).

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. John Wester, City Resident, stated that he lives in the Central Beach area and he took a poll and the residents there are very much against the Marina expansion. The traffic is already bad and it will only increase with a bigger Marina. He said he found out that only 1% of City residents own boats. He said he did a survey and about half of the cities from Pompano Beach to Port Saint Lucie to Pine Island all charge fees for people to launch their boats. There are hundreds of people who do not pay City taxes, but they use the City facilities for free. He asked if they ever thought about having a boat-launching fee in the City.

The Commission members replied they have not heard of that.

Mr. Wester said it would be a good idea to investigate how many boats are coming to the City boat ramps and how much revenue the City is losing. He asked why is the City not renting the commercial building at the Marina.

Mr. Monte Falls, City Manager, explained they were holding off renting that space until they got the results of this plan to determine if the space was needed. They are now in the process of putting together a request for proposals (RFP).

Mr. Wester asked how much was the monthly rent and how long has it been vacant.

Mr. Sean Collins, Marina Director, replied that the monthly rent was \$4,000 - \$5,000 and it has been vacant for about one (1) year.

Mr. Wester stated that the City just lost \$35,000.

Mr. Falls reiterated that they held off renting the building until they knew what was happening with the Master Plan, because it is hard to get a one (1) year lease.

Mr. Thomas stated that he hopes the homeowner's concerns were taken into consideration during this process.

Mr. Collins stated that he understands the neighborhoods concerns, but there are a fair amount of people who use to travel to Vero Beach every year by boat and eventually bought homes here. He has reached out to these people and invited them to some of the meetings to show that this is not just about the Marina. This project is an economic generator for the Marina, but indirectly it benefits the restaurants, businesses, hotels, and the services related to boats. This plan is not necessarily the final plan. They want to incorporate as much as possible in the plan and then let the permitting guide them from there.

Mr. Cunningham stated that he does not encounter many residents who want Vero Beach to become like Palm Beach or Fort Lauderdale.

Mr. Johnson stated that he appreciates Mr. Wester's comments about the neighborhood. Vero Beach has many amenities that add value to homes. By making the improvements to the Marina, it adds value to homes, and improves Vero Beach. Looking at only the revenue side of it is a bit short sided. Other people have taken their own studies and found that people are in favor of this. They have been working hard for many years to get this to move forward.

Mr. Bob Jones, City Resident, said he lives close to the Marina. He is a life long boater and an enthusiastic supporter of the Marina project. He explained that boats are not extensively utilized and Vero Beach serves as a pass through place for boaters cruising south or coming here for the winter. The boaters pay premium rates to stay at the Marina and they spend money in the community. He believes the traffic problem is due to people cutting through and not the boaters. Most days the Marina parking area is only 30 to 40 percent full, so that shows boaters are not there all the time. He said there is a market for larger boats and part of the expansion is to accommodate these larger vessels. The last thing they want to become is a Marina for obsolete boats.

Mrs. Joy Todd, City Resident, stated that she is a strong supporter of the Marina. She said that the boating industry brings in more revenue than the citrus industry and the tentacles from the boating industry reach far and wide. It includes boat dealers, boat shows, the service industry, etc. Boating in Florida is here to stay and she understands that they have to be a Marina for the current boaters. The boating industry is a huge revenue producer for all of Florida.

Mr. Drewett stated that he lives on Eugenia Road and the traffic problem has improved. There are people who still break the law, but it has improved. Many more cars visit the Dog Park than will ever be at the Marina. They now have the Rowing Club, which they did not have a year ago and that increases traffic.

Mr. Trautman thanked everyone for their opinions and he thanked Mr. Falls for pursuing this project with them to help make the right decision.

Mr. Falls said that he would like the Marine Commission to give the City Council their recommendation on the plan that was submitted. The sooner that it is done the sooner the City Council can review it and move it forward.

Mr. Collins said several months ago, the Commission chose to go with the large-scale plan and the City Council followed their recommendation.

Mr. Johnson asked if they need to have it as an agenda item at another meeting, or can they just make a motion on it.

Mr. John Turner, City Attorney, stated that they can proceed with a motion and it can be based on the suggestions by the Consultant. However, if they want to accept the Draft Master Plan and make recommendations to the City Council they need to make sure it is what they want to accept. They could also ask the Consultant to bring back a Final Master Plan to review and then submit their recommendations to the City Council.

Mr. Johnson stated that time is of the essence when applying for grants. If they have the opportunity to fund a large portion of this project with grants, he recommends they make a motion to move forward.

Mr. Falls explained that this was labeled as a draft so that the Consultant could incorporate any recommendations or changes the Marine Commission might want to make before he presents it to the City Council.

Mr. Drewett said the Commission might want to consider that all the options, as they were presented are from a maritime perspective and they seem to be viable. He recommends that the Marine Commission states they support moving forward on a phase basis with the projects broken out and the viability, cost structure, revenue structure, and the grant application process is evaluated for each project.

Mr. Cunningham said he agreed with Mr. Drewett's comments. Not everyone has read every word of the report since they received it on such a short notice, but it is a culmination of what they have been discussing for years.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion that they proceed and move beyond the draft stage with the addition that they will be moving forward in phases.

Mr. Turner suggested they recommend removing the word "Draft" and that they are accepting the plan for the City Council's consideration.

Mr. Cunningham replied that is fine, but with the addition of moving forward in phases and having discussions on what the financials would be.

Mr. Johnson said it also depends on the permitting and the results of further testing.

Mr. Cunningham agreed that permitting is a big part of it, but they have to take the first step.

Mr. Turner said the City Council is looking for the Marine Commission's input and if this plan is what they want they need to adopt it.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to adopt the Marina Master Plan and drop the word "Draft". Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. On a roll call vote the motion passed 5-0 with Mr. Snyder voting yes, Mr. Johnson yes, Mr. Thomas, yes, Mr. Cunningham, yes, and Mr. Trautman, yes.

3. ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

A) Marina Master Plan

Mr. Tem Fontaine, Coastal Tech, stated that he is here today to present the Draft Marina Master Plan. He has a short Power Point presentation to go over what they have completed and what the next steps will be to implement the Master Plan (attached to the original minutes). He said he was very pleased with the comments and what came out of the pre-application meetings with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). In general, the potential improvement they previously discussed appears to be permissible and there were no huge flags or challenges. He explained that the FDEP permit will be valid for five (5) years and it can be extended for another five (5) years. The USACE permit is good for 10 years, so the City will have to identify how many boats the Marina can accommodate. If the number of boats increases down the road the City will have to go through the entire permit process again, which takes 18 months. The conceptual designs of the docks were changed, because they were informed that the docks could extend further out into the navigable waterway. He said the existing facilities will accommodate approximately 238 vessels, but with all of the potential improvements that number is closer to 441 vessels. He said the Lagoon currently has 13 slips, but the new concept will have 44 slips and accommodate boats up to 30-feet. He continued by going over the existing and potential improvements for the entire Marina. He explained that the Dockmaster's office in the middle of the main dock over the water was constructed prior to the existing permitting process. It will probably be reconstructed in the same footprint, because it contains the fuel controls for the pumps. The fuel dock and the north dock will be moved further north to accommodate larger boats. He stated that it was the consensus of the City Council not to change the nature of the Marina, because it is a great spot with lots of big shade trees. The facilities building could be torn down and rebuilt in the same footprint, but they are not depicting any large-scale changes to the dry area of the Marina. He stated that the bulkhead is losing some sediment from behind it, so depending on how much dredging is permitted they might reconstruct the bulkhead in its current location or further inland. The dry storage building currently accommodates 55 vessels, but the proposed larger building will hold up to 84 30-foot vessels. If the City wants to incorporate some office space in the building, it would affect the number of vessels they can accommodate. He said the south shoreline development would be a much later project to accommodate future growth. He would love to see the entire Marina area joined with Riverside Park with a pedestrian bridge. The challenge is that they would have to leave a 20-foot height clearance to accommodate sailboats launching out of the MacWilliam Park boat ramps. The only way they can achieve that is by including stairs. He does not see how it could be built with ramps to make it compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). He continued with going over the probable construction costs.

Mrs. Beth Lemke, Planning Solutions, stated that she is a Grant Specialist and there are many factors to consider when applying for grant funding. The most important piece is to have a well-defined project. She said showing a commitment to the project, understanding the need and purpose, knowing who and what it is going to serve, who is going to benefit from it, etc. are all part of the project definition and makes a difference on how much grant funding they receive. The City's long-term commitment to implement the project is important, because grantors do not like to fund projects that are going to sit on a shelf. Funders like to see that a project is part of something bigger like the Master Plan. They see how pieces fit in with more projects to create more benefits and more users. Having readily available match funding when submitting grant applications looks very favorable to funders. Other grants are reimbursable, where the City has to put out the funds and then they are reimbursed. Flexibility in the project

and agility to change priorities also helps. Sometimes grants open and close very quickly, so people who are ready and can react will get the money. She said that Planning Solutions knows the grantors, so they can sometime have a heads up on when money is becoming available. Another recommendation for higher grant funding is to have a Funding Strategist who is always looking for the opportunities to fund the project. The funding plan they put together for this project has 12 to 15 regular sources for grant money, but many other opportunities could come into play depending on how the project is defined. They look at the overall big picture of all of the improvements for larger grants and they look at the very detailed and specific pieces of the projects for smaller funding. If they are serious about implementing the project, she would recommend expediting the plans and pushing them forward. From a funding standpoint, she recommends getting started with the design, because with a defined plan and costs that are more complete it is easier to start applying for money to help with the construction costs. She said they can also apply for funding for the design process. She suggested that if there are multiple sources of funding for a particular part of the project that they should pursue all of them. The sooner they can apply for grants the better, because most grantors provide funding in cycles. If they miss the cycle, they will have to wait until next year to apply. Once the project is defined, there are simple things they can do to make it more appealing to grantors. She said branding of items like gazebos, trash cans, bike racks, etc., are things they can start selling for the project now.

Mr. Fontaine went over the potential next steps from the Power Point presentation.

Mr. Snyder said earlier Mr. Fontaine mentioned that there could be a problem with permitting the number of boats in regards to the manatees, The number of boats is more than double what they currently have, so is there any way to look forward to determining what the real numbers would look like.

Mr. Fontaine explained that the City would apply for a permit and they would identify that they are expanding the Marina to accommodate “X” number of boats. The USACE will send the permit package to the Commenting Agencies who will be concerned with the impacts on the manatees and they will review the number of boats. If years later the City wants to increase that number, they will have to start the 18-month permitting process all over again. He would recommend that if the City wants to pursue the permit that they do it for the entire project and even bump that number up. He said each County has a Manatee Protection Plan, which identifies where the manatees are and limits the number of boats and the construction of docking facilities. Vero Beach Marina area is very conducive for an expansion project. There are Aquatic Preserves to the north and south, but not in the actual Marina area.

Mr. Cunningham asked if there was a division between engine powered and sailboats when they talk about how many boats are permitted for the manatee impact.

Mr. Fontaine replied yes. It would be in the best interest of the City to list them all as motorized vessels. The Manatee Protection Plan does not limit the number of motorized vessels in this area.

Mr. Cunningham asked if this project is going to happen in phases, how do they decide what is first, second, third, etc. Do they look for grant funding for the entire project or in phases.

Mr. Fontaine replied that there will be many challenges, like finding the right grant money, the demand of the Marina, etc. For the funding, it would make sense for the City to prioritize the

work and pursue the grant funding for the facilities they want to see first. The other challenge is that the Marina is full of boats, so they cannot construct everything at once.

Mr. Collins stated that the permitting process is extensive for the grand scale of everything they would like to do. They will concentrate on the existing facilities first, which will be a large phase one (1). The next phase will be the dry storage building, the docks, and the Lagoon. The long-term project will be the southern shoreline and those facilities.

Mr. Thomas asked if the Manatee Protection Plan is relatively new, because the City's circumstances have changed dramatically especially since the Power Plant land opened up.

Mr. Fontaine stated that he believes it was developed in the 1990's.

Mr. Drewett asked if it would be feasible to create a living shoreline instead of building a bulkhead.

Mr. Fontaine said it is feasible. The bulkhead was a preliminary design decision. There are different costs and benefits on how they construct the shoreline. If they choose a living shoreline, they might give up some land. They discussed adding some fill and possibly planting mangroves or other plants with the regulatory agencies. If they build a bulkhead they can dredge up to the bulkhead and add other slips there, but the bulkhead and dredging can be expensive.

Mr. Drewett stated that a living shoreline might open up a slew of grant possibilities. He asked when and how does any financial modeling or pay back analysis get done.

Mr. Fontaine replied that was not included in their scope of work. Since this is a public facility, it opens up a lot of money for the City. If they look at the high grant funding the improvements would cost \$5 million, if they get the level of grant funding that they expect.

Ms. Cindy Lawson, Finance Director, said this goes back to prioritizing the projects and moving them forward on a priority basis. She said safety issues generate some projects and others are driven by revenue generation. They will need to plan for each project to determine how much grant funding is available, so they know what it will cost the City. Next, they will look at how much revenue is generated to be able to move onto the next project. They cannot do an analysis for the Master Plan as a whole and they need to go project by project.

Mr. Drewett said he thought there might be an advantage of prioritizing projects early on that are revenue generating. He said the mooring field expansion is relatively low cost and it would provide immediate revenue.

Mr. Collins replied yes. The moorings will definitely bring in more revenue. They have been doubling up on the mooring balls for decades, so it would also help spread the load out at the facilities.

Mr. Trautman asked if the dry storage building is permitted the same way as everything else.

Mr. Fontaine replied yes, and it is included in the total number of vessels.

Mr. Trautman said it sounds like they cannot permit the dry storage building without permitting everything.

Mr. Fontaine stated that he would have to see if the previous owners received a core permit when they went through the permitting process. He believes they did get a Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) permit for the improvements, so it should be able to be expedited.

Mr. Collins explained that the previous owner was working on replacing the dry storage structure before the City bought it. He reported that the submerged land lease already has wording in it to allow for 96 vessels.

Mr. Cunningham asked if the dry stack building is included with all of the City owned Marina property.

Mr. Collins replied that the dry storage building has separate land leases.

Mr. Trautman said he thought the expanded parking area near the Lagoon was not a given, since it is chartered land.

Mr. Monte Falls, City Manager, explained that any time that parking is added to a City Park there has to be a public hearing before it is done.

Public Comment was discussed after item 3–A).

4. ADJOURNMENT

The Marine Commission meeting adjourned at 10:41 a.m.

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