



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
MARINE ADVISORY BOARD
FORT LAUDERDALE FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT
528 NW 2ND STREET, STATION #2
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA 33311
3RD FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2024 – 6:00 P.M.**

**Cumulative Attendance
January-December 2024**

Steve Witten, Chair	P	2	0
James Harrison, Vice Chair	A	0	2
Tyler Brunelle	P	2	0
Robyn Chiarelli	A	0	2
Barry Flanigan (arr. 6:01)	P	2	0
Robert Franks	P	1	1
Elisabeth George	P	2	0
Brewster Knott	P	2	0
John Lynch	P	2	0
Norbert McLaughlin	P	2	0
Noelle Norvell	A	1	1
Ed Rebholz (arr. 6:46)	P	2	0
Bill Walker	P	2	0
Robert Washington	P	2	0

As of this date, there are 14 appointed members to the Board, which means 8 would constitute a quorum.

Staff

Jonathan Luscomb, Marine Facilities Supervisor
Sergeant Travis O’Neil, Marine Unit Supervisor
Marco Aguilera, Code Compliance Officer
Dr. Warren Sturman, Fort Lauderdale District 4 City Commissioner
Renee Manchoy, Assistant to City Commissioner Dr. Warren Sturman
Carla Blair, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communications to City Commission

None.

I. Call to Order / Roll Call

Chair Witten called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and roll was taken.

Mr. Flanigan arrived at 6:01 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes – January 4, 2024

Motion made by Ms. George, seconded by Mr. Franks, to approve. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

III. Statement of Quorum

It was noted a quorum was present at the meeting.

IV. Waterway Crime & Boating Safety Report

Marine Unit Sergeant Travis O'Neil reported the following activity for January 2024:

- No reported burglaries or thefts
- Removal of two boats from the beach

Sgt. O'Neil added that Marine Unit Officers have cautioned owners of electronic devices to secure them due to the potential for thefts. He felt this has been helpful in deterring some thefts.

The Marine Unit is continuing a campaign to meet with every vessel anchored in the City, as this makes it easier to reach out to those owners if any incidents occur.

Chair Witten addressed illegal dumping into canals, requesting clarification of what is legal and how enforcement can be achieved. Sgt. O'Neil recommended taking video of incidents if possible, including any distinguishing markings or numbers. It is illegal to dump anything into the water from land or from a boat, including landscaping detritus.

Mr. McLaughlin recommended immediate outreach to the U.S. Coast Guard when dumping is witnessed. Sgt. O'Neil confirmed this, also encouraging members to call the Marine Unit's emergency number. He pointed out that while the Coast Guard may not immediately bring charges for a violation, the Marine Unit can.

Mr. Franks shared a photo of an illegally tied vessel near a bridge, pointing out that this can impede navigation on the waterway. Chair Witten recommended that members address or report issues that affect navigation or safety if they witness these incidents. Code Compliance Officer Marco Aguilera reported that he has followed up on the violation.

The following Item was taken out of order on the Agenda.

VI. Industry Expert – Captain Chris Wittman, Co-Founder Captains for Clean Water

Chair Witten introduced Captain Chris Wittman of Captains for Clean Water, which is an education and advocacy organization led by stakeholders to promote water quality improvement projects in the Florida Everglades. He emphasized the significance of these projects for drinking water as well.

Capt. Wittman noted the economic as well as ecological impacts of water quality and the environment on Florida, recalling the effects of a water crisis event in 2018 on commercial and recreational fishing as well as local economic output, property values, and jobs. In order to ensure economic security, citizens and stakeholders must make water quality a priority and ensure that resources are invested in addressing this issue. The core of Captains for Clean Water is public outreach and engagement.

Chair Witten asked what can be done to promote awareness of the importance of water quality. Capt. Wittman observed that making the public aware of opportunities that come with addressing water quality issues can lead to political success for policymakers at the state, regional, and local levels. He added that educational material is available on the organization's website, Captainsforcleanwater.org.

The organization is funded by individual donors and does not apply for state grant funds, as they hope to hold policymakers accountable. Captains for Clean Water is a non-partisan 501(c)3 entity and does not support specific candidates. They have been in existence for eight years and have a full-time staff of 20 throughout the state, with headquarters based in Fort Myers. This staff produces educational content and leads awareness campaigns. The organization's goal is to have sufficient resources to see Everglades restoration through to completion while elevating attention on other water quality issues as well.

Ms. George stated that she had recently attended a City priority planning meeting for District 2, which includes the Fort Lauderdale Beach. She had raised the issues of beach cleanliness and reef preservation, as well as the cleanliness of the Intracoastal Waterway. She emphasized the need for residents to be passionate about these issues and take a proactive stance on behalf of the environment, as well as for constant communication and education of the public.

Capt. Wittman acknowledged that the area's transient populations, including new residents and "snowbirds," have less experience with living near water and may not understand the importance of maintaining water quality. He emphasized the importance of awareness and education for these residents and visitors.

Mr. McLaughlin stated that dredging of the City's waterways is another key concern, pointing out that the City does not dredge regularly or in large portions of the rivers. There is no regular budget for dredging. It was noted that the public has raised this issue before the City Commission and dredging will be discussed further at an upcoming Commission meeting to establish goals.

Mr. Rebholz arrived at 6:46 p.m.

V. Introduction – District 4 Commissioner / Dr. Warren Sturman

Chair Witten introduced Fort Lauderdale District 4 City Commissioner Dr. Warren Sturman. He pointed out that the majority of the New River moratorium is located in District 4, and noted that further public and stakeholder outreach is planned in relation to the moratorium.

Commissioner Dr. Sturman and Chair Witten briefly discussed variance requests, including considerations such as views and relationships between neighbors as well as safety and navigability. Chair Witten observed that while issues related to views are not within the Board's purview, there may be a need for further discussion of views and their impacts on property values with the City Commission.

Chair Witten noted that another consequence of granting a large number of variances on a waterway could eventually include running out of room. Mr. Brunelle also pointed out that granting a variance does not mean an individual's boat may extend past the structure into the navigable waterway.

Commissioner Dr. Sturman stated that the Commission regularly holds workshops on various topics, adding that he would be happy for his district to host a workshop related to the moratorium.

Commissioner Dr. Sturman also recalled that there has been a proposal for the City to designate a Chief Waterway Officer who would report directly to the City Manager. This may be discussed further at an upcoming Commission goal-setting meeting. Another issue that has arisen is the application of the City's Noise Ordinance to its waterways.

Mr. Franks emphasized the importance of dredging the City's waterways and ensuring a defined navigable channel. Commissioner Dr. Sturman acknowledged that while this may be an expensive undertaking, the Commission plans to consider this further. He added that he has heard this concern expressed many times.

VII. FIND (Florida Inland Navigational District) Industrial Access Video

Chair Witten introduced Broward County Commissioner Frank Gernert, who serves as Vice Chair of the Florida Inland Navigational District (FIND). He emphasized the importance of FIND to the Board's work.

Chair Witten showed a brief video by FIND on the importance of commercial and industrial access to waterways throughout South Florida.

Commissioner Gernert explained that FIND is a special taxing district within the 12 counties along the Intracoastal Waterway. They generate approximately \$15 million in annual revenue from property taxes, as well as an additional \$15 million to \$30 million in federal funds. There are 12 FIND Commissioners who are charged with stewardship of the Intracoastal Waterway. Each month the organization holds a meeting in one of its 12 member counties.

Commissioner Gernert continued that in addition to overseeing the Intracoastal Waterway, FIND also offers funding programs to counties and municipalities along that waterway. They distribute \$15 million in annual funding throughout the 12 member counties. He cited the example of a dredging project from Dania Beach to Las Olas, which cost approximately \$20 million. FIND also helped to fund Fort Lauderdale's floating dock system through grant funds. These dollars can be used toward any items that contribute to the accessibility of waterways that lead to the Intracoastal Waterway, including the New River.

While FIND is a service organization, it operates as if it were a private entity. He emphasized the importance of marine industries to the area and their role in ensuring accessibility to the waterway. FIND is also assisting with the cost of a bathymetric study of the New River which is currently underway.

VIII. Discussion – New River Moratorium

Chair Witten showed part of the slide presentation the City had made in December 2023 to the Planning and Zoning Board, which outlined the defined area in which the moratorium was requested. He explained that he has spoken with Assistant City Attorney Bob Dunckel to request permission for the Board to meet one hour earlier in March 2024 for casual discussion of and updates on the New River moratorium. He also recalled that Commissioner Dr. Sturman had offered to assist with additional public outreach meetings as well.

Chair Witten also shared a video that was shown to the Planning and Zoning Board as part of the moratorium request. He noted that no such moratorium has previously occurred in Fort Lauderdale.

IX. Old / New Business

Chair Witten distributed copies of *Florida's Long-Term Stored Vessel Study* to the members, and shared slides of a recent manatee rescue/relocation at Cooley's Landing.

Ms. George requested a copy of the slide presentation on Ocean Rescue Alliance International which had been shown at the January 2024 meeting.

X. Adjournment

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There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]