

**PUNTA GORDA ISLES
CANAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING
JUNE 15, 2009**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bill Dixon, Chairman
Nancy Dauster, David Gerdel,
Spencer Hughes, Michael Strunk

MEMBERS ABSENT: Thomas McAlear

OTHERS PRESENT: Randy Brodersen, Canal Maintenance Supervisor
Dennis Murphy, Growth Management Director
Rick Keeney, Public Works Director
Mayor Larry Friedman
Councilmember Charles Wallace
Councilmember Bill Albers
Vice Mayor Harvey Goldberg
Mike Fauci, Mary Fleenor, Robert Brady, Noel Hyde,
Mario Cavanna, John Dauster, Tom Carroll,
Bill Folchi, Jim Hoffman

CALL TO ORDER/ANNOUNCEMENTS

- A. Roll Call
- B. Next Scheduled Meeting - Monday, July 20, 2009 - 1:30 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. Regular Meeting - May 18, 2009
 - Ms. Dauster MOVED, Mr. Gerdel SECONDED approval of the May 18, 2009 minutes.
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.
- B. Joint Workshop - May 26, 2009
 - Ms. Dauster MOVED, Mr. Gerdel SECONDED approval of the May 26, 2009 minutes.
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

CANAL MAINTENANCE MONTHLY REPORTS

- A. Permits Authorized by City Staff for Installation of Docks, Lifts, Outpilings, etc.
 - Mr. Randy Brodersen, Canal Maintenance Supervisor, reported 15 permits had been issued in May 2009, noting same were detailed in the Committee's agenda material.
- B. Budget Utilization Report
 - Mr. Brodersen displayed the Budget Utilization Report for the period beginning June 1, 2009, as delineated in the members' agenda packets, offering to answer any questions regarding same.
 - Ms. Dauster noted the Report indicated 98% of seawall replacement was complete, with 84% of that line item expended; however, 45% of seawall cap replacement was

complete while 52% of the budgeted amount had been spent; thus, 7% more had been utilized.

- Mr. Brodersen responded he had made all necessary corrections for the following month's report, stating percentages had been based on the originally estimated lineal footage. He explained dividing the dollar amount for seawall cap replacement, for example, by the cost per foot, would provide the correct percentage as to how much was complete. He clarified the numbers under seawall or seawall cap replacement did not equate to the dollar amounts found in the budget section below.
- Ms. Dauster then thanked Mr. Brodersen for detailing the breakdown of what had already been encumbered.

OLD BUSINESS

- Mr. Dennis Murphy, Growth Management Director, announced the Charlotte County Geographic Information System (GIS) Manager had advised he was prepared to provide a GIS demonstration specific to the City's seawall database to staff on June 26, 2009. He expressed hope the program could be up and running within one to two months.
- Mr. Dixon provided a brief explanation of the GIS information referenced by Mr. Murphy, stating same would provide vital information to the Canal Maintenance Division.
- Ms. Dauster commented PGI had experienced two recent seawall failures, asking if there had been any others.
- Mr. Brodersen replied he believed there had been a total of three.
- Mr. Dixon clarified work on Jamaica Way was ongoing, commenting same was sorely needed.

CURRENT BUSINESS

- A. Operational Budget Discussion - Fiscal Year (FY) 2009/2010
 - Mr. Dixon announced the PGI Civic Association (CA) Board of Directors unanimously supported this Committee's recommendation for a \$100 increase to the annual canal maintenance assessment fee. He continued he understood the PGI CA Board polled their members, with approximately 90% of responses received thus far being in favor of the recommendation.
 - Ms. Dauster noted she served on the PGI CA Board, confirming members were provided with the same budget information made available to members of this Committee.
 - Mr. Strunk opined the Committee's thoughts with regard to the need for an increase had been made clear at the May 26, 2009 Joint Workshop.
 - Mr. Mike Fauci spoke in favor of maintenance of the canal system, pointing out people were drawn to Punta Gorda based on it being a waterfront community; however, he

asserted it was time to consider seawall costs on a per family basis, stating he believed the system must be fair to those with a 35 foot seawall as compared to another with 200 feet.

- Ms. Mary Fleenor expressed full support of the Committee's recommendation for a \$500 annual fee.
- Mr. Robert Brady commented he did not believe anyone could legitimately complain about an increase to \$500. He questioned the fee schedule for multi-family units.
- Mr. Rick Keeney, Public Works Director, replied the amount collected was equal to one ten-thousandth of a single family lot assessment for each square foot of land lying less than one hundred twenty lineal feet from the canal, waterway, seawall or bulkhead abutting Charlotte Harbor.
- Mr. Brady then asked if any commercial properties existed in PGI and the assessment method for same.
- Mr. Keeney replied affirmatively, stating such properties would be assessed in the same manner as multi-family zoned property.
- Mr. Brady asked how unbuildable lots were assessed.
- Mr. Keeney replied same was dependent upon their zoning classification.
- Mr. Brady asked if multi-family property owners would also face an increase.
- Mr. Keeney replied affirmatively, offering to meet with Mr. Brady after the meeting to further explain the different methods of calculation.
- Mr. Brady asked what determined the priority of locations requiring replacement or repair.
- Mr. Keeney replied sites were prioritized by Canal Maintenance Division staff based on their experience.
- Mr. Noel Hyde commented on the suggestion to change the assessment method to one based on lineal feet, reminding everyone the annual fee included much more than just seawalls and seawall caps, i.e., dredging throughout the entire canal system, mangrove trimming, aids to navigation, etc.
- Mr. Fauci acknowledged same; however, the greater the seawall, the greater the property value.
- Mr. Dixon concluded he would schedule a discussion of this issue on a future agenda once the upcoming year's budget issues were resolved.
- Mr. Mario Cavanna expressed agreement with Mr. Fauci, urging the assessment to be based on lineal feet.
- Mr. John Dauster recommended consideration be given to addressing long term maintenance of all seawalls by floating a bond issue. He asserted residents would

soon be faced with paying \$1,000 per year, adding a figure of \$1,200 per year had been mentioned at a previous meeting. He clarified a cost benefit analysis should be conducted by this Committee and then by City Council in order to determine the appropriateness of a bond issue.

- Mr. Dixon responded he intended to initiate such a discussion following the current budget cycle. He expressed hope up-to-date GIS information would provide some sense of rate of failure.
- Mr. Gerdel reminded everyone the figure of \$1,200 was the initial assessment, adding there were 30 years of payment behind same.
- Mr. Tom Carroll stated the annual fee was being tied to the previous or current year's seawall failure rate, asserting a professional must be hired to actuarially assess how much must be collected for long term maintenance of the seawalls.
- Mr. Strunk countered hiring such a professional would cost \$100,000; however, those funds were simply not available.
- Mr. Jim Hoffman asked why the fee structure did not revert back to the single family rate when a single family home was constructed on a multi-family zoned lot.
- Mr. Dixon expressed uncertainty regarding same; however, he opined the property must first be rezoned.
- Mr. Hoffman commented Councilmember Bill Albers had advised all contract work was competitively bid; however, he understood City crews constructed the seawalls and installed seawall caps.
- Mr. Dixon responded City crews poured the seawall panels while a contractor installed same. He explained the City did not have equipment such as a barge or crane, adding City crews sometimes replaced seawall caps, particularly on a vacant lot.
- Mr. Hoffman asked how City crews became involved in seawall cap replacement if an annual contract was bid out.
- Mr. Dixon replied Mr. Brodersen made those decisions, reiterating same was possible on vacant lots due to the availability of landward access. He clarified the Committee was strictly advisory and thus could not enter into contracts or conduct negotiations.
- Mr. Hoffman asserted his taxes increased over 20% the previous year, stating he accused Mayor Larry Friedman of utilizing the proposed 25% increase in canal fees to offset lower taxes in the upcoming fiscal year in order to keep more City employees on the payroll. He acknowledged Mayor Friedman's honesty and straightforwardness.
- Mr. Dixon clarified the increase referenced by Mr. Hoffman was relative to property taxes, pointing out the City received a relatively small portion of same.

- Mr. Hoffman questioned the basis for a sudden increase of 25% in that the City had been keeping up with seawall failures.
- Mr. Dixon countered the City had not been able to keep up with its seawalls, adding actual failures had been few due to the years long drought.
- Mr. Hoffman contended excess money should be available.
- Mr. Dixon responded the seawall budget was expended each year. He noted the Committee had recommended a 10% increase the previous two years; however, City Council had opted to act otherwise.
- Mr. Strunk stated the Committee arrived at a recommendation of 25% after looking at past and projected rates of failure and associated expenses. He clarified the Committee was concerned solely with seawalls and seawall caps as opposed to anything relative to property taxes.
- In response to Mr. Hoffman's question relative to zoning, Mayor Friedman stated the zoning designation did not have to drive the Canal Maintenance Assessment District's (CMAD's) method of assessment. He opined a single family home constructed on multi-family zoned property should be charged the single rate, suggesting staff research same and report back to Mr. Hoffman. He clarified usage, not zoning, should be what drove canal fees. He expressed hope over the course of the next year, the City would attempt to devise a business plan in terms of looking to the future and quantifying the true condition of the canal system, how much had been replaced and a more accurate way to predict the rate of failures. He explained such a business plan could comprehend the amount of work which must be accomplished to prevent falling so far behind. He stated he believed the City must corroborate its inventory was correct, adding available figures, if correct, indicated a relatively small percentage of seawalls had been replaced. He noted the prediction of dire consequences was being predicated on faulty data. He mentioned he did not believe a professional statistician would cost anywhere near \$100,000. He then reported receipt of a fair percentage of electronic mail raising the issue of changing to a per lineal foot assessment method, adding he had personally supported same in past years. He contended such methodology would be more "doable" with current technology as compared to years past. He advised members to first decide whether or not they wished to pursue same, adding if a decision was made to move forward, it must be approached in an algebraic type formula, i.e., " $y = a + b \times x$ ", with "a" representing the fixed costs associated with activities not particular to seawall length such as dredging, mangrove trimming, general administration, etc. He explained "y" would represent costs associated with the latter activities, "b" being a factor to be derived by multiplying by "x", which was

the length of the seawall. He then stated the assessment method for multi-family properties must be studied, offering to work with the Committee throughout the year.

NEW BUSINESS

A. FY 2010 Strategic Plan Review & Input

- Mr. Dixon announced the City was requesting input from various stakeholders, including the City's advisory boards/committees, noting a copy of the Strategic Plan was provided in the Committee's agenda material. He explained members could submit suggestions either individually, as a committee or both. He pointed out the last page of the Strategic Plan pertained to the Canal System, displaying a copy of same for the benefit of those in the audience.
- Ms. Dauster recommended amending the third project to include the following, quoted verbiage: Reassess the condition and appearance of the canals in Punta Gorda Isles "including but not limited to seawalls, seawall caps, maintenance of appropriate depths and overgrowth of mangroves" and identify an appropriate funding mechanism if deemed warranted.
- Consensus of the Committee was agreement with same.
- Mr. Dixon then stated he felt the City must take further action in the interest of public awareness and education. He confirmed he would coordinate with the City Clerk's Office on transmitting the Committee's consensus to the Assistant City Manager.
- Mr. Hoffman asked if the Marine Patrol was financed through the CMAD.
- Mr. Dixon replied absolutely not.
- Ms. Fleenor commented Mr. McAlear's running articles in the PGI CA's newsletter represented an excellent communication tool. She then described a recent incident of excessive speed through the canal system.
- Mr. Dixon strongly urged residents to report such incidents to the Police Department even when unable to report the vessel's registration number.
- Mr. Bill Folchi suggested adding to the Strategic Plan some way of communicating with the public about the inventory or backlog of work needing to be done in PGI. He explained this would inform residents when and/or if their seawalls were scheduled for repair.
- Mr. Dixon asked Mr. Folchi to urge such residents to also contact the Public Works Department.
- Mr. Brodersen confirmed staff addressed all such calls and would advise the caller if contact information was provided.
- Mr. Hoffman commented on the issue of speeding in the canals, stating Volunteers in Policing (VIPs) patrolled during the day while Fishing Club volunteers patrolled at night.

He recommended the groups trade shifts as crime tended to be more prevalent at night, adding the Fishing Club volunteers had no authority.

- Mr. Dixon pointed out the VIPs' charter was primarily boater education, adding many more boaters were out during the day.
- Mr. Keeney then confirmed the Committee wished to maintain their unanimous recommendation for a \$500 annual canal maintenance assessment fee. He reported MCG had been asked to dedicate additional crews to repair of seawalls and seawall caps. He questioned the Committee's feelings with regard to utilizing their reserves down to 5% strictly to increase production relative to seawalls and seawall caps, estimating same at \$200,000.
- Mr. Strunk asked what 5% represented in terms of dollars.
- Mr. Keeney replied \$100,000.
- Consensus of the Committee was to utilize reserves down to 5%.

MEMBER COMMENTS

- Mr. Gerdel commented a citizen had been tracking Marco Island activities, specifically with regard to their use of French drains, asking if that information had been provided to staff.
- Mr. Keeney replied affirmatively.
- Mr. Gerdel asked if French drains were worth the City's consideration as a possible alternative to weep holes.
- Mr. Keeney replied staff would give the idea further study. He acknowledged a French Drain helped transport water; however, staff desired the water to sheet flow as well.
- Mr. Gerdel asked staff to be prepared to comment on same at the next meeting. He further suggested a thorough analysis of the City's design details as spelled out in City Code.
- Mr. Keeney concurred, adding a study on French drains was done with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) following Hurricane Charley in August 2004.
- Mr. Dixon mentioned Marco Island residents owned their seawalls and were thus personally responsible for their maintenance and replacement.
- Ms. Dauster announced Mr. McAlear was writing a series of articles relative to the canals in general for the PGI CA newsletter, commenting favorably on same. She then reported a presentation of a pump-out boat was made at the most recent Waterfront Development Advisory Committee (WDAC) meeting, adding same had been very well received.
- Mr. Dixon reported the following Marine Patrol activity for May 2009: 3 citations; 10 warnings; 23 vessel inspections.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

- Mr. Dauster commended the Committee on their presentation to City Council at the May 26, 2009 Joint Workshop, stating he believed a very compelling argument had been made.

ADJOURNMENT

- Meeting Adjourned: 2:55 p.m.

Bill Dixon, Chairman

Mary Kelly, Recording Secretary