



Beach Preservation Ad Hoc Committee Meeting
Friday, July 12, 2024, 9:00am
1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC and
broadcasted live on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/cityofisleofpalms>

MINUTES

Present: Andrew Vega (via phone), Cindy Solomon, Tim Ahmuty, Dan Slotchiver, Council members Pierce and Miars, Mayor Pounds, Administrator Fragoso, Director Kerr, Stephen Traynum

Absent: Council Member Campsen

Administrator Fragoso provided updates on beach-related projects. The City requested \$7 million in the State's FY25 budget for beach nourishment and stormwater projects. The approved budget awarded \$1 million for beach nourishment and \$1.25 million for stormwater projects.

The City submitted a letter to the USACE asking for funds to be assigned for a feasibility study to determine the City's eligibility to become a federally funded project. This letter of intent will be used by USACE to request funding. The letter is specific to the erosional issues on the public beach.

State budget provisos for FY25 were vetoed by the Governor. Administrator Fragoso explained the suggested provisos that "would essentially require OCRM to re-evaluate any violations associated with hard erosion control structures since the passage of the new Beachfront Management Act and also allow property owners who challenge the definition of or challenge that violation from the State. If they are successful in court, the State would be reimbursing the property owner's legal fees and also reimbursing the actual cost that the property owner spent in trying to correct the violation. The other proviso was associated with the beach's definition that the State currently has when regulating the beach." Neither were included in the FY25 budget.

The contractor for the USACE beneficial use project has mobilized and is on site clearing sediment. It will be 60 days before sand is placed on the beach. An updated work schedule will be provided when available.

The permit for the shoal management project at the north end of the island was submitted. A public meeting was held at the Recreation Center in May explaining the project to those affected by it. Due to concerns from residents about the recycling of the sand and potential impacts, the permit was revised. Administrator Fragoso explained, "We did not want to threaten the ability of us securing a permit for the shoal management piece, so this is new sand that is coming in and attaching to that area, by having it tied with this other area that may be concerning to some and could be challenged by others. So we decided to separate those two permits and moving both of

those concurrently, but not limiting our ability to secure a permit for the shoal, which was always our number one priority.” Mr. Traynum expects the permit process to take 7-8 months.

Available funds previously approved by City Council have been used to secure another layer of sandbags at Beachwood East. Mr. Traynum explained updates to the beachfront regulations regarding the placement of sandbags. He said the new regulations will make it easier to maintain a sandbag wall. He also said there was a change to the emergency criteria used to determine when a property owner can place sandbags: “The emergency criteria used to be a hard 20’. The shoreline had to be within 20’ of a structure. They’ve added a line now that maintains that 20’, but if the department determines that extenuating circumstances related to the site conditions exist, the department, at its discretion, may allow the use of emergency orders when the erosion is beyond 20’ of the structure. So it gives the department a little bit more flexibility to anticipate erosional events or unique circumstances where a particular property may be set further back than adjoining properties, so it makes the emergency conditions a little bit more user friendly.”

Ms. Solomon expressed concern about the City’s readiness to deal with hurricane-related damages to the beach. She asked if permits were in place that would help after a hurricane. Director Kerr explained that the homeowners can truck in sand under the City’s permit, but no homeowners have taken advantage of it.

Mr. Slotchiver added, “I think one thing for certain that everybody can agree with is that the circumstances we have now would qualify for any triggers that we are going to create. So how do we ignore the present and only plan for the future without planning for the present? I think that we are kind of required to do that, and I think that is part of the City’s charge from my perspective.”

A lengthy discussion ensued about the City’s recent efforts to support homeowners’ efforts to protect their properties, what the permits allow a homeowner to do, and what else, if anything, can be done to help or prepare homeowners for hurricane season ahead of the USACE beneficial use project.

To assist in the efforts allowing homeowners to protect their beachfront homes, the City will request an extension of the permit to truck in sand up to 10th Avenue; talk with DHEC about the feasibility of considering the entire area under emergency conditions; request permission for the flexibility to harvest sand from the spit; request from the State the authority to place sandbags along a longer stretch of beach and help coordinate for property owners in that area; and communicate these options to the homeowners there. Administrator Fragoso hopes to have updates on these efforts by the July 23 City Council meeting.

Mr. Traynum said he would fly a drone today “to determine relative distances that could qualify for an emergency permit” to build a sandbag wall.

Council Member Pierce said he would like to know what a 60’ sand loss looks like at the July 23 City Council meeting.

Mayor Pounds said Explore Charleston will help the City lobby the State for beach funding. Council Member Miars suggested the City plan for beach nourishment as if the State is not going to help.

Administrator Fragoso said she will be speaking with the City's financial advisor to look at "a 32-year plan and we generate what our current expenditures are and the cost of the project as Stephen has outlined for those 30 years, how much do we need to come up with every year in addition to what we currently do to be able to sustain that, and it is not, I think to your point, I don't thin it is insurmountable. I think we can get creative to at least cover for some of that, and that's the worst-case scenario, that not assuming any grants. I think that would be gravy, but we have to plan for the worst-case scenario."

Council Member Miars said the City would end up spending less money in the long run by acting proactively. Director Kerr reiterated staff's desire to have a "playbook" to react to any situation revealed by beach monitoring.

Referencing the recommendations and considerations page in the meeting packet, Director Kerr said, "We think we've settled the first five. Then we have number six and seven to work on, and then we had four at the bottom of that list that we were hoping to start digging into these in future meetings. Number one is the funding mechanism that sounds like we're going to focus on the next meeting. We have talked about providing information to Wild Dunes which we have done some work on in terms of what it would take for their beach to become eligible for public nourishment funding. We've talked about analyzing the Army Corps pros and cons of being a managed beach. And then to our discussions today, a more clear emergency response strategy."

Administrator Fragoso added that legal staff could be brought in to discuss the special tax districts and the City's lobbyist could discuss strategies for securing funding for the beach.

The next meeting of the Beach Preservation Ad Hoc Committee will be Monday, July 22, 2024 at 9:00am.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:36am.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk