

**MANATEE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER
1112 Manatee Avenue West
Bradenton, Florida
May 25, 2017**

Present were:

Betsy Benac, Chairman
Robin DiSabatino, First Vice-Chairman
Stephen R. Jonsson, Third Vice-Chairman
Vanessa Baugh (entered during work session)
Carol Whitmore (entered during work session)
Priscilla Whisenant Trace

Absent was:

Charles B. Smith, Second Vice-Chairman

Also present were:

Ed Hunzeker, County Administrator
Mitchell O. Palmer, County Attorney
Vicki Tessmer, Board Records Supervisor, Clerk of the Circuit Court



Chairman Benac called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

AGENDA

BC20170525DOC001

1. **WEST COAST INLAND NAVIGATION DISTRICT (WCIND)**

BC20170525DOC002

Charlie Hunsicker, Parks and Natural Resources Director, explained the funding sources of WCIND, and the need to fund public waterways and boat ramps. A capital improvement program has been developed for navigation issues and boating. Revenues come FBIP (Boater Registration fees) have been reserved for boating improvements. The county is allowed to use property they own, on a 50/50 basis. He reviewed the matching dollar amounts with WCIND and the types of projects that eligible for funding. Residential canals and non public waterways are not eligible for WCIND funding.

Mr. Hunsicker began a discussion regarding dredging due to many property owners requesting assistance for dredging. This is a level of service the County cannot provide as there are limited revenues for navigation and boater improvement.

Discussion ensued regarding residential canals serve a non public purpose, there would be no public launching into a non-public canal, Florida Statutes states there is no obligation for local government to maintain canals even if they are dedicated to the public, Bowlees Creek, waters belong to the State, unless an owner has riparian rights, owners can obtain a permit from the State to maintain canals, the County cleans the outfalls in the canals, but the area is limited, the natural flow of water will go into the canals, WCIND is not allowed to fund the cleaning of outfalls, natural erosion process of water and the natural sediment will occur and the County will remove it,

Ron Schulhofer, Public Works Director, explained at one time the Municipal Service Tax Units were done for the benefit of tax payers to have canals in subdivisions dredged. The residents would not be happy with the results of the project, and a previous Board decided to no longer dredge the canals. A pilot program was created to hit the high spots where

sediment occurs in the canals. Residents would be notified and while the dredging company was in the canal, the residents would contract with the dredging company to perform more dredging in the canal. The County has managed 12 different areas for \$250,000 per year.

 Discussion ensued regarding keeping the outfall project going, budgeting will continue for the program, and funding comes out of the Public Works budget, and runoff in Bowlees Creek from the golf course,

Mr. Schulhofer noted there are 177 sites (pipes) that have been cleaned out and the estimated cost per pipe is \$10,000. The outfalls in Manatee Subdivision will be taken care of, and the residents will be notified as soon as the project comes back from bid.

 Discussion ensued regarding taking advantage of the dredge company being on site to have them use this for personal use.

Mr. Schulhofer explained dredging was done in Manatee in 1958 and again in 2001 for \$305,000.

 Mr. Hunsicker explained Highland Shores has is a public boat ramp in that area, and at the time Highland shores was developed the boat ramp was built by the neighborhood. A previous Board had the boat ramp turned over to the public to receive County funding and the launch capability has been improved over the years. Fort Hamer also offers access to upriver. A bathometric study is being done in Highland Shores, which will give the general location of sediment in relation to the natural resources in the area and is part of the permitting process. There is a complete inventory of all the canals in the county, and the cost to dredge all of them would be over \$40 million.

Mr. Hunsicker continued the slides noted WCIND funds are for public waters and cover non-public canals that connect to larger bodies of water, but staff cannot recommend these be done as there is not enough funding. Funding could also cover access to amenities/facilities which serve the general public, and intra-coastal waterways handled by WCIND and the Army Corps of Engineers, which are federally maintained channels. The County contributes to a regional account, and the County can request WCIND to dredge regional waterways. None of the regional projects are included in the local budget. Approximately 20 percent of the budget is contributed to the regional account.

(Enter Commissioners Baugh and Whitmore during discussion)

 Discussion ensued regarding the WCIND Board votes on dedicated projects that benefit the region and not just Manatee County. Regional projects benefit boats from outside of Manatee County and also directly benefit the intercoastal waterways, such as Longboat Pass, and encompass waterways all the way down to Lee County. Some Manatee County projects are also regional in nature. In this budget, a regional project has been identified, as the Coquina South/Longboat Key jetty. Manatee Co will be requesting half the funding be taken care of by the regional funding of WCIND.

 Mr. Hunsicker noted priority dredging is slated for Warner's Bayou, Highland Shores and Coquina North boat ramps. Bathometric studies need to be done due to the flow of the river. The nature of the obstruction and the cost of the project need to be considered. The County has to pay to remove assets of the State. When sediment occurs in a deep area, sea grass will grow, and is protected, and must be mitigated.

 Alan Lai Hipp, Environmental Program Manager, explained the channel from the boat ramp to the intercoastal channel at Coquina was realigned to avoid sea grasses. Staff continues to work to define the estimated costs of the Bradenton Beach Channel.

 Mr. Hunsicker noted a cost estimate has been done and the construction cost is \$200,000 and the mitigation will be another \$250,000.

 Discussion ensued regarding is the dredging necessary for the Ferry, identifying a problem, having a project permitted does not guarantee construction will occur, revenues need to be dedicated to maintain navigation, projects help the Sheriff, boater safety and navigation, half a million is needed for the North Coquina project, and the cost of the improvements make it difficult to not affect the existing boat ramp, no funding source for the Coquina North boat ramp, and what revenue sources do other counties use.

 Mr. Lai Hipp explained other counties charge to park at boat ramps, and they have more boat registrations. Boater registration fees in Manatee County total \$350,000 per year.

 Mr. Hunsicker explained parking will provide revenue but will not solve all the problems. Paid parking would help to maintain the amenities at the Boat ramps. Boater registration fees are eligible for projects that are not WCIND eligible. Jiggs Landing boat ramp was funded with Boater registration fees. Derelict boat removal is funding by WCIND. The county wide navigation improvement fund is \$1.6 million and projects are fully budgeted in the Capital Improvement Plan moving forward. There is no unencumbered money available. The WCIND funds can be used to clean up derelict boats during a storm event. Upon question Mr. Hunsicker addressed mooring fields, and the requirements to provide services.

 Discussion ensued regarding charging boaters to use the boat ramps, improvements to the boat ramps would be required to in order have paid parking, enforcement of infractions, feasibility study to have paid parking, projected income for future funds, WCIND tax rates, Longboat Key cut, County owns the north end of Longboat Key, but does not maintain it, and issues with the groins

 Mr. Lia Hipp provided an update on the boat ramps and displayed a map in the slide presentation. The Fort Hamer and the Coquina north boat ramps are under construction. King Fish and Coquina South are planned after the completion of the others. Manatee and Highland shores are two different projects.

Charlie clarified in FY16 Manatee County contributed \$131, 256 to the regional fund of WCIND. The WCIND Board decides what projects will be completed. The taxing base for WCIND is regional.

Mr. Hunsicker introduced Nan Summers, Grants Coordinator, Parks and Natural Resources.

 Katherine Edwards commented on canals dedicated to the County and who decides what the objectives are of WCIND, and what projects can be completed.

Mayor William Shearon, Bradenton Beach, commented on the Bradenton Beach channel and requested support for completing the channel which would go from the Bradenton Beach pier to the Coquina North boat ramp without having to go into the intercoastal waterway. The channel could accommodate a water taxi which could connect to a ferry and other areas along the islands.

There being no other comments, Chairman Benac closed citizen comments.

 Mitchell O. Palmer, County Attorney, explained per Florida Statute 177, the County has no obligation maintain canals if they are dedicated to the county.

Discussion ensued regarding using storm water utility fees to dredge, no maintenance projects for the canals would be used for dredging with the half cent sales tax.

 Mr. Palmer noted the government can decide to cease maintaining canals.

 Discussion continued regarding permitting a canal today is much more difficult due to rules and regulations, no new subdivisions are being developed with canals, and the Inlets has boat lifts to connect to the waterways.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner DiSabatino attended an LPEC meeting where they showed videos regarding first responders and simulations of emergency situations. She stated other areas have the fire districts sponsor the CERTs.

 Discussion ensued regarding the work session on May 26 with the Constitutional Officers.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, Chairman Benac adjourned the meeting at 12:02 p.m.

Minutes Approved: June 6, 2017