



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**MARINE ADVISORY BOARD
100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE
COMMISSION CONFERENCE ROOM – EIGHTH FLOOR
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2019 – 6:00 P.M.**

		Cumulative Attendance May 2019 – April 2020	
Grant Henderson, Chair	P	4	0
Ed Strobel, Vice Chair	P	3	1
Cliff Berry II	P	3	1
Robyn Chiarelli	A	2	2
Richard Graves	P	3	1
James Harrison	P	1	0
Rose Ann Lovell	P	5	0
Kitty McGowan (arr. 6:07)	P	2	2
Norbert McLaughlin	P	5	0
Ted Morley	A	1	3
Curtis Parker	P	2	2
Rossana Petreccia	P	3	1
Roy Sea (arr. 6:21)	P	4	0
Randy Sweers	P	1	2
Bill Walker (arr. 6:06)	P	4	0

As of this date, there are 15 appointed members to the Board, which means 8 would constitute a quorum.

Staff

Andrew Cuba, Manager of Marine Facilities
Jonathan Luscomb, Marine Facilities Supervisor
Officer Laurie Arthur, Fort Lauderdale Police Department
Tatiana Guerrier, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communications to City Commission

None.

I. Call to Order / Roll Call

Chair Henderson called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes – August 1, 2019

Motion made by Mr. Graves, seconded by Vice Chair Strobel, 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

Officer Laurie Arthur of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department reported the following Marine Unit activity from August 2019:

- 6 citations
- 62 warnings
- 11 safety inspections
- 2 boating accidents
- 16 miscellaneous incidents

Officer Arthur noted that no incidents occurred in relation to Hurricane Dorian.

V. Presentation – FEC Bridge & Infrastructure / James Maitland, Marine Industries Association of South Florida

James Maitland, Vice President of the Marine Industries Association of South Florida (MIASF), showed a PowerPoint presentation on the FEC Bridge and related infrastructure. Regulation of the bridge's operations changed in 2016 based on numbers provided by Virgin Brightline.

Ms. McGowan and Mr. Walker arrived at 6:06 and 6:07 p.m.

In the past, the bridge remained open unless it was used by passing trains. MIASF has advocated for this regulation to remain in place in order to protect navigability on the New River so no undue harm would be done to the marine industry, which brings \$8.9 billion and 111,000 jobs to Broward County alone.

The bridge was owned by a private equity firm which sold the FEC to Grupo Mexico in 2017; however, the firm retained development and easement rights for rail. Virgin became a minority stakeholder in Brightline in 2018/2019. This service is one of very few privately owned and operated passenger railroads within the United States.

At present, the U.S. Coast Guard recommends test deviation, which allows boaters and the general public to provide feedback on navigation and their experiences with the bridge. This began on August 20, 2019 and will last for 45 days, with the possibility of extension to 180 days if necessary. Virgin Brightline approached the Coast Guard to request test deviation because FEC was receiving multiple fines for violation of the previous regulation.

Virgin Brightline is currently working to improve a mobile app that would show whether the bridge is up or down. They are also updating and posting additional signage so it provides accurate information for boaters. A company called Dispatch Co. is being created to balance FEC and Virgin Brightline so they can share rail time and improve communication to the bridge monitor/tender and establish standard operating procedures.

Mr. Maitland noted that New River tours were provided through the Water Taxi to ensure that all stakeholders have an accurate perspective on the navigability of the New River. The tours showed the impact of the bridge on the marine industry from the ground level. An updated study is also underway from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), which builds on a 2004/2005 study conducted on the train bridge over the New River. The updated study has been approved by the Governor for this year's budget and is estimated to be complete by early 2020. It is expected to identify the best way forward for the train bridge and the entrance to the City.

Mr. Maitland continued that the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has budgeted for flyovers over Commercial Boulevard, Sunrise Boulevard, and other areas so it would not be necessary to stop traffic for trains. MIAASF continues to advocate on behalf of the collective marine industry to identify solutions and educate the community. MIAASF meets with the Coast Guard, FEC, and Brightline/Virgin on a monthly basis to work toward the best solution. He encouraged the Board members to provide feedback on the test deviation to the Coast Guard.

Chair Henderson asked where a flyover was most likely to begin and end. Mr. Maitland explained that the FDOT study is intended to determine this placement. Ms. McGowan noted that a flyover could significantly affect the real estate beneath the bridge. Mr. Maitland advised that the City has Master Plans that include rail lines and could turn a flyover into an asset for the area.

Ms. McGowan also asked how multiple trains would affect other parts of Fort Lauderdale. Mr. Maitland reiterated that all parties are working together to determine the best solution. Because Virgin Brightline hopes to add more stations and trains, they hope to be able to navigate the bridge more efficiently.

Mr. Sea arrived at 6:21 p.m.

Ms. McGowan asked what type of input has been provided from boatyards and other facilities upriver. Mr. Maitland advised that many these businesses are not pleased with the current situation but are aware that the marine industry, the Coast Guard, and Virgin Brightline will have to work together to identify the best solution for the public waterway and hold the appropriate parties accountable if they cannot comply with regulations.

Mr. McLaughlin asked if Virgin Brightline has paid any of their fines accrued thus far. Mr. Maitland replied that fines are private, as they are still being negotiated. Patience Cohn,

also representing MIAF, clarified that fines are paid to the Coast Guard General Fund. Each violation costs \$27,500.

Mr. Walker asked if the general public has been made aware of the test deviation and comment period. He emphasized the importance of maintaining navigation on the New River for the marine economy, including the upcoming Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show. Mr. Luscomb advised that the Coast Guard is acting as a referee with regard to these issues and will make the final decision on a solution.

VI. Reports

None.

VII. Old / New Business

Vice Chair Strobel addressed the recent impact of Hurricane Dorian on the Bahamas, stating that he is working with a group called Hope for Hope Town that is coordinating with the Bahamian government to provide aid to the islands. Pilots have flown over the islands to document the conditions of airports, runways, ports, marinas, and roads in order to determine the safest way to provide assistance.

At present, the Marsh Harbor, West End, and Freeport airports expected to reopen on Friday, September 6, 2019. Treasure Cay airport is open, and the Scotland Cay and Spanish Cay airports are closed but accessible. Planes landing at these airports require approval: Vice Chair Strobel advised that he could assist with back-channel approval if any planes wish to land at these airports. A boating group of eight to nine vessels has received approval to access Hope Town on Saturday, September 7.

Mr. Maitland recognized the assistance of City Commissioner Ben Sorensen for providing connections to organizations providing aid. Ms. McGowan clarified that Hope for Hope Town has made a 60-day commitment to provide support, medical assistance, and disaster relief. The primary objective is to help residents evacuate from the Abacos. All official groups providing assistance require permission.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

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