



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**MEETING MINUTES  
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE  
MARINE ADVISORY BOARD  
FORT LAUDERDALE FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT  
528 NW 2<sup>ND</sup> STREET, STATION #2  
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA 33311  
3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM  
TUESDAY, JULY 9, 2024 – 5:00 P.M.**

**Cumulative Attendance  
January-December 2024**

Steve Witten, Chair	A	6	1
James Harrison, Vice Chair	P	4	3
Tyler Brunelle	P	6	1
Robyn Chiarelli	A	3	4
Jason Dunbar	A	3	1
Barry Flanigan	A	6	1
Robert Franks	A	5	3
Elisabeth George	P	7	0
Brewster Knott	P	4	3
John Lynch	P	6	1
Norbert McLaughlin	P	7	0
Noelle Norvell	P	4	3
Ed Rebholz (via Zoom)	P	5	2
Bill Walker	A	4	3
Robert Washington	P	6	1

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

**Staff**

Andrew Cuba, Marine Facilities Manager  
Jonathan Luscomb, Marine Facilities Supervisor  
Robert Dunckel, Assistant City Attorney  
K. Cruitt, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

**Communications to City Commission**

None.

- I. Call to Order / Roll Call

Vice Chair Harrison called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

## **II. Statement of Quorum**

Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was present.

## **III. Approval of Minutes – June 8, 2024**

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

## **IV. Waterway Crime & Boating Safety Report / Code Enforcement Update**

Vice Chair Harrison reported the following activity from June 2024:

- 113 calls for service
- 40 citations
- 4 marine accidents with no or minor injuries
- 1 vessel burglary

Ms. George stated that the Marine Unit had a visible presence at both the Florida Panthers' championship parade as well as for the City's 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration.

## **V. Dock Permit – 909 Cordova Road / Neal & Susan Mehlman**

Jena Robbins, representing the Applicants, gave a presentation on the Application, which requests a dock permit for the private use of public property abutting the waterway. The Applicants previously had a dock at the site, which was removed when the City built a seawall along the Cordova Road canal. The Applicants are requesting an after-the-fact permit for the dock, which was reinstalled in 2023.

The dock is 40 ft. long and 7.5 ft. wide. It adheres to Code and is more than the required setback distance from the adjacent property. The Applicants are willing to follow the Cordova Road landscaping plan in accordance with City Code.

There being no questions from the Board at this time, Vice Chair Harrison opened the public hearing. As there were no individuals wishing to speak on the Item, the Vice Chair closed the public hearing and brought the discussion back to the Board

**Motion** made by Mr. Brunelle, seconded by Mr. Knott, to approve. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 8-0 (Mr. Rebholz not voting).

## **VI. Mid-Year Review, Strategic Planning Discussion & MAB Action Items**

Vice Chair Harrison observed that while there is no moratorium in place for permit or waiver requests on the New River, the Board has taken a proactive stance on improvements to the City's waterways, water safety, and water quality, and is working to

make the waterways more enjoyable for everyone. He requested input from the Board members on topics they would like to discuss.

Ms. George stated that she would like to continue discussion of cleaner waterways and improved water quality.

Vice Chair Harrison suggested that another topic for consideration could be discussion of establishing a commercial barge loading area for marine construction, which will only increase as the City's seawalls must be raised. Requiring barges to travel several miles to pick up these materials will only increase the cost of construction.

It was asked if the Board felt one such location would be sufficient, or if there should be both eastern and western locations. Vice Chair Harrison noted that even one such site would be a major improvement, adding that it may be necessary for the City to purchase a property for this purpose; if that is done, there may be concerns from the surrounding neighborhood. He recalled that the Board has discussed the possibility of a designated loading area for several years.

Vice Chair Harrison suggested that another item for discussion could be the use of public docks, which are currently being used by a number of illegal charter vessels. This presents a safety issue for the City, as illegal charters do not have proper insurance or licensing. Where these boats are docked, and where passengers are loaded or off-loaded, are also issues, as the City's public docks do not allow this activity. This also creates issues at launching ramps, as illegal businesses can crowd out boaters.

Mr. Brunelle requested clarification of whether or not use of launching ramps by unlicensed businesses is prohibited. Mr. Luscomb confirmed that this would constitute commercial activity in a park or other public space, which is not allowed without a permit. Vice Chair Harrison commented that this is also an enforcement issue.

Vice Chair Harrison continued that the Board can also have an effect on Broward County's manatee plan, which limits the number of docks that can be located within Broward County. The County's waterways are divided into four zones in which docks can be constructed, and it is possible for private property owners to purchase and hold the rights to docks. Mr. Luscomb clarified that private docks may have up to four slips; if a property has more than four slips, it is considered a marine facility.

Vice Chair Harrison explained that the easiest solution would be for the City to request that Broward County reallocate the distribution of docks within the zones, as not all zones have equal demand for docks. Reducing the number of zones from four to one would be one option. Mr. Luscomb advised that the County would have to seek permission from the state before taking this step.

Vice Chair Harrison continued that between 2007 and 2023, the number of registered boats in Broward County has decreased by 10%, while in Miami-Dade County this

number has increased by 20%. He pointed out that this is related in part to the availability of docks. Ms. George added that many boats docked at existing facilities, such as condominiums, are not registered in Florida, as many owners bring their boats south when residing in Fort Lauderdale.

The Board members discussed the allocation of dock space for both individual boaters and marine businesses, as well as the number of licensed slips an operator can retain. Vice Chair Harrison suggested that the Board may wish to request a presentation on this subject from the County for greater clarity.

Vice Chair Harrison also addressed the Davie Boulevard Bridge, which recently experienced a major failure. He proposed that a means of notification for both boaters and drivers be identified for when the City's bridges are down. Ms. George also noted that the Las Olas Bridge is scheduled for major maintenance in 2025, although no details are available at this time. If this bridge is not regularly opened, there is no other way for boats to access this area.

Vice Chair Harrison continued that another concern in the City is the illegality of renting dock space, which, he pointed out, is done anyway. He noted that the issue of rented docks is similar to operating an Airbnb or other rental in a private home. In addition, the City could earn revenue if dock rental was permitted, as the boats would need to be registered and insured.

Mr. Brunelle advised that insurance could be an issue, as home insurance will not cover a boat not owned by the homeowner. Vice Chair Harrison stated that he felt most residents would be in favor of permitting dock rental. He added that this is a complicated issue, as penalties for illegal dock rental are not currently enforced, and it can be difficult for a property owner to have a derelict vessel removed from their property if they do not own the boat. Mr. Brunelle suggested that the Board may wish to discuss this further as well.

The Board members further discussed the risks to homeowners, enforcement or lack of it, and fines associated with illegal rental of dock space. It was also clarified that renting dock space is illegal in Fort Lauderdale, but not throughout Broward County. There are also two specific neighborhoods in Fort Lauderdale, Hendricks Isle and Isle of Venice, which permit dock rental in residentially zoned areas.

The Board members also discussed Code Enforcement's presence on the City's waterways, which is a relatively new development. It was clarified that Code Enforcement's boat is operated from Mondays through Fridays, and Code Enforcement hopes to be proactive in addressing marine concerns with its waterway presence. Owners who violate rules are sent a notice of violation, which allows them time to address the issue before Code Enforcement takes formal action. Ms. George emphasized the importance of education about and awareness of the City's rules.

Vice Chair Harrison also addressed ongoing issues with City seawalls in the Downtown area. He recalled that the Board has discussed this issue for some time, and Broward County had attempted to help Fort Lauderdale seek grant funds for this purpose. Mr. Cuba advised that he would send the Board members a link to a site showing the City's plans to address its seawalls.

Mr. McLaughlin asked if use of a consultant is mandatory when the City makes seawall repairs, pointing out that the City has used marine contractors to repair its seawalls at several locations without consultant involvement. He suggested that the Marine Advisory Board could assist by reviewing bids by contractors. Assistant City Attorney Robert Dunckel replied that while it is not required that the City use a consultant, it is considered a prudent business practice by the Public Works Department.

Vice Chair Harrison continued that a sign addressing overnight dockage and anchoring on Lake Sylvia was illegal, as it was posted by a property owner. He noted that the homeowners on that lake have had to deal with several derelict vessels in the past. Overnight anchoring in public areas is permitted under state law, and municipalities are not allowed to regulate the anchorage of vessels.

Mr. Knott advised that construction on developments on the west side of the Andrews Avenue Bridge has recently been completed, and more retail and restaurant space is expected as well, which will lead to greater activity in the area. He suggested that the Board consider discussing this further at their September 2024 meeting, as there will potentially be more boating activity as well. There may be a need to determine what entities control dock space in the area.

Mr. Knott continued that there may be congestion at the location, particularly with large chartered vessels turning in the area. He suggested that the Board may wish to advise the City Commission before it becomes a concern. Vice Chair Harrison confirmed that this could become a potential issue.

Vice Chair Harrison concluded that he had noted the different issues discussed at today's meeting and would provide them to Mr. Cuba.

## **VII. Old / New Business**

Patience Cohn, representing the Marine Industries Association of South Florida (MIASF), advised that the new Florida Inland Navigational District (FIND) Commissioner is Richard Waltz. Vice Chair Harrison proposed that the Commissioner could be invited to attend a future Board meeting.

Vice Chair Harrison requested an update on the bathymetric survey of the New River. Mr. Luscomb replied that the survey is complete, and the data is being processed and charted.

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It was noted that the Board will not meet in August 2024. Their next meeting will be in September.

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 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.]