



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
MARINE ADVISORY BOARD
FORT LAUDERDALE FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT
528 NW 2ND STREET, STATION #2
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA 33311
3RD FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2024 – 6:00 P.M.**

**Cumulative Attendance
May 2024-April 2025**

Steve Witten, Chair	P	4	1
James Harrison, Vice Chair	P	3	2
Norm Bekoff	P	1	0
Tyler Brunelle	P	4	1
Robyn Chiarelli	A	3	2
Jason Dunbar	P	4	1
Barry Flanigan	P	4	1
Robert Franks	P	3	2
Brewster Knott	A	2	3
John Lynch	P	4	1
Noelle Norvell	P	3	2
Ed Rebholz	A	2	3
Bill Walker	P	3	2
Robert Washington	P	4	1

As of this date, there are 14 appointed members to the Board, which means 8 would constitute a quorum.

Staff

Andrew Cuba, Marine Facilities Manager
Jonathan Luscomb, Marine Facilities Supervisor
Sgt. Travis O’Neal, Marine Unit Supervisor
Stephen Gollan, Fire Chief
K. Cruitt, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communications to City Commission

None.

- I. Call to Order / Roll Call

Chair Witten called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. He advised the members that the next Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 12, 2024 in order to avoid a scheduling conflict with the Fort Lauderdale City Commission.

II. Statement of Quorum

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

III. Approval of Minutes – September 5, 2024

Motion made by Mr. Dunbar, seconded by Mr. Walker, to approve. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

IV. Waterway Crime & Boating Safety Report – Sgt. Travis O’Neal

Chair Witten showed slides of a super-yacht which had been stuck against the 17th Street Bridge. Marine Unit Sergeant Travis O’Neal confirmed that the large vessel had blocked traffic at the bridge for some time.

Sgt. O’Neal reported the following activity from September 2024:

- 87 calls for service
- 6 accidents with minor or no injuries
- 67 citations
- 1 break-in and burglary

Sgt. O’Neal continued that there are currently seven vessels at risk of being declared derelict. Marine Unit Officers monitor these boats on a regular basis.

Mr. Luscomb advised that the City is currently in the process of executing a \$50,000 grant agreement related to derelict vessels.

Chair Witten recalled that he recently saw public notice related to an incident that occurred near SE 20th Street and 14th Avenue. A contractor unintentionally cut through a 54 in. force main facility which carries treated effluent from the George T. Lohmeyer Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant to a deep injection wellfield. Sgt. O’Neal stated that the City’s Public Works Department was notified of this incident.

Mr. Bekoff advised that the treated effluent in this case is the same product that is dumped offshore. Solids are removed from the liquid, but caustic elements such as chlorine are used to treat the remaining material. He recommended against operating boats in this general area until the effluent has had some time to disperse, as there may be health risks in that area as well as downstream.

a. Code Enforcement Update

This update was not provided.

The following Items were taken out of order on the Agenda.

VI. Presentation – Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show w/John Nigro

- a. Owned by the Marine Industries Association of South Florida (MIASF) and produced by Informa Markets, the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show (FLIBS) is recognized as the largest in-water boat show in the world. Celebrate its 65th year!**

Chair Witten introduced John Nigro, representing Informa Markets, which produces the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show. The Boat Show began in 1959 and includes over 1000 exhibitors and more than 1300 boats on display. It is based at the Bahia Mar Resort and runs from October 30 through November 3, 2024 at seven locations throughout Fort Lauderdale and along the Intracoastal Waterway. The Boat Show is owned by the Marine Industries Association of South Florida (MIASF).

Mr. Nigro stated that many exhibitors at the Boat Show have attended and worked together successfully for several years. He emphasized the importance of following the Boat Show's calendar to keep the event on schedule.

Mr. Dunbar commented that the Palm Beach Boat Show provides dock space so individuals can attend their show by boat. He asked if there are any plans for a similar feature at the Fort Lauderdale show. Mr. Nigro replied that there is no capacity for this type of service in Fort Lauderdale. He also noted that exhibitors who did not bring their boats to the show may attempt to leave their vessels for sale at the designated dock.

Mr. Dunbar also pointed out that vehicular traffic on A1A is one of the greatest deterrents to attendees of the Boat Show. Mr. Nigro referred the Board members to a document he had provided on the Fort Lauderdale show which included parking and transportation information. The show's producers have negotiated the use of 2000 parking spaces at \$20 each at the Broward County Convention Center. He reviewed other traffic arrangements related to the event, noting that visitors can also park in the Las Olas parking garage, the Galleria Mall, and the Las Olas Riverfront.

Mr. Nigro continued that the Water Taxi also eliminates a great deal of traffic congestion. He concluded that the Boat Show encourages attendees to use the Water Taxi or public bus transportation whenever possible. Large hotels with parking garages also help accommodate traffic.

Mr. Dunbar noted that vendors exhibiting at the Boat Show use up a great many parking spaces before the event begins. Mr. Nigro confirmed that there are over 30,000 credentials issued for the show. He added that vendors have a scheduled time in which

they must undertake staging at various locations. The producer's staff works day and night to direct traffic and expedite staging.

Mr. Walker observed that access to the event can change every year due to construction, and pointed out that the Boat Show continues to be successful. Roughly 0.04 gallons of diesel fuel is spent per Water Taxi passenger when moving throughout the Boat Show. This greatly lessens the carbon footprint of the event by taking cars off the roadways.

Mr. Nigro continued that the Boat Show also has evacuation plans in case of emergency. All personnel, including the Fort Lauderdale Fire Department and the Marine Unit, are briefed at operations meetings on how to control any safety issues. Multiple local and national law enforcement entities are present at these meetings. He strongly emphasized the importance of safety before, during, and after the event across all its venues.

Fort Lauderdale Fire Chief Stephen Gollan also recognized that there are a great many precautionary measures taken at the Boat Show. The producers continue to meet public safety concerns for all aspects of the event. He added that there have been lightning concerns in the past which resulted in evacuations, and all procedures were followed according to plan.

Mr. Nigro noted that the Boat Show also operates a tender service throughout the event which allows identifiable "VIP tenders" to shuttle private clients to all tender docks. Golf cart service is also available at the Boat Show. Mr. Nigro estimated that in 2023, these vehicles moved approximately 20,000 attendees. This also helped to alleviate automobile traffic.

Mr. Nigro also reviewed the Bahia Mar and Convention Center locations, noting that the Convention Center space sold out very quickly. This location provides 2000 parking spaces. Traffic maintenance is supported by Fort Lauderdale Police Department (FLPD) and Broward Sheriff's Office (BSO) personnel. He shared an agenda with the Board members related to behind-the-scenes activities at the event. The Boat Show and its buses are compliant with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Mr. Nigro also provided the Board members with a copy of a daily schedule for the Boat Show from early September through the conclusion of the event. The schedule includes the event's multiple locations. The goal is to have all docks in the water at the Las Olas Marina no later than October 15 in order to focus more closely on the Bahia Mar location as the event approaches.

The Boat Show uses approximately 2000 dock units as well as over 300,000 sq. ft. of tent space. Beginning on October 11, Informa staff constructs the yacht builders' tent in the Bahia Mar parking lot. The tent is equipped with electrical power and a plastic floor. Another provider constructs an additional 45,000 sq. ft. of specialty tent space.

The Boat Show includes 291,000 sq. ft. of 10x40 dock space as well as 104,000 sq. ft. of 10x20 dock units. Dock units total approximately 406,000 sq. ft. Mr. Nigro concluded that the Boat Show's goal is to complete all work by 2 a.m. on October 29 in order for the event to open on October 30. Staff is on hand overnight to keep the locations and facilities clean.

Mr. Nigro showed a brief video on the Boat Show.

Mr. Connelly asked how many attendees are anticipated in 2024. Mr. Nigro replied that ticket sales have been very high and both exhibitor and visitor numbers are expected to be up. Attendance increases slightly each year.

Mr. Washington asked if the Boat Show affects the waterway channel. Mr. Nigro advised that the event's boat traffic does not encroach upon the channel, which is 45 ft. wide and 15 ft. over dredge.

VII. Introduction to "Captains on Call" – Presentation by Captain Tony Estrada

- a. "Individually we are one drop, together we are an ocean." Captains on Call is a private group of South Florida-based mariners whose sole objective is to pay it forward to our industry.**

Chair Witten stated that Captain Tony Estrada was unable to attend tonight's meeting and will provide this presentation in November 2024.

VIII. Old / New Business

- a. News, articles, trends and concerns of our waterfront community as well as anything impactful on the local and national boating scene (local achievements, accomplishments, awards, etc. – related to people and companies in Fort Lauderdale).**

Chair Witten thanked former Board members Norbert McLaughlin and Elisabeth George for their time and service to the Marine Advisory Board (MAB).

Chair Witten addressed a program called Ramp, which is a ride-sharing service for boat owners. Patience Cohn, representing MIAASF, stated that this service will pick up boat trailers for customers.

Chair Witten continued that he has reached out to Garmin and invited one of the company's national sales managers to attend a later meeting. He had explained that Garmin devices are often stolen from vessels, and the representative indicated that he may be able to provide better education to the public.

A “captains and crew” event is scheduled for November 1, 2024 as part of the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show. Board members are invited to attend.

Chair Witten recalled that at the September 2024 meeting, State Representative Chip LaMarca had discussed the issue of anchoring in lakes with the Board. The City does not have a Resolution on this issue thus far, although it is in process.

Mr. Luscomb further clarified that it has been suggested a Resolution of this nature address locations other than Lake Sylvia, such as the area north of Las Olas Marina and Sunrise Bay. There are approximately 36 acres of land remaining in Broward County available for designation as anchoring space. The City is asked to draft a memorandum to the Broward County Administrator, who will then move forward to draft an Ordinance and inter-local agreement with Fort Lauderdale.

Mr. Bekoff reported that on Tuesday, October 8, 2024, there will be a water quality forum at George English Park from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. He strongly encouraged attendance at this event to discuss water quality issues. Candidates for office are expected to be present at the forum.

V. Introduction of New Member – Norm Bekoff

Chair Witten noted that Mr. Cuba had distributed a Code of Conduct Affirmation Statement to the Board members. This document states that members shall refrain from inappropriate language, including statements that could be perceived as malicious, threatening, slanderous, disparaging, or profane.

Chair Witten introduced new MAB member Norm Bekoff, recalling that he had previously referred to the Board as “corrupt.” He pointed out that the information which had led to that statement was inaccurate, and requested that Mr. Bekoff address the issue further.

Mr. Bekoff confirmed that he had made the above statement on a social media post in April 2024. He acknowledged that it was inaccurate to refer to the entire Board as corrupt, although he expressed concern with activities that had occurred at a Board meeting. He requested additional information and clarification of that meeting, stating that he had believed the Board to be entertaining the idea of a 25 ft. limit on the distance between seawalls and “a combination of vessels at docks.” Chair Witten asserted that this had not been the case. Mr. Bekoff continued that he had spoken to other members of the public who had the same perception of the meeting.

Chair Witten stated that the Board had discussed a potential moratorium for 18 months and had spoken at a Planning and Zoning Board meeting. They also met with the City Commission. He concluded that the Board had consistently intended to make sure that large vessels which need to access marine industry facilities could do so, and had addressed only new waivers.

Mr. Bekoff explained that he had been wrong regarding the intent of the moratorium proposal, and apologized to the Board members. He pointed out, however, that he had made his comments as a private citizen and had misconstrued or misunderstood the information before him, as had other members of the public.

Mr. Bekoff continued that his intent was to be better educated about the many issues facing the marine community. He hoped to serve as a proactive member of the Board and become more closely involved in similar discussions in the future.

Chair Witten commented that the Board members are also very committed to addressing marine issues. He emphasized the importance of having all available information on both sides of an argument before making decisions or comments.

Vice Chair Harrison directly addressed the issue on which comments had been made, explaining that the Board is asked to approve distance waivers for dolphin pilings at locations where boats are docked perpendicularly to the seawall. In some cases, a property owner may dock a boat at their property which extends beyond the dolphin pilings into the waterway. This can be difficult to both monitor and address through enforcement.

Vice Chair Harrison continued that the Board had discussed a waiver request from a specific property and had felt it would be easy for the property owner to dock a boat that extended into the waterway in this manner, affecting the travel of vessels on the river. The Board did not recommend approval of the application, although the City Commission later approved it. The Board continued to receive similar waiver applications and ultimately proposed requesting a moratorium on waivers until the issue could be studied and addressed further.

Vice Chair Harrison emphasized the importance of the marine industry to Broward County, pointing out that boats encroaching into the waterway could pose a problem to marine businesses which travel on the river. Options discussed had included asking the United States Coast Guard to declare a portion of the New River a federally navigable waterway; however, they had wished for the City to determine if smaller steps could be taken first.

Vice Chair Harrison continued that because the Board is required to follow Florida's Sunshine Law and hold all discussions in a public forum, there had been a perception that they were encouraging action on specific proposals. He concluded that the proposed moratorium on waivers had been denied by the City Commission. The marine industry continues to explore ideas on how to improve waterway traffic on the local level without involving the Coast Guard.

Mr. Bekoff asked how involved property owners had been in the Board's discussions. Mr. Cuba replied that all of the City's homeowners' and neighborhood associations were

provided with notice of Board meetings, as had MIAF and towing companies. The meetings were noticed according to the requirements of the Sunshine Law.

Chair Witten concluded that the Board may address these issues further at some point in the future. He asked all the Board members to provide Mr. Cuba with any local or national news they would like to see addressed under Old/New Business in the future.

IX. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:33 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.]