



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  
THURSDAY, MAY 1, 2025 – 6:00 P.M.**

**Cumulative Attendance  
May 2025-April 2026**

Steve Witten, Chair	P	1	0
Robert Washington, Vice Chair	P	1	0
Norm Bekoff	A	0	1
Tyler Brunelle	P	1	0
Jeffrey Coburn	P	1	0
Jason Dunbar	P	1	0
Barry Flanigan (arr. 6:06)	P	1	0
Robert Franks	P	1	0
John Lynch	P	1	0
Noelle Norvell	A	0	1
Bob Swindell	A	0	1
LaRhonda Ware	P	1	0

As of this date, there are 12 appointed members to the Board, which means 7 would constitute a quorum.

**Staff**

- Andrew Cuba, Marine Facilities Manager
- Luis Villanueva, Marine Facilities Senior Administrator
- City Manager Rickelle Williams
- Acting Assistant City Manager Chris Cooper
- Assistant City Manager Anthony Fajardo
- Assistant City Manager Susan Grant
- Acting Assistant City Manager Laura Reece
- Assistant City Manager Ben Rogers
- Bob Dunckel, Assistant City Attorney
- Marco Aguilera, Chief Waterways Officer
- Sergeant Travis O’Neal, Marine Unit
- Edward Eason, Code Compliance Officer
- Captain Chad Robertson, Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue Marine Unit
- Assistant Chief Stewart Ahearn, Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue
- Police Chief William Schultz
- L. Harmon, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

## **Communications to City Commission**

None.

### I. Call to Order / Roll Call

Chair Witten called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

- **Motion to permit Jason Dunbar to Participate Virtually**

### II. Statement of Quorum

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

### III. Marine Advisory Board Elections – Chair / Vice Chair

Mr. Cuba noted that motions are required to nominate members as Chair or Vice Chair.

**Motion** made by Mr. Lynch, seconded by Mr. Brunelle, to nominate Steve [Witten].

**Motion** made by Mr. Brunelle, seconded by Mr. Franks, to close nominations. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

In a voice vote, Mr. Witten was unanimously reelected as Chair.

**Motion** made by Mr. Witten, seconded by Mr. Brunelle, to nominate Robert Washington as Vice Chair.

**Motion** made by Mr. Lynch, seconded by Mr. Franks, to close nominations. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

In a voice vote, Mr. Washington was unanimously elected as Vice Chair.

### IV. Introduction of New Member – Jeffrey Coburn

New Board member Jeffrey Coburn introduced himself at this time.

### V. Approval of Minutes – March 6, 2025

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

### VI. Waterway Crime and Boating Safety Report

- **Sgt. Travis O’Neal (FLPD) / Deputy Chief Garrett Pingol (Fire) / Edward Eason (Code)**

Captain Chad Robertson of the Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue Marine Unit reported that there were seven fire boat calls in April 2025, and briefly reviewed details from two of the calls.

Assistant Fire Chief Stewart Ahearn provided an overview of the Fire Department’s mission and the Marine Unit’s role, explaining that there are 12 Fire Stations within Fort Lauderdale. Fire Station 49 covers the southern end of the Fort Lauderdale Beach as well as the Las Olas Isles. This station includes eight personnel, as well as Engine 49, Ladder 49, and Rescue 49.

The City’s two fire boats are maintained at Station 49, although they are not permanently staffed; personnel from the land-based units are moved to the boat units as needed. If the land-based units are out on other calls, Station 49 will not have enough personnel to put the boats in service. When this occurs, Broward County’s fire boat is called, although the County’s team does not have dive capabilities.

Chair Witten emphasized the Marine Advisory Board’s (MAB’s) commitment to ensuring that the City’s Fire Rescue services have the right assets available to them.

Sergeant Travis O’Neal of the Marine Unit reported the following activity from April 2025:

- 42 citations
- 3 boating accidents
- 3 water rescues

He also provided additional detail on an incident that occurred at the Tortuga Festival.

Code Compliance Officer Edward Eason reported that the waterway team is working with the City’s Building Department to identify homes where unpermitted work has been done on the waterway. He briefly reviewed two active cases, including a dock in disrepair and a derelict vessel.

Chair Witten advised that Code Compliance and City Staff are working to expedite the process for removal of derelict vessels.

**VII. Meet & Greet our new City Manager Rickelle Williams and the City Manager’s Office. “How the Sausage Gets Made!”**

- **Assistant / Acting Assistant City Managers Chris Cooper, Anthony Fajardo, Susan Grant, Laura Reece, and Ben Rogers plus Fire Chief Stephen Gollan and Police Chief William Schultz**

New City Manager Rickelle Williams introduced herself at this time, explaining that the City Manager is responsible for overseeing the City's day-to-day responsibilities. Her greatest responsibility is to help implement the vision of the City Commission based on their policies. The City has two Assistant City Managers and three Acting Assistant City Managers, as well as a Chief Waterways Officer. Ms. Williams emphasized Fort Lauderdale's commitment to supporting its waterways.

Assistant City Manager Susan Grant advised that she currently oversees the City's Finance Department as well as the Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport (FXE). She also works closely with the City's Chief Education Officer.

Acting Assistant City Manager Laura Reece stated that her focus is on budget management, human resources, and the Office of Professional Standards. She works closely with the Police and Fire Departments to develop replacement plans for vehicles, gear, and equipment.

Acting Assistant City Manager Chris Cooper explained that he oversees the City's Neighbor Support Division, which connects the City Commission, City Manager, and Fort Lauderdale's civic associations and residents. He also oversees the City's Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) and Development Services Department.

Assistant City Manager Ben Rogers stated that he oversees the Parks and Recreation, Transportation and Mobility, Real Estate, and Marine Facilities Departments. He is also the City's liaison to the Marine Industries Association of South Florida (MIASF), and works closely with the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show as well as the City's marina projects.

Police Chief William Schultz briefly reviewed the responsibilities of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department's Marine Unit, which include emergency responses, calls for service, speed zone violations, boating accidents and investigations up to major injury, safety inspections, derelict/abandoned vehicles, open water rescues, support of the Police dive team, Port Everglades and local security escorts, marine education, and other aspects of maritime enforcement. Their jurisdiction covers 165 miles of navigable waterways.

The Marine Unit currently consists of one supervisor and six Officers, which allows for one day shift seven days per week. They also provide additional patrols through a grant from Broward County's Enhanced Marine Law Enforcement Grant (EMLEG) program. EMLEG contributes roughly \$156,000 per year to allow for overtime enforcement seven days per week. The grant is funded through County boat registration fees.

Chief Schultz reviewed the Marine Unit's responsibilities during emergencies, including storms and severe flooding. The Unit has a rescue boat as well as two john boats for shallow-water rescues.

Chief Waterway Officer Marco Aguilera introduced himself at this time, explaining that this is a new position dedicated to making a difference for the City's waterways. He will regularly attend MAB meetings going forward.

Chair Witten briefly reviewed some of the priority items identified at the January 2025 MAB meeting, including both short- and long-term goals.

**VIII. Dock Permit – 909 SE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street / 909 Beverly, LLC**

Jena Robbins, representing the Applicant, explained that the Application is a request for private use of public property. The subject site is a residential multi-family property located on the Himmarshee Canal. The Applicant requests permission to build a dock adjacent to the City's seawall. The Applicant will adhere to the 5 ft. setback required by Code.

The proposed dock will cantilever over the existing seawall and will not be permanently affixed to it. All upland landscaping will remain as is, and stairs on the landward side will be cut around existing trees. Broward County is currently processing environmental approvals for the Application.

Assistant City Attorney Bob Dunckel commented that he appreciated the identification of where a 25% or 35% extension into the waterway would be located. He also noted that the Application is very responsive to environmental concerns.

**Motion** made by Mr. Franks, seconded by Mr. Lynch, to approve. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed unanimously (9-0).

**IX. Dock Permit – 915 SE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street / 915 Beverly, LLC**

Ms. Robbins, representing the Applicant, showed an aerial view and boundary survey of the site, as well as trees in the area. The Applicant proposes a dock that would be cantilevered over the seawall as well as compliant with the 5 ft. side yard setback and the limitation to 25% of the waterway.

**Motion** made by Mr. Franks, seconded by Mr. Dunbar, to approve. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed unanimously (9-0).

**X. Dock Waiver – 738 NE 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue / HG Middle River Investments LLC / Hal E. Griffith**

Alejandra Giraldo, representing the Applicant, showed an aerial view of the subject property and surrounding area. She noted that the body of water is 622 ft. wide at the location from property line to property line.

The maximum extension into the waterway would be 129 ft. Extraordinary circumstances include the width of the waterway, as well as the safety of vessels from severe weather

and high wake energy. Several other properties in the area have requested and received waivers, and the Applicant received letters of support from neighbors.

Mr. Cuba confirmed that all properties located within 300 ft. of the subject site were mailed notice more than 10 days in advance. He did not receive any letters of opposition to the Application.

**Motion** made by Mr. Lynch, seconded by Mr. Franks, to approve. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed unanimously (9-0).

**XI. Old / New Business – Follow up on MAB recommendations specific to “Extraordinary Circumstances”**

Chair Witten observed that there are currently several absences on the Board, and encouraged the members to reach out to the community.

Attorney Dunckel stated that in the past, the City has considered extraordinary circumstances in terms of a range of conditions. He advised that he would encourage the City Commission to continue to administer permits and waivers in the same manner as the last several years unless the Ordinance governing these items is changed.

Mr. Flanigan asserted that he did not feel use of the term “extraordinary circumstances” is supported, as it is often applicants themselves who create such circumstances. The Board discussed the subjectivity of the term, including its application to high wakes, storms, water sports activity, and other conditions. There was also consideration of whether the same standards are applied for nearby properties, as well as whether or not structures in the waterway create navigational hazards.

Mr. Cuba confirmed that three waiver requests recommended by the Board are expected to go before the City Commission at their May 6, 2025 meeting.

Mr. Cuba also noted that the Board members had provided information on the conditions they felt were or were not acceptable as extraordinary circumstances for the granting or denial of a waiver. Chair Witten pointed out that the Board is asked to review the circumstances for each waiver request on an individual basis; there is no “one size fits all” policy that applies equally to all waiver applications.

The Board members also discussed the identification of “layup” areas, which can help them to identify areas where navigation could be affected by structures in the waterway.

**XII. Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Marine Advisory Board

May 1, 2025

Page 7

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.]