



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
TUESDAY, JULY 8, 2025 – 6:00 P.M.**

**Cumulative Attendance
May 2025-April 2026**

Steve Witten, Chair	P	3	0
Robert Washington, Vice Chair	P	3	0
Norm Bekoff	P	2	1
Tyler Brunelle	P	3	0
Jeffrey Coburn	P	3	0
Jason Dunbar	P	3	0
Barry Flanigan	A	1	2
Robert Franks	P	2	1
John Lynch (dep. 7:00)	P	2	1
Dr. Bret Ribotsky	P	2	0
Bob Swindell	P	1	2
LaRhonda Ware (dep. 8:00)	P	3	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
- Marco Aguilera, Chief Waterways Officer
- Bob Duncel, Assistant City Attorney
- Sergeant Travis O’Neal, Marine Unit
- Deputy Chief Garrett Pingol, Fire Rescue Marine Team
- Edward Eason, Code Compliance Officer
- Kate McConville, Harbormaster, Block Island, RI (via Zoom)
- N. Day, Recording Clerk, Prototype, Inc.

Communications to City Commission

None.

I. Call to Order / Roll Call

Chair Witten called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

II. Statement of Quorum

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

III. Approval of Minutes – June 5, 2025

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

IV. Waterway Crime and Boating Safety Report

- **Sgt. Travis O’Neal (FLPD) / Chief Eric Knowles (Fire) / Edward Eason (Code)**

Code Compliance Officer Edward Eason reviewed a Code case involving a boat that was too wide for the waterway on which it was docked. The subject property was cited in February 2025 and was given 35 days in which to comply with Code at a recent Special Magistrate hearing. The Code Inspector is working with the property owner to address the issue. Zoning Code at the subject area requires vessels or structures to remain within 33% of the waterway’s width as measured from the property line.

Officer Eason addressed another Code case involving a derelict vessel without registration which also extended too far into the waterway at its location. As of today, the vessel is registered and has been moved to a wider portion of the property. Code Compliance will continue to monitor this issue.

Sergeant Travis O’Neal of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department’s Marine Unit described a recent incident in which the Marine Unit responded to an illegally chartered vessel that had run aground. The U.S. Coast Guard also responded to the incident and cited the operator of the vessel for a number of violations.

Sergeant O’Neal reviewed the following activity from June 2025:

- 120 calls for service
- 6 boat accidents
- 6 citations

He added that multiple Garmin electronics were stolen from a vessel, although processing of the incident did not identify evidence.

Deputy Chief Garrett Pingol of the Fire Rescue Marine Team stated that there were two significant marine fire incidents in June 2025. Fire Rescue was able to control both incidents. They also provided marine support for the recent Florida Panthers championship parade. He noted that there were 110 medical calls during the parade, most of which were related to heat exhaustion. Fire Rescue also provided marine support during the Fourth of July event and fireworks show.

Several personnel have recently undergone dive and marine training in addition to their regular Firefighter training. Their certification will bring the dive team to approximately 80 certified divers.

V. Discussion – Kathleen (Kate) McConville / Harbormaster Block Island, RI

Chair Witten stated that the town of Block Island, Rhode Island is known as the smallest town in the smallest U.S. state. He characterized the town as leading the marine industry with respect to clean water. He explained that Fort Lauderdale is expecting the purchase of its first 1,000-gallon pump-out boat, and requested information on best practices.

Kate McConville, Harbormaster of Block Island, stated that there are two harbors in that municipality. Her fleet currently includes five pump-out boats of varying sizes which offload directly into the town's sewage line. Regular water quality testing occurs at 17 sites throughout Rhode Island and in the harbors.

Harbormaster McConville continued that her pump-out fleet manages 800 to 1,500 boats across three marinas. Beginning in 2022, marinas were charged a fee of \$5 per pump-out. The service fee is capped at \$5 by the grant requirements which fund the program. There is no charge to boats in anchorage or on private property.

Chair Witten requested information on enforcement. Harbormaster McConville advised that an individual discharging illegally may face a fine of up to \$2,000 and may be banned from the harbor. She noted, however, that Fort Lauderdale has a very different waterway system than Block Island. She recommended that any system to be implemented be made as user-friendly and accessible as possible, emphasizing the importance of consistency.

Chair Witten commented that while Fort Lauderdale has sought to limit anchoring within the City, Block Island has embraced transient boaters and encouraged them to take pride in keeping waterways clean. He noted that public outreach will be necessary to inform boaters of where the City's pump-out vessel will be available, as well as its hours of operation. The Block Island pump-out boats operate seven days per week from Memorial Day to Columbus Day, 7 a.m. until 5 p.m., depending upon calls. Their season comes to an end on November 1, when residents typically winterize their boats and no longer need pump-out service.

Mr. Dunbar asked if the pump-out vessels' ranges are broken up into different areas throughout the week. Harbormaster McConville replied that the vessels go to the locations that call for them.

Harbormaster McConville continued that her office applies for state and federal grants which cover maintenance of the pump-out boats and could be used toward the cost of a

new boat if needed. Her office maintains and winterizes its boats through an in-house mechanic.

Chair Witten requested additional information on the use of mooring walls as an alternative to anchoring. Harbormaster McConville explained that the town's mooring field is state-regulated, with 290 private moorings for which permits can be issued. Regulations for private mooring fields differ from state-regulated areas. When moorings are not in use, the town may rent them out.

Vice Chair Washington asked if the Harbormaster works with the town's code enforcement entity when fines are issued, or if they may issue fines on their own. Harbormaster McConville replied that her office, including pump-out boat operators, may cite boats for illegal dumping and notify the appropriate state and Coast Guard authorities. A vessel fined for this activity would be banned from the harbor.

Chair Witten requested additional information regarding insurance requirements. Harbormaster McConville confirmed that vessels moored or anchored in the town's waters for more than two consecutive weeks are required to show proof of insurance to her office.

Chair Witten asked if there was any additional advice that could be offered to Fort Lauderdale on this issue. Harbormaster McConville stated that her community takes great pride in maintaining its water quality, again emphasizing the importance of public outreach and accessibility.

Mr. Bekoff asked how many pump-outs can be accomplished during an average day. Harbormaster McConville replied that on an average day, four working boats can accomplish 150 to 200 pump-outs. In 2024, just over 80,000 gallons were collected.

The Board members briefly discussed potential options for the City's proposed pump-out service. It was noted that a pump-out boat will allow an additional view of the City's waterways so there is less reliance on the Marine Unit for activities other than law enforcement. The pump-out operator could serve as a de facto Code Compliance presence, as they can provide photos of violations to that department. He recognized Chief Waterways Officer Marco Aguilera for his work in sourcing a grant to fund the purchase of a pump-out boat.

Mr. Lynch left the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

The following Item was taken out of order on the Agenda.

VII. "10 Minutes with an Industry Expert" – Tim Griffin / Griffin Yacht Services

- **Marine plumbing, head systems, and other wastewater treatment devices**

Tim Griffin, representing Griffin Yacht Services, stated that his business specializes in yacht plumbing. He noted that while marine communities such as Block Island, RI take pride in their compliance regarding waterway cleanliness, this is not typically the case in South Florida. Issues often include cost, as well as the need to properly maintain blackwater and holding tanks.

Mr. Griffin continued that enforcement is a major concern regarding illegal dumping, recalling that the Florida Legislature recently passed a law which prohibits local law enforcement from stopping and/or boarding a vessel without a primary reason. This prohibition does not apply to the Coast Guard.

Mr. Bekoff expressed concern with the City's perceived culture of indifference to marine waste management, citing the example of marinas that do not offer public pump-out facilities, or in which pump-out facilities are continually inoperable. He emphasized the importance of requiring these facilities for new marinas. Mr. Griffin pointed out that when marinas are upgraded, they are required to install pump-out equipment; however, the equipment may not be regularly used or maintained. Some private marinas offer pump-out services but limit access to vessels using the marina. Chair Witten observed that if the City provides an easy alternative for pump-outs, such as a City vessel, this may eliminate some of these problems.

Mr. Griffin stated that residential pump-out applications are another alternative, although there are challenges to this option. Because landward plumbing relies upon a slope for drainage, most property slopes downward toward seawalls, which would require pumping uphill and could contribute to backups.

Chair Witten requested additional information on steps that can be taken to encourage pump-outs. Mr. Griffin recommended that any outreach include a public campaign to show marine waste treatment as a desirable option rather than a chore.

VI. Proposed Ordinance Amending Code Sec. 8-145 entitled "Regulation of vessels anchored in public waterways," restricting anchorage of vessels for a period of one (1) hour or more between one-half (1/2) hour before sunrise for more than thirty (30) days in any six (6) month period, subject to exclusions.

Assistant City Attorney Bob Dunckel briefly addressed the Board's governing Ordinance, which states the MAB may consider any subject it deems appropriate. They are also specifically directed to consider and make recommendations on subjects including the conditions of waterways and waterway safety.

Attorney Dunckel explained that when the City first designated Lake Sylvia as a location for mooring purposes, there was a significantly smaller population of boats anchored there than at present. In 2008, the state preempted the City's ability to regulate anchorage in municipal waters. This preemption remained in effect until May 19, 2025, when House

Bill (HB) 481 adopted legislation allowing municipalities to once again regulate the anchorage of vessels.

A recently proposed Ordinance would make it unlawful to anchor a vessel within Fort Lauderdale's public waterways for a period of one hour or more between one half-hour after sunset and one half-hour before sunrise for more than 30 days within a six-month period, excluding the overnight anchoring of a vessel for purposes of permitted marine construction.

Attorney Dunckel concluded by requesting that the MAB recommend adoption of the proposed Ordinance by the City Commission. He estimated that the Ordinance would be presented to the Commission in September 2025.

Dr. Ribotsky commented that the proposed Ordinance seems to be restrictive with regard to the revenue that may be generated by transient boaters on their way to other locations, who may spend a number of weeks in the City. He asked if there is an estimated value of this revenue. Attorney Dunckel replied that this information has not been collected, although there is a requirement for a business impact statement. He also pointed out that there is a large segment of the transient boating population that does not contribute significantly to the local economy.

Mr. Bekoff expressed concern that the Ordinance could negatively affect the boats whose owners may be attending or participating in the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show, the Winterfest Boat Parade, or other major community events that take place at night.

The Board members recalled that when this issue was previously addressed by the Board, there was discussion of potential exemptions which could apply, such as boats undergoing marine maintenance. It was clarified that the Ordinance is intended to address nuisance boats; boats moving through the City are not expected to be a problem.

It was noted that the city of Hollywood has recently designated mooring areas within its jurisdiction. Attorney Dunckel explained that this was part of an anchorage limitation area option, which some municipalities have chosen to adopt. HB 481 provides an entirely different option.

Dr. Ribotsky asked if it would be possible to modify the Ordinance's time frame. Attorney Dunckel recommended adopting the exact language provided by the state.

Chair Witten recalled a public meeting held in June 2025 in the Lake Sylvia area which discussed the proposed Ordinance based on HB 481. Most of the attendees at that meeting indicated they were in favor of the Ordinance rather than the adoption of an anchorage limitation area.

Motion made by Mr. Coburn, seconded by Mr. Franks, to send up a recommendation supporting Ordinance 8-145 as written. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 8-2 (Dr. Ribotsky and Ms. Ware dissenting).

Attorney Dunckel advised that the next action under the purview of the MAB will address the regulation of live-aboard vessels. He advised that the owner or operator of a live-aboard vessel or houseboat equipped with a marine sanitation device will need to maintain a record of the date of each pump-out of that device and the location of the pump-out station used.

Sergeant O'Neal addressed enforcement of the proposed Ordinance recommended by the Board, stating that Marine Unit Officers would check "hot spot" locations such as Lake Sylvia on a daily basis and keep a log of the vessels there, including their condition. Attorney Dunckel added that he was not involved in determining potential fines or enforcement actions.

Tim Stocksdale, member of the public, commented that boats moving through the City on their way to other destinations do not create an issue; problems arise from boats that remain continuously.

VIII. Mid-Year Update: Marine Advisory Board 2025 Initiatives

Chair Witten distributed a document listing the MAB's 2025 initiatives as discussed at their December 2024/January 2025 meetings, as well as an overview of activities at meetings since that time. Items included water quality, illegal discharge, maintenance on the waterways, City seawalls and infrastructure, illegal charters, day dockage for the beach, and more.

IX. Communication from the Bridge – Marco Aguilera, Chief Waterways Officer

Chief Waterway Officer Marco Aguilera reported the following activity since the June Board meeting:

- Signage has been ordered to educate all charter passengers about the credentials needed by a captain, inspection decals, and emergency and regulatory phone numbers; the signage was developed with input from the Coast Guard and will be posted at all locations where charters commonly pick up passengers
- Pre-application for grant funding for a City pump-out vessel has been delivered to the City Manager's Office for approvals from all required Departments
- Channel 9 has been designated as the communication channel monitored by City Dockmasters

Mr. Aguilera advised that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) would contribute 75% of the cost of a pump-out vessel, as well as 75% of the cost of an employee's salary and ongoing maintenance over the next five years. The Coastal

Conservation Association of Florida (CCAF) and Lauderdale Isles Water Management District have both contributed toward the City's portion of this expense.

Mr. Aguilera also noted that there have been several recommendations regarding the use of Y-valve locks or dye packs. He cautioned against this use at present, pointing out that the City should ensure it has the infrastructure for vessels to comply before enforcement may begin. He characterized the pump-out boat as the first step toward a solution.

The CCAF has partnered with Fort Lauderdale on an oyster rope installation in the New River. They have received a permit and are working with the Marine Facilities Department to begin identifying and marking potential locations for the ropes.

Mr. Aguilera continued that Broward County's Traffic Engineering Department will undertake a bridge scour project on the three bascule bridges over the New River. A representative of this Department will be present at the next MAB meeting to provide a more in-depth presentation on the project, which was recommended by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). The City's Marine Facilities Department is aware of the project and can make arrangements to move large vessels to different slips if necessary.

Mr. Bekoff requested information on intermittent waterway closures. Mr. Aguilera advised that Broward County has made it clear to the contractor that installation must take place at night in order to avoid impacts to marine traffic. The contractor must provide the means and methods of any required closures in order to have the least impact on the marine industry or other boaters. The bridge will also need to be closed to vehicular traffic at times during this project.

Mr. Aguilera continued that FDOT also acknowledges the need for approximately 14 days of intermittent waterway closures when the Davie Boulevard Bridge project begins in spring 2027. The closures will not be continuous, and equipment can be moved in some areas to allow for waterway traffic.

The City Commission recently passed a Waterway Noise Ordinance which requires that sound shall not be plainly audible at a distance of 25 ft. or greater from a motorboat or any other sound source. No specific hours of the day or night are associated with this Ordinance, which will be enforced as a Police matter. The Ordinance will take effect on September 28, 2025. Videos further explaining the Ordinance will be made available to the public.

Mr. Aguilera stated that there were 14 different types of waterway requests available through the FixItFTL mobile app for various items in the water, as well as five request types for waterway spills. He explained that this can be confusing to residents and can result in requests going to the wrong departments, which can delay the City's response. To avoid confusion, he has reviewed and consolidated several of the categories and

assigned them to the most appropriate personnel. His office is copied on all waterway requests.

Dr. Ribotsky requested clarification of which entity should be called for fuel spills. Mr. Aguilera replied that this can depend upon the size of the spill, and clarified that while the Coast Guard may document a fuel spill, they do not take part in the actual cleanup process. Depending upon the material and amount of a spill, there may be a need for the Fire Department to respond. He recommended both sending a FixItFTL request as well as calling his office in the event of a fuel spill.

The City has four pump-out stations that are open to the public, and improved signage will be provided to them to promote public awareness of their locations.

Mr. Bekoff reported that there are issues with slips 43 and 44 on the New River, where the only public pump-out facility is available for larger boats. These slips have become increasingly shallow toward the east end, making it difficult to access.

Mr. Aguilera continued that he has worked with Attorney Dunckel to develop the proposed Ordinance approved by the Board at tonight's meeting, which he felt will have a significant impact on the City's waterways, particularly in conjunction with the new pump-out boat.

Mr. Aguilera recalled that he had received a complaint regarding dredging at the Las Olas Marina. The City's Building Inspector was notified of activity at that location, but the contractor stopped work before the Inspector could arrive at the scene. Code Compliance was also notified and issued a citation related to turbidity. Broward County also inspected the construction site. He emphasized that citizens are watching activity at the site. The City is also working with the County to limit the hours in which work can be done to ensure the availability of Inspectors as needed.

Dr. Ribotsky commented that several violations have been photographed at that site by residents of a nearby condominium, and problems are ongoing. Mr. Aguilera noted that as citations accumulate, fines may increase significantly.

Mr. Aguilera continued that there is discussion of identifying a full-time marine Code Compliance Officer to work on the City's waterways. He explained that he previously served the City as a Code Compliance Officer on both land and water, which divided his time between land and waterway investigations. At present, there are four to six Code Compliance Officers who work the waterways on a part-time basis, which provides limited marine enforcement. He advised that other municipalities employ full-time marine Code Compliance Officers and he would like to see this implemented in Fort Lauderdale as well.

X. Old / New Business – Ladders on Docks

Chair Witten stated that the next meeting will include a discussion of dredging. He also recalled that a representative of the City's Procurement Department will attend a future meeting to discuss the procurement process.

Ms. Ware left the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Chair Witten also addressed ladders on docks, which are not required by Fort Lauderdale. He has spoken with City representatives about this issue, which one of the City's plans examiners has indicated should be a future Code requirement as a life safety issue.

Mr. Franks recalled that at a previous Board meeting, there had been discussion of where vessels such as the Water Taxi are allowed to pick up passengers. He requested additional clarification of this issue, including which vessels can dock at City-owned spaces. Attorney Dunckel replied that commercial boats are not allowed to use the City's floating docks, as they were provided by a Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) grant and are limited to personal watercraft.

Attorney Dunckel further clarified that because some Water Taxi stops are considered public rights-of-way, other commercial vessels may use them to pick up passengers. Water Taxi stops that are not public rights-of-way may not be used by other vessels. Commercial boats using other public areas, such as pump-out stations at City docks, may use these spaces with approval from the Dockmaster.

Dr. Ribotsky requested an update on dockage fees charged by the Las Olas Marina. Chair Witten replied that this will be discussed further at a subsequent meeting.

Mr. Bekoff stated that the Aquatic Control Group (ACG) has a very important job with the City and has improved its cleaning services significantly since Mr. Aguilera's appointment as Chief Waterways Officer. He expressed concern, however, with some of the language in ACG's contract and how that contract is executed, and recommended that the Board look into this. The ACG contract is set to expire in 2027, but includes extension clauses, which he felt should be examined further.

Mr. Bekoff asked if the Board members could be sent copies of the ACG contract in advance of this future discussion. He concluded that he would recommend Mr. Aguilera be named the contract administrator for this service.

XI. Adjournment – See You on September 4th (No August Meeting)

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

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

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[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]