



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY BOARD**

Tower 101, Suite 1100
101 NE 3rd Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301
August 25, 2025 – 6:00 PM

Cumulative Attendance					
1/2025 through 12/2025					
	Members	Appt by	Attendance	Present	Absent
1	Robert Daoust, Vice Chair	II	P	4	2
2	Kelly Charles	IV	P	6	0
3	David Blattner, Chair	I	P	6	0
4	Suzee Bailey	C	P	5	1
5	Spencer Lasday	IV	P	4	1
6	Vacant	III	-	-	-
7	Nicole Barnett	M	A	5	1
8	Sarah Rahmankhah	IV	P	3	0
9	Vacant	M	-	-	-
10	Vacant	III	-	-	-
11	Vacant	II	-	-	-
12	Parker Jacobson-Bertanzetti, Non-Voting Youth Chair	C	P	4	2

*attending via Zoom

Staff Present

Glen Hadwen, Sustainability Manager
 Dr. Nancy Gassman, Deputy Director of Public Works/Chief Resilience Officer – Sustainability (via Zoom)
 Luz Ramirez, Sustainability Coordinator
 Talula Thibault, Sustainability Analyst; SAB Liaison
 Marco Aguilera, Chief Waterways Officer
 Melissa Doyle, Division Manager / Solid Waste and Recycling (via Zoom)
 Laura Tooley, Urban Forester
 N. Day, Recording Clerk, Prototype, Inc.

I. Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was present.

II. Approval of Minutes

I. June 23, 2025

Motion made by Mr. Lasday, seconded by Ms. Rahmankhah, to approve. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

III. Liaison Report

- **Community Climate Conversation**

Ms. Thibault reported that the previous month, a Community Climate Conversation presentation by eco-artist Xavier Cortada, in partnership with Broward County, was held at the African-American Research Library and Cultural Center. The artist's installation provided an illustration of the urgency of rising sea level. Another Community Climate Conversation presentation is planned for 2026.

- **Urban Forestry Master Plan**

Mr. Hadwen stated that urban forestry consultants will be invited to present at the next Sustainability Advisory Board (SAB) meeting. They will present the draft Urban Forestry Plan. The comment period for the draft Plan will be open from mid-September until mid-October. When available for public comments, links to the draft Plan will be sent via email to all Board members in advance of the presentation.

- **Conservation Pays – HOA meetings**

Ms. Thibault explained that Conservation Pays is a Broward County partnership which provides \$125 rebates for replacing older toilets with new high-efficiency toilets. Free aerators for shower heads, sinks, and faucets are also being given away. Interested residents are asked to email sustainability@fortlauderdale.gov or call Ms. Thibault's office for additional information.

Ms. Thibault concluded that she has been presenting information on this program at meetings of the City's homeowners' and civic associations and is available to present at additional meetings if requested.

Vice Chair Daoust and Ms. Bailey arrived at 6:04 and 6:05 p.m. respectively.

- **Parking passes**

Ms. Thibault advised that she has requested renewed parking passes for Board members to replace those that have expired.

IV. Presentations

- **Meet the Chief Waterways Officer, Marco Aguilera**

Chair Blattner introduced Fort Lauderdale's Chief Waterways Officer, Marco Aguilera. Mr. Aguilera explained that his background is in Code Compliance; he oversaw the purchase of a boat for Code Compliance use, as well as the implementation of a program that allowed Code Compliance to have a stronger waterway presence. Six Code Officers are currently assigned to this program.

Marine Code Compliance responsibilities include dealing with derelict vessels, docks and seawalls in disrepair, illicit discharges, sunken vessels, and more. Officers also transport Building Inspectors to the sites of seawall inspections.

Current City waterway projects and efforts include:

- Purchase of a pump-out vessel using grant funds provided by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP): these boats empty the holding tanks of larger vessels to prevent discharge of sewage into waterways; the grant will cover 75% of the cost of the vessel as well as Staff salaries for five years
- Living shoreline protection: the City is in the process of installing living seawalls, including a 120 ft. portion of the New River seawall replacement project which will serve as a pilot project
- Protection of New River navigability: Mr. Aguilera's office is working closely with the Marine Industries Association of South Florida (MIASF) to ensure that vessels can fully transit the New River; while no regulations have changed on this waterway, boats continue to grow in size
- Anchorage: an Anchoring Ordinance will be presented at the next City Commission Conference Agenda meeting which will restrict anchorage in City waterways to no more than 30 days within a six-month period; the state of Florida has recently empowered municipalities to take actions to govern anchorage
- Water quality: waterway testing will be expanded in the next fiscal year to include microbial source tracking, which may help to identify the sources of some pollutants
- Mangrove installation: the City has installed 50 mangroves at George English Park and will plant more in Coontie Hatchee Park on Saturday, September 13, 2025 at 8 a.m.; the City is also working with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission to plan the installation of mangrove planter boxes along the New River seawall; the University of Florida has indicated interest in donating additional mangroves
- Illegal charter vessels: these vessels are a concern on the City's waterways because tourists are often unaware of the requirements of charter boats; the City has worked with the U.S. Coast Guard to provide signage to educate potential passengers about these requirements
- Vertical oyster gardens: this pilot program is a partnership between the Coastal Conservation Association and the City; the gardens will be installed along the New River
- Navigability: the "Little Florida" portion of the New River is very constricted, which can be difficult for large vessels on the waterway
- Ongoing discourse with various groups about new technologies and other issues of interest on the City's waterways

Mr. Aguilera further clarified that the Marine Patrol would be tasked with enforcement of the proposed Anchoring Ordinance. As vessels anchor in Fort Lauderdale's waterways, the new pump-out boat will be used to welcome them as well as to educate them on the City's Ordinances, location of public pump-out facilities, and other pertinent information. He emphasized that while the City welcomes visitors, it does not want waterways to become storage grounds for anchored vessels.

Mr. Aguilera continued that during his tenure with Code Compliance, he was responsible for the identification and removal of derelict vessels. This process has recently been streamlined, as it now uses multiple vendors for derelict vessel removal and emergency procedures have been standardized.

The Board members discussed the presentation, including coordination between vessels on the City's waterways. Mr. Aguilera explained that boats must monitor radio channel 9; however, as waterways become narrower, there are fewer places for boats to stop and hold while others pass by. Safety of this maneuver is also dependent upon the changes in currents and use of the train bridge.

It was asked if the narrowness of the river is being balanced with the construction of new seawalls. Mr. Aguilera replied that new seawalls are typically placed in front of older structures. Code measures the distance of the waterway from property line to property line, and vessels may not protrude into more than 30% of this distance.

Clarification of the phone number residents should call to report issues was requested. Mr. Aguilera stated that the City's 24-hour customer service number is (954) 828-8000; residents may also use the FixItFTL mobile app. His office receives alerts when marine issues are reported. In the event of an emergency, the Police Department can also be contacted and the Marine Patrol would notify Mr. Aguilera's office.

Mr. Aguilera further clarified that while derelict vessels may not be considered emergencies, sunken vessels can constitute emergencies, as they may leak fuel or other pollutants.

It was asked how residents can obtain information on responses to incidents they have reported. Mr. Aguilera replied that FixItFTL creates tickets for reports, and the reporting individual receives an email when the tickets are updated. If a report is called in, the individual who receives the call will enter the issue into FixItFTL. They can also provide individuals with request numbers so they can follow up on the item later on.

Ms. Bailey asked how the City plans to address issues of construction-related pollution and stormwater management. Mr. Aguilera advised that he does not have expertise in stormwater management, and suggested that one of the City's experts in this field be invited to present at a later meeting.

With regard to pollution from construction, Mr. Aguilera continued that he has received calls regarding different construction sites. He cited the example of dredging at the Las Olas Marina, which resulted in the migration of turbidity plumes down the Intracoastal

Waterway. Broward County establishes limits for turbidity on its waterways; if these limits are exceeded, the City or County can issue a stop work order and/or a fine. Incidents of this nature can be reported to the City by phone or through FixItFTL.

Ms. Rahmankhah asked if the protection of marine life falls under the Chief Waterway Officer's purview. Mr. Aguilera confirmed this, although he noted that the current focus is on water quality.

A member of the public asked if the City Commission is aware of concerns with navigability and space on the City's waterways. Mr. Aguilera replied that the City's Marine Advisory Board (MAB), which oversees waterway issues, is aware of this concern. The City has been in communication with the Coast Guard as well as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with respect to defining channel width. At present, there is consideration of bringing on a maritime consultant to identify areas in need of restructuring to provide for the restriction of encroachment beyond the current 30% guideline. This may result in a restriction to no more than 25% or less of waterway width in some areas in order to ensure safe passage of vessels.

Mr. Aguilera continued that he is working with the City's Zoning Department to determine whether these locations of concern can be designated as special navigation areas, which would allow for a reduction in encroachment. He is working with stakeholders and marine businesses to identify these potential areas.

Ted Insera, president of the River Oaks Civic Association, requested additional information on discharge of treated sewage offshore. Mr. Aguilera explained that state law permits this activity three miles offshore with the use of appropriate marine sanitation devices.

Ms. Jacobson-Bertanzetti requested information on public outreach. Mr. Aguilera stated that he is working to bring the City up to speed on water quality programs, which will include future outreach to the public. He pointed out that there are other priorities to put into place first, such as implementation of the pump-out boat, adoption of the Anchoring Ordinance, address of derelict vessels, and more before new projects are added.

Ms. Thibault asked what happens to derelict vessels when they are removed. Mr. Aguilera replied that the derelict vessels that the City typically removes have no value and can be destroyed.

Vice Chair Daoust asked what can be done with regard to cleaning in coordination with waterways that connect to other municipalities' jurisdictions. Mr. Aguilera stated that the Aquatic Control Group is responsible for cleaning the City's waterways as well as addressing harmful algal blooms. They are assigned to different areas of the City in rotation throughout the year. They also use a secondary vessel to address areas identified as particular concerns due to the accumulation of trash. Mr. Aguilera concluded that he plans to reach out to other nearby municipalities to encourage them to keep their waterways clean as well.

V. Old Business

- **Sustainability Advisory Committee Coalition
September 9th meeting**

Ms. Bailey advised that she would be willing to attend the September 9, 2025 Sustainability Advisory Committee Coalition (SACC) meeting if no other members can attend. She requested additional details on this meeting.

VI. New Business

Ms. Thibault noted that the December 17, 2025, Board meeting will need to be moved to an alternative date due to availability of audiovisual staff. It was determined that the meeting will be rescheduled for Monday, December 15 in a location to be determined.

Ms. Thibault stated that a Resiliency Coordination Forum is scheduled for September 3, 2025 in West Palm Beach. This is a quarterly meeting of the South Florida Regional Water Management District. The fourth annual Florida Resiliency Conference will be held from September 17-19, 2025 in Charlotte Harbor. An Ocean Exchange event is scheduled for October 26-28, 2025 in Fort Lauderdale.

Chair Blattner advised that links to more information about these upcoming events are included in the Agenda.

VII. Proposed Communication

None.

VIII. Comments

None.

IX. Items for Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 29, 2025.

X. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 6:44 p.m.

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