



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, APRIL 2, 2026 – 6:00 P.M.**

**Cumulative Attendance
May 2025-April 2026**

Steve Witten, Chair	P	10	0
Ted Morley, Vice Chair	P	7	0
Norm Bekoff (via Zoom)	P	7	3
Tyler Brunelle	P	9	1
Jeffrey Coburn	P	9	1
Courtney Day	A	5	1
Jason Dunbar	A	9	1
Katherine Fernandez	P	1	0
Barry Flanigan (via phone)	P	8	2
Robert Franks	P	9	1
John Lynch	P	9	1
Sam Mitchell (dep. 7:59)	P	7	0
Dr. Bret Ribotsky	P	9	0
Bob Swindell	P	8	2
LaRhonda Ware	P	9	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
- Edward Eason, Code Compliance Officer
- Sergeant Travis O’Neal, Marine Unit
- William Knowles, Fort Lauderdale Police Chief
- Captain Chad Robertson, Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue
- Bob Dunkel, Assistant City Attorney
- Scott Stone, Assistant City Attorney
- Todd Hiteshew, Deputy Public Works Director
- 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. and noted that Vice Chair Morley and Mr. Flanigan would be participating remotely in tonight's meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Lynch, seconded by Ms. Ware, to allow them to join us via Zoom or phone. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

New Board member Katherine Fernandez introduced herself at this time.

II. Statement of Quorum

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

III. Approval of Minutes – March 5, 2026

Dr. Ribotsky recalled a discussion at the March 5, 2026 meeting regarding the creation of a regular Agenda Item for Board conversation on issues of importance which they wished to bring to the attention of the City Commission. Mr. Cuba explained that the process by which those items are advanced is a communication to the City Commission, which does not require a separate Agenda item. He concluded that he would discuss the proposal further with the Chair.

Chair Witten stated that he would like to present a summary of various issues addressed by the Board to the City Commission at a forthcoming City Commission meeting.

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

Chair Witten advised that Assistant City Attorney Bob Dunckel, who regularly works with the Board, will be retiring in the near future, and introduced Assistant City Attorney Scott Stone, who will succeed Attorney Dunckel in this role at future Board meetings.

Chair Witten also thanked Board Member Barry Flanigan for his service on the Marine Advisory Board (MAB), noting that tonight is Mr. Flanigan's final meeting as a member.

Chair Witten briefly reviewed a number of efforts addressed by the Board in recent months, including the recent implementation of a Slow Speed/Minimum Wake Zone on a portion of the Intracoastal Waterway, the upcoming Greater Fort Lauderdale Air Show, and the importance of ensuring a safe and clean waterway for present and future boaters.

Chair Witten continued that he has spoken with Principal Urban Planner Trisha Logan to seek information on whether a body of water can receive a historic designation. It was clarified that this designation is not possible for a waterway.

Chair Witten also reported that a dock waiver on SE 2nd Avenue recommended by the Board was recently approved by the City Commission. Another waiver on NE 20th Avenue for which the Board had recommended denial was also approved by the Commission, which added a caveat related to monitoring the use of the property.

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

**VIII. “Behind the Scenes of Our Boating Community”: Discussion with Ted Drum, owner of The Shipyard at Lauderdale Marina, 15th Street Fisheries Restaurant & Drum Realty.
“Serving Fort Lauderdale over the past seven decades.”**

Chair Witten introduced Ted Drum, owner of a variety of businesses located in Fort Lauderdale and a longtime member of the City’s marine community. Mr. Drum showed a slide presentation reviewing events from the City’s marine history dating back to the Second World War, the involvement of members of the marine community in the war effort and afterward, and the expansion of the marine economy in Fort Lauderdale through the development of marinas and other key businesses.

**IV. Waterway Crime & Boating Safety Reports:
Sgt. Travis O’Neal (FLPD) / Capt. Chad Robertson (Fire Rescue) / Edward Eason (Code)**

Captain Chad Robertson of Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue reported eight Fire boat calls from March 2026.

Code Compliance Officer Edward Eason reported the following activity:

- March 12: a property was cited for installation of guardrails without a permit
- March 11: a property was cited for encroachment of trees into the waterway

Sergeant Travis O’Neal of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department’s Marine Unit reported the following activity:

- Theft of fishing gear from a vessel; video of the theft has been distributed to law enforcement
- Two new Officers are fully trained for the Marine Unit
- There has been an increase in jet ski rentals, with most use occurring to the south due to Slow Speed zones elsewhere; there have been complaints from residents in this area, which the Marine Unit is seeking to address

A question was asked regarding charter vessels that are picking up customers at condemned docks on the New River. Sgt. O’Neal replied that individuals wishing to report this activity should notify the Marine Unit, other Police Officers, or Park Rangers of typical pickup times using the Fort Lauderdale Police Department’s non-emergency line. Charter boats involved in this activity can be banned from these areas.

Dr. Ribotsky requested an update on individuals who were cited for anchoring violations. Sgt. O'Neal replied that none of these cases have gone to trial thus far. Some individuals have left the areas in which they had anchored. Others were cited for failure to produce a log for waste disposal. Two trial dates are anticipated in April 2026.

Sgt. O'Neal continued that the Marine Unit's bid on motors for three boats is currently live, and an update should be available next month.

Mr. Mitchell asked if any patrols have taken place on the North Fork River. Sgt. O'Neal replied that until that waterway is dredged, it is not accessible to the Marine Unit's boats. Mr. Mitchell requested that when Chair Witten presents his overview of MAB issues to the City Commission, he include the suggestion of installing a ramp on the North Fork River so patrols can access the waterway. He also recommended that both dredging and partnership with the South Florida Water Management District be proposed for the area due to the condition of the river.

Chair Witten advised that he has spoken to the U.S. Coast Guard regarding the North Fork River, as well as to the City Commissioner in whose District the waterway is located. He noted that at least a portion of the North Fork River was federalized in 1978 and emphasized the importance of addressing the condition of that waterway.

Mr. Mitchell asserted that no action has been taken regarding the North Fork River other than water quality testing. Chair Witten suggested that Mr. Mitchell prepare a draft communication to the City Commission stating how he would like to address this matter, again emphasizing the importance of the North Fork River and residents of the area.

Mr. Mitchell pointed out that while cleanup efforts are underway for the Everglades, which connect to the North Fork River, there has been no accompanying cleanup of the river. He recommended that this be presented to the City Commission as an option.

Mr. Bekoff observed that the Board could reach out to the contract administrator overseeing the Aquatic Control Group, which is the City's contractor responsible for cleaning Fort Lauderdale's waterways. He suggested the cleanup vessels could be dispatched to the North Fork River at least on a monthly basis to provide cleaning. Chair Witten stated that stagnant water rather than floating debris is the primary issue on the North Fork River, and cannot be addressed by the cleaning contractor.

Mr. Bekoff advised that he has visited the subject area and seen floating debris in the water, and proposed that this could be a starting point in working to improve the waterway. He requested additional information on the accessibility of the North Fork River. Sgt. O'Neal replied that Marine Unit vessels cannot access the entirety of the river. Chair Witten noted that there is limited action citizens can take to address the subject waterway's problems, particularly if it is inaccessible to law enforcement.

Mr. Bekoff reiterated Mr. Mitchell's suggestion to reach out to representatives of the South Florida Water Management District, as that entity may be a possible source of a solution.

Attorney Dunckel recommended that the Board send a carefully crafted communication to the City Commission on this topic, including bullet points citing specific concerns. Chair Witten proposed that individual Board members send these bullet points to Mr. Cuba's office so they can be compiled into a communication, again stating that the District Commissioner for the subject area should be involved as well.

Ms. Ware explained that the North Fork River is an ongoing concern to residents in its area, and advised that she has accessed the waterway by boat. She agreed that clearing debris from the area would be a significant first step, as well as that the water is stagnant and has a bad smell. She concluded that water quality is becoming a more and more important issue to residents in the area, and emphasized that Fort Lauderdale's government should seek to maintain the City's reputation as "the Venice of America."

Chair Witten stated that he has also spent time in the subject area with members of City Staff as well as others in the marine community, adding that Broward County has some responsibility for the waterway's condition as well, as the waterway runs through a County park. He reiterated that Board members should send bullet points on this topic to Mr. Cuba's office, and they can be summarized and compiled into a communication to the City Commission at next month's meeting.

Mr. Cuba requested that the bullet points be as concise as possible so they can be effectively consolidated into a communication to the Commission. Once sent, the communication will be placed on a City Commission Conference Agenda. He strongly encouraged Board members to attend the Conference Agenda meeting at which the communication will be discussed so they can speak to the issues it addresses. It was also recommended once more that Board members reach out to their appointing City Commissioners to further discuss their concerns, as the authority to make change ultimately lies with the Commission and not with the MAB.

Mr. Cuba further clarified the procedure for sending communications to the City Commission, explaining that the Board must pass a motion to send their communication, which will be presented for discussion at a City Commission Conference Agenda meeting. He again emphasized that a Board member or members will need to be present at that meeting to provide additional information as needed. He will inform the members of when the Conference Agenda meeting will be scheduled.

Mr. Bekoff asserted that Fort Lauderdale is in need of a comprehensive approach to clean waterway management, which he felt was currently lacking. He pointed out that while there are fragmented efforts in specific locations, there is no comprehensive plan for how to clean and maintain the City's waterways, and suggested that the Board identify areas of concern as well as potential funding programs to address this need.

Deputy Public Works Director Todd Hiteshew explained that he is currently filling in at the position of Chief Waterways Officer while the City is recruiting for that position. He advised that Aquatic Control Group accesses the North Fork River, and statistics may be available on their frequency of cleaning. While dredging has been discussed, it is difficult to identify a funding mechanism for this work, as grants typically require matching funds from municipalities and the cost can be very expensive. He recalled that the City had developed a Dredging Master Plan in 2015, but was unable to execute that program due to a lack of funding.

Mr. Hiteshew continued that water quality was recently tested at Sweeting Park on the North Fork River and passed this test. He recalled that this waterway was last dredged in the 1980s to remove contaminated sediment that had accumulated from a nearby wastewater treatment facility.

Mr. Mitchell asked why the North Fork River could not be included in the ongoing cleanup and rehabilitation of the Everglades. Mr. Hiteshew replied that the Everglades cleanup is aimed at a different area than the contributing waterway. He added that the South Florida Water Management District controls water flow into the North Fork River.

Mr. Mitchell asked if some of the federal funds used for the Everglades could be channeled into the river to rehabilitate it as well. Mr. Hiteshew stated that he did not know how the federal cleanup program might accommodate more local programs. The entities involved in the Everglades project include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Attorney Dunckel suggested that Mr. Cuba may wish to highlight or underscore the portion of today's meeting minutes reflecting discussion of the North Fork River and attach them to the communication when it is sent to the City Commission.

Mr. Bekoff commented that City Commissioner Ben Sorensen has established a waterway working group, including representatives of Nova Southeastern University, which discusses waterway quality and other marine issues. Chair Witten added that the working group includes the City Manager.

Chair Witten continued that most City Commissioners hold pre-Agenda meetings in their districts ahead of scheduled Commission meetings, and encouraged the Board members to speak on issues of concern at these meetings.

V. "Ten Minutes with an Industry Expert": Visit from Katherine O'Fallon of The Marine Research Hub of South Florida Inc. "Connecting the Dots to build FLORIDA'S BLUE ECONOMY to be resilient & sustainable."

Ms. O'Fallon requested that her presentation be deferred to next month's Board meeting. There was consensus to defer this Item to the May 2026 meeting.

Mr. Mitchell left the meeting at 7:59 p.m.

VI. Dock Waiver – 401 Idlewyld Drive / Nancy A. Daly and Paul E. Daly, Co Trustees of the Nancy A. Daly Revocable Living Trust

This Item was withdrawn from the Agenda.

VII. Dock Permit – 1101 Cordova Road / Robert L. Gallagher Jr.

Robert Gallagher, Applicant, explained that the request is for the installation of a dock on the subject property. The dock will start 35 ft. from the nearby 11th Street Bridge and will be 40 ft. in length. There is a required 5 ft. setback from the bridge. He showed renderings of the property, the proposed dock, and distances and dimensions.

Attorney Dunckel noted that the dimensions of the dock area extend from one 5 ft. setback to another 5 ft. setback of neighboring properties. He added that the Applicant is not the riparian owner of the public swale area; the City is the riparian owner, and holds that area in trust for the public.

Mr. Gallagher further reviewed specifications of the proposed dock and the surrounding area. The dock will be a fixed structure.

Motion made by Mr. Lynch, seconded by Mr. Franks, to approve the permit. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 11-0.

**IX. Old / New Business
Scuttlebutt, Loose Ends, Progress on Initiatives**

Chair Witten addressed the dock waiver application that was pulled from tonight's Agenda by its Applicant, explaining that the Applicant wished to reconsider their plans. Attorney Dunckel recalled that the Applicant had made a request to intermittently dock an additional vessel on the southernmost structure of the proposed dock. After further discussion of this request, as well as discussion of possible recorded conditions to be included in public records, the Applicant chose not to pursue the construction plan proposed in the Application. The Applicant will bring back plans for a finger pier that can accommodate the additional vessel at a future meeting.

Mr. Franks recalled that at the March 2026 meeting, he had suggested a representative of Florida Power and Light (FPL) be invited to a Board meeting to discuss access for their barge when traveling to power plants. The barge is 150 ft. long and 50 ft. wide, with additional 30 ft. barges on both ends of the primary vessel. He cautioned that waterways will need to maintain a channel that will allow periodic access to a vessel of this size in order to serve utility infrastructure in the area, and that this vessel effectively defines the minimum navigable channel width. The barge must be able to access locations on the waterway at least every two years.

Mr. Franks continued that a representative of FPL needs to clarify that in order to serve power plants located near the waterway, the waterway must be accessible to the specific dimensions of their barge. He concluded that it has been difficult to make contact with FPL. Chair Witten recommended that the Board members reach out to their City Commissioners with regard to this issue as well.

X. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:23 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.]