

West Galveston Island Property Owners Association (WGIPOA)

Board of Directors Meeting

The WGIPOA Board of Directors meeting was held on July 20, 2013 at the Galveston Island Country Club. Jerry Mohn called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m., Present. Directors present were Jeff Southard – Dunes of West, Lee Slataper – Pirates Cove, Tom Gillespie – Sea Isle, Peggy Zahler – Spanish Grant Beach, Chris Kasper – Spanish Grant Bay, Lee Petros – Pointe West, Greg Mack – Pointe San Luis, Bet Jennings – Laffites Cove, and Mary Jan Lantz – Bermuda Beach.

Officials in attendance: Marie Robb – COG City Council, Judge Jim Schweitzer, Mayor Lewis Rosen, Judge Michelle Slaughter, and Chief Constable Clint Wayne Brown. Pat Grady running for District Court was also present.

Corp. Sponsors Peggy Zahler – Johnson Space Center Federal Credit Union, Marie Robb – Coastal Solutions, and Greg Mack – Toshiba USA were present.

The prior June 15 special Board meeting minutes and current financials were reviewed. Motion by Tom Booth and seconded by Peggy Zahler, the minutes and financial statements were approved.

**GARM REPORT** – Sgt. Joel Caldwell stated approximately \$10,000 of fireworks were confiscated but no serious incidents to report. GARM monitors rental homes on the west end and to please call 682-3603 for any issues or problems.

**Community Policing:** Lt. Torres introduced officers handling the west end. Lt. Torres stressed again to call the non-emergency number: 765-3702 for any incidences. They do log the information and respond. Golf carts were discussed and they are considered a vehicle and not allowed on the beaches unless a handicap type. There is also an increase in snake sightings – both rattlesnake and water moccasin – on or near the dunes. The police will come out and remove any snake.

**District 6 Happenings** – City Council Member Marie Robb stated the 5 year budget capital project improvement plan has not been paid attention such as the Terramar waste water treatment plant was behind schedule but now up to speed. It is not at full capacity yet but the conversion of septic tanks to sewer will now occur in the next few years.

When the paid parking program in front of the Seawall begins soon, the west end will be affected with people looking for free parking access. Hershey Beach has been hit hard with an abundance of cars and people trying to use bathrooms/showers at the nearby condos. In addition, people are using the dunes to relieve themselves. Litter is rampant now and the City is working with the Parks Board for a plan. Port-a-potties and moving the bollards is one solution.

Inadequate fire hydrants will be repaired on the west end. The existing hydrants have sufficient capacity to handle fires.

Cove Lane in Laffites Cove is a real issue and dangerous to let it exist. There needs to be a cap on the end to prevent damage to people and vehicles.

Census – Marie was instrumental in getting the City to file an appeal on June 29 for the 2010 census that showed Galveston with 47,000 plus population. She wants to show that Galveston has a population in excess of 50,000 because this will entitle the City for Federal funds for projects like roads, etc.

**Windstorm Insurance:** Otie Zapp advised there was little or no change with the recent 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislative Session. There have been three insurance commissioners in three years and there is no stability. Senator Larry Taylor had the perfect bill, SB 1700, to fix the Texas Windstorm Insurance Agency (TWIA), but it died in committee. TWIA is almost insolvent with \$500 million in reserves and almost no capital. TWIA will have to borrow money and have the policy holders pay back. TWIA needs to be fixed. So far the windstorm insurance issue is not being pursued during the special sessions on Capitol Hill in Austin.

**Newsletter:** Peggy Zahler advised the July 3 “GalvestonWestender” newsletter is out and this is the third year of publication. They now have a distribution list of 6000.

**Galveston Parks Board of Trustees:** Chairman Craig Brown gave an overview of the Parks Board that was established in 1963 by the State Legislature. The Parks Board mission is to promote Galveston Island tourism through the Convention and Visitors Bureau and to maintain the beaches of the island. The Parks Board is funded through the hotel and motel occupancy tax. The HOTAX tax is 15% and 6% will come back to the Parks Board. They do not receive any funds from sales or property tax. They do charge beach users fees at some of the parks and this is used for operations and they also get fees from concessionaires. There are 9 members of the Parks Board and 8 members are appointed by City Council. The City recently directed the Parks Board to study the issues at Hershey Beach. Beach Maintenance is headed by Mario Rabago, the Convention & Visitors Bureau is handled by Meg Winchester, and Beach Patrol and Lifeguards are handled by Peter Davis. The Galveston Police Department supports the Parks Board’s efforts; Parks Board funding is for specific areas; and, they work with the City to make recommendations. Currently the budget for the Parks Board is \$1 million per month.

Kelly de Schaun, Executive Director of the Parks Board, discussed three areas. The first is the \$4.2 million beach nourishment and dune construction project from the end of the Seawall to Dellanera Park. There will be a mega dune with a width of 75 feet and 11 feet high with a crest of 30 feet wide. Funding for the project is coming from FEMA with \$3 million, the City with \$1 million, and the rest from the Parks Board with \$75,000 coming from the GLO and the Seascape Homeowners Association coming in with funds. For the dry beach area there is a “recreational easement” that is secured and exists as long as the beach exists. All the permits are ready and they have a waiver from US Fish & Wildlife during turtle season to do the project. The sand source is not secure yet and could be a problem with the start-up date, which they intended the project to commence the end of spring to beginning of summer, 2014. This area of the island has the highest rate of erosion and FM 3005 is the only evacuation route off the island for the west end.

Kelly discussed the second area of importance and that is the seaweed maintenance policy. The Parks Board hand picks debris and wood on the wet beach for the west end. They also collect litter from trash

cans on the on-site beach access points. They apply for seven permits each year for beach cleaning. They have a Beach Maintenance Advisory Committee (BMAC) that informs on beach maintenance policy and conceptualizes projects such as Seawall beautification. The Parks Board has various beach maintenance equipment – bobcats, front end loader, 2 types of surf rakes, and a pilot surf rake that picks up debris and seaweed and leaves the sand on the beach. The heavy equipment is used for large amounts of seaweed. The Parks Board is not ready to make a decision on the best equipment to use and the BMAC is studying the matter. Once completed, the Parks Board will make recommendations to the Planning Commission on the best practices. , which is to be completed by January, 2014.

The third area discussed was the key on for the major purpose of the Parks Board and that is tourism. Tourism is a significant contributor to business sales, employment, and taxes on Galveston Island. Right now tourism is off the charts. It is an industry and needs to be managed. Galveston leads the state in tourism after the Alamo. Galveston is the playground for Houston, which is projected in the near term to be the third largest city in the U.S. However, the Parks Board finds the visitors to the island lately are mostly day trippers and we need more to stay at hotels and to eat at the restaurants and this is where efforts will be made.

**Other:**

**Paid Parking:** The City plans to begin paid parking on the Seawall by August 1 and this will put pressure on west end subdivisions since people coming to the island will be looking for free parking. This matter is being addressed by the City and Parks Board.

**Hershey Beach:** A Task force from the Parks Board, City, WGIPOA and the Condos are looking at solutions to the mass influx of beach users to this area. It's a real safety and health issue and needs to be addressed. A few in the audience from the condos discussed the problems they are encountering and seeking help to maintain a great quality of life they enjoyed before the current situation.

**Coastal Beach & Bay Foundation:** This is a 501©3 organization that has specific fund donations for sand nourishment and marsh restoration projects. The Foundation would like the WGIPOA to take over the organization and this is being investigated.

**Ike Dike/BAHEP:** The Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership has a committee studying the project and raising funds and is chaired by Dr. Bill Merrell of TAMUG.

**Snakes:** Several sightings of snakes have been reported on the dunes mainly the far west end. However, we did have a sighting near 13 mile road and seems they are migrating west. We encourage people to call the police on any sightings and they will remove the snake.

**HB 3459:** This Bill was signed by the Governor and has two parts. The first allows the GLO Commissioner to call a moratorium of up to three years after a major storm event to determine the line of vegetation. In the interim, the line of vegetation and use of the public beach will be 200 feet from the mean low tide line. The second will be a committee composed of State Representatives and Senators to do a study on the Ike Dike and to report to the Legislature by December 1, 2014.

**Noise Ordinance:** The Sea Isle Issue with a band playing at a bar is causing disruptions for local residents around the area. It was recommended that the affected residents call the police to log in the complaint. This has not occurred and we need to look at the ordinance, which is at 85 decibels, and to consider reducing to what Houston has, 65 decibels for commercial and 58 decibels for residential.

Meeting adjourned at 10:49 a.m.