

WEST GALVESTON ISLAND PROPERTY OWNER'S ASSOCIATION

MEETING WITH GALVESTON CITY MANAGER

June 23, 2001

City Officials Present: Steve LeBlanc, City Manager; Angelo Grasso, Public Works Dept.; Chief Robert Pierce and Lt. John Mitchell, Police Dept., Wendy O'Donohoe, Planning Dept., and, Council Member Dianna Puccetti

WGIPOA Board Members present: Marty Baker (Pirates POA), Sharon Turnley (Sea Isle), Lucy Rangel (Spanish Grant Beach), Kathy Love and Mildred Coker (Bermuda Beach), Wanda Greer (Terramar), and Jerry Mohn

Meeting began at 9:30 AM on Public Works and Planning Department issues; Police related concerns began at 10:10 AM until the end at 11:30 AM.

Public Works and Planning Dept. Issues:

A. Infrastructure Problems:

Bermuda Beach: Washout areas near John Reynolds Road and Jane Road need to be addressed and fixed to stop erosion during heavy rainstorms and tidal surges. Bermuda Beach Drive threshold has eroded. The catch basin on the beach side; need to coordinate something (drainage work) alongside to prevent from caving in. If it is not corrected, major cost to the City with sewer line and road repairs. City will look at area and revert.

Bermuda Beach: Ditches near Rachel and Jane Roads need mowing and maintenance. Need to determine if these areas belong to the City or to the homeowners association and who is to take care of them. The City will investigate and revert.

Spanish Grant Beach: Sand that was taken out of Buena Vista has never been replaced and now a large trough and potentially dangerous if a car backs up without looking and goes over the embankment. The City will investigate and revert.

B. Debris Removal: Bermuda Beach & Spanish Grant: Trash and rebar still remain on the Eastern section of Bermuda Beach and in specific areas of Spanish Grant. Concrete slabs on beach need to be removed by the County. The County volunteered to clean up the area after Francis but it was never completed. Jerry Mohn to check with Tesa Duffy, Emergency Management Coordinator of the County, to see if that Department or another area to handle.

C. Walkovers/Parking lot: Terramar is concerned about former public parking areas between Bay Harbor and Terramar. Prior to Frances, the public had access to the beach but now the parking lot has high grass and walkovers no longer exists. People either walk over the dunes or drive golf carts over the dunes to get to the beach. Need to determine if this is in the County or City first.

Discussion was held on the empty parking lot at the Miramar subdivision and what could be done to use it. The City will handle.

D. Elevation of FM 3005: After the February meeting with the City Manager, City Council adopted a resolution that was sent to the Texas Department of Transportation (TEXDOT) to address the issue in raising FM 3005 at the end of the Seawall in order for residents to evacuate the West End safely. This areas floods at 3.5 feet tide levels. TEXDOT acknowledged the receipt of the resolution but no further reply. Steve LeBlanc will pursue the matter to determine the progress in elevating FM 3005 in several areas along the highway.

Police Department issues and concerns:

In summary, the Chief and City Manager were very enthusiastic in establishing some type of substation or presence on the West End. This could be accomplished with some type of interlocal agreement with Jamaica Beach or the Sheriff's Dept. Before a meeting is held with various groups on the matter, Chief Pierce would like to discuss the situation with his counterparts at the Sheriff's Office, Gean Leonard, and Jamaica Beach, Chief Debbie Kershall, which he hopes to complete the week of July 30. Hopefully, the week of August 6, members of WGIPOA, entities, law enforcement, and City Officials will meet to discuss the substation on the West End.

Current situation for the West End: Total Galveston Police Department has 80 officers of which 10% or 8 officers are assigned to the West End, which is designated West of 103rd street. There are 2 officers during the day shift (6 a.m. – 2 p.m.) Officers Armando Torres and William "Buddy" Jackson; 4 officers assigned to the evening shift (2 p.m. to 10 p.m.) Officers Don Lounds, Jerimi Smart, Ken Weems, and John Estilette; and, 2 officers during the night shift (10 p.m. to 6 a.m.) Officer Javier Rosa and Sergeant Tim Galvan.

If you call an emergency with 911 by cell phone, remember to ask the dispatcher for the City of Galveston. Non Emergency telephone number is 409-797-3702 and to report an incident is 409-797-3838.

Ideal staffing is another officer on the day and night shift but retirements, etc., have taken away people. When the County completes the new jail in 2004, it will free up 4 officers to go back out on to the street. The Police Department currently has 13 positions to fill and they are going through the hiring process. Assuming none of the current officers retire or resign it will be another 5 to 6 months of training, etc, before any of the new officers are assigned a detail. Chief Pierce hopes to have the three extra officers, one on each shift by the end of the year for the West End.

Another problem is the gas fill up. Currently police cars come into the main garage of the City to fill up. Chief Pierce advised it would be necessary to contract with a local gas station on the West End to take care of the cars to save time.

Of the approximately 80,000 calls for service each year, less than 400 come from the West End. Members of the WGIPOA indicated the probable reasons for the low number of calls such as the length of time it takes police to respond; if a minor theft, people will not bother to call; renters do not call for problems; etc, etc.

The WGIPOA group stressed the need for a substation or some type of kiosk on the West End to have visibility to act as a deterrent to criminals. Sharon Turnley, General Manager for Sea Isle, reviewed the recent problem with a burglary and response time. The Chief explained the reason for the slow response and the low manpower situation at that time.

The Police Department did have a substation at Pirates Beach Fire Dept years ago but when the ban of alcohol on the beach and other changes did not justify an officer in the area. Chief Pierce advised a substation needs to be maintained and this takes an officer off the street. Exchange of information is critical and a constant dialog with the downtown operation and other police areas is necessary.

Dianna Puccetti discussed a virtual reality type system that police officers could use with video hook ups and audio. New technology will make it easier for policemen to communicate rather than the long process now. The WGIPOA members present indicated to the City Manager and Police Chief that if necessary there would be a fund drive to raise money for the substation.

Steve and Chief Pierce were advised of the discussion after the WGIPOA meeting on Saturday by Dianna Puccetti and myself, with the Mayor of Jamaica Beach, Vic Pierson, where he indicated they would make some type of arrangement with the City for a substation at their facility.

During the course of the meeting, Chief Pierce reviewed the "Project Child Safe" program that is being sponsored by the State for citizens to safely store any firearms. The program is designed to reduce the risk of firearm accidents in the home and to safeguard children from suffering a tragic injury because of an improperly stored firearm. The Police Department has available for homeowners with firearms a cable style gun lock that prevents the firearm's action from closing. Supplies are limited to only 2,000 for the entire City of these cable locks but they are available on a first come, first serve basis, maximum two per household, no charge. If anyone is interested in obtaining the cable locks, please contact Sergeant Parker of the Galveston Police Department, telephone 409-797-3830.