

WEST GALVESTON ISLAND PROPERTY OWNER'S ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

August 4, 2004

Galveston Parks Board Offices

Parks Board: Lou Muller – Executive Vice President

WGIPOA: Jerry Mohn; Doug Eibsen – Terramar Beach; Nancy Bond – Sea Isle

City: Jackie Cole - City Council Member

Summary of the meeting:

1. No raking of the seaweed on the beaches on the West End for this year and 2005. Only exception is except in front of the Seawall and the County Parks. The Parks Board is evaluating a charge to any subdivision that desires to have their beaches raked. The fee mentioned was \$525/hour. This has to be approved first by the Parks Board of Directors.
2. A subdivision could hire a private contractor to rake the beach but a beach front permit application is required through the Department of Planning, attn: Maxwell Fisher. In addition, the beach cleaning has to be in accordance with the City of Galveston Zoning Standards, Section 29-90: Development, Preservation, and Protection of Sand Dunes, part (o) Public Beach Use & Access; item (6) Beach Maintenance, d.1 page 146: and check the Web site:
http://www.cityofgalveston.org/city_services/pdf/zone.pdf
3. Budgets for the upcoming fiscal year have not been finalized but the service for the West End will be minimal, pick up of trash at least once a week. Additional services such as picking up wood debris will depend upon the grants the Parks Board receives.
4. The Parks Board is willing to set up a program for the West End whereby a subdivision cleans the beach monthly and packages the trash and sets it aside, they will schedule to come out and pick it up. This would be in addition to the weekly trash barrel pick up.
5. The WGIPOA will address the Parks Board during the budget review for more service, at least twice a week, one for regular trash and one for debris such as wood, plastic bottles, etc. When the budget review date is available, we will request the property owner associations to also address the Parks Board for more beach cleaning of the West End.

Meeting: Lou reviewed the problems the Parks Board has with the funds available. The funds the Parks Board receives are derived from hotel/motel taxes and not from property taxes. The West End portion of the hotel/motel tax is 13.5% (\$846,000) of the total \$6.25 million collected on the Island. Lou mentioned 3 million people visit Galveston Island and over 65% use the Seawall area; for this reason, the priority to keep this area pristine clean. Lou indicated if the beaches are not cleaned in front of the Seawall by a certain time in the morning, the telephone starts ringing. We emphasized that West End renters who contribute to the hotel/motel taxes are weekenders and dirty beaches do not leave a good impression for the visitors. In addition, since approximately 80% of the property owners on the West End are weekenders and not permanent residents, they also take back the images of the trash conditions of the beach.

The main point of the meeting was to emphasis the west end beaches are loaded with debris. Besides weekly trash barrel pick ups, placing more trash barrels where current ones are over flowing and additional cleaning of loose plastic containers and wood debris on the beach is necessary. We are concerned about the sanitary conditions when over stuffed trash barrels and loose trash sits out for days until it is picked up on

the regular weekly route.

The Parks Board of Trustees is funded primarily through two sources of user fees – Hotel Occupancy Taxes and Beach User Fees. The rate for the Hotel Occupancy Taxes (hotel/motel taxes) is 9% and there is a formula in how the funds for the various operations under the Parks Board are allocated. The City used to receive only 7% of the hotel/motel taxes collected but through legislation passed a few years back, there is an additional 2% rebate that totals 9%. Therefore, the break down in how the 9% is allocated is as follows as set by City Council and the State of Texas:

	Local	State	Total
Convention Center Operations	2.125	--	2.1250
Beach Cleaning	0.500	0.7666	1.2666
Beach Patrol	0.500	0.6667	1.1667
Arts Funding	0.875	--	0.8750
Tourism Development	3.000	--	3.000
Nourished Beach	--	0.5667	0.5667
Total	7.000	2.0000	9.0000

The portion the Convention Center receives has cut into the funds that were previously available for beach cleaning. The thought behind the action at the time in allocating a portion for the Convention Center was that sales tax revenues would increase and make up the difference. Lou mentioned the hotel/motel taxes for the past year have not increased significantly and remain the same. They are trying to do the same job they did before the Convention Center with fewer revenues today.

A few days after the meeting, Lou forwarded the 2005 budget for Beach Cleaning for everyone to have a better understanding in where funds are generated. Besides the 1.2666% of the hotel/motel sales taxes collected, beach user fees and grants are also used in the Beach Cleaning budget. A breakdown is as follows:

\$941,844 from Hotel/Motel taxes (0.5 and 0.7666 above)

\$250,000 grant from the GLO for beach cleaning

\$220,421 from Nourished Beach tax rebate (see above .5667%)

\$175,146 from Apfel Park and Bodeker Drive beach user fees

\$215,458 from Stewart Beach user fees

\$98,264 from Dellanera Park beach user fees

\$12,000 from 2 vendors at Fort Crockett Park

\$30,000 from the City to empty trash barrels on top of the Seawall

\$10,000 from the County for weed/rodent control on the Seawall and rock groins

\$8,047 from General Fund

\$1,961,180 total 2005 budget

Of the \$1.9 million beach cleaning funds available for 32 miles of beach this year, approximately \$220,000 is used for the West End.

The Seawall area has trash pick-ups daily. This area will always be cleaned because of the high public visibility with visitors and tourists. For the West End, trash pick-ups operate 5 days a week. Work begins at 5:00 AM where the trash is first picked up the Seawall area, both top and bottom. When they finish the Seawall, the trucks go west to pick up trash. They begin just west of the Seawall and continue until 5:00 PM. Next day when they come back to the West End after servicing the Seawall, they pick up where they left off and continue in this manner the entire workweek until San Luis Pass is reached.

We discussed use of inmates and the Seaborne Corps to clean the West Beach. Lou advised the inmates were cost expensive because you pay for the police watching them. Seaborne has bodies available but no supervisor and the Parks Board cannot handle it. We discussed working on weekends but funds are not available.

The Parks Board recently laid off 24 part-time laborers in order to keep the beach-cleaning budget from being approximately \$188,000 in the red. This is going to have an effect on their ability to provide the level of services that occurred during the spring and early summer. Lou emphasized again that funds are not available.

We discussed trash barrels at times are not emptied completely or half filled trash barrels are not emptied at all. He will look into this situation because all trash barrels are supposed to be emptied. We mentioned in several areas after a weekend, trash barrels are overflowing with trash all around the receptacle in bundles. Lou mentioned if a trash barrel is over stuffed, another trash barrel is supposed to be placed near it – we advised this is not happening.

We discussed the wood and log debris throughout the West end beaches and a need to pick them up because they become battering rams during major storms. Lou advised a \$20,000 grant that was received from the GLO is being used for this purpose. During a later conversation, he checked on the status and the truck has reached the 18-mile road area and they will get to the rest of the West End to pick up the wood debris. Lou was later advised that wood debris just east of the 13-mile road has yet to be picked up.

Lou is trying very hard to accommodate everyone's needs but with limited funds available, it is difficult. New sources of revenues will have to be reviewed for beach cleaning such as beach access fees and paid parking on the Seawall. Chuck Coburn is the Supervisor for the trash pick-ups on the island.

I had an occasion to speak to Dianna Puccetti, Chairwoman for the Parks Board, and every effort will be made to obtain the necessary funds to keep the West End beaches clean. She is aware of the conditions of our beaches and will pursue additional funds. Again, to support efforts in securing more funds for west end beach cleaning, we will have to address the Parks Board during the budget review process.

The beaches are the economic engine that drives the Galveston economy and clean beaches should be a number one priority to keep the engine running!
