

Lower Matecumbe Key Association

Meeting December 4, 2018

Questions submitted to Village Manager

1. Sea Oats Beach:

What is going to be done to prevent the imminent threat of high water and flooding on the highway at Sea Oats Beach?

The sand pile at Sea Oats beach is an eye-sore and an obstacle for those walking/biking there.

Both Village Manager Seth Lawless and Environmental Resources Manager Peter Frezza made comments. The Village has applied for a restoration grant through Army Corps of Engineering. They did not get the grant for current year but are optimistic they will get it this coming year. But process is slow and it is likely that the actual work will not begin for about four years.

Monroe County is working on developing project plans for “Coastal Risk” areas of the county and Sea Oats Beach is a primary area of concern in their initial discussions.

The “Sand Pile” was intended to be used during the Army Corps beach restoration project, but because it is now clear that that project is several years away, the Village has asked Army Corps to let the Village put the sand on the beach now. If that is allowed it will still take some time as several agencies would have to approve the permit.

As far as the highway is concerned, Peter passed around drawings of two possible designs to protect the highway, by hardening the shoreline, likely with the use of rip rap... temporary fixes that will begin in 2020. The long term fix involves raising the road and possibly moving it, but this is as much as 10 years away.

2. Anne’s Beach – plans for restoration. When? What is happening there now?

The restoration of the boardwalk is underway. A local contractor is in the process of putting in the pilings for the boardwalk. As of today approximately 100 pilings are in but the rig doing the work turned over today and is laying on its side at the site. No word on what this will mean to the project – damage to the rig, etc. Anticipated completion date was June 1 but it is unclear whether this problem will cause a significant delay.

3. The Fill – repairs and future control of # of people and their impact; rest rooms?

FDOT has plans to harden the shoreline with rip rap.

As to the parking, trash and other issues on the Fill.... Prior to Hurricane Irma, FDOT had proposed a plan to create limited parking areas to control the use of the Fill. The Village Council objected as they believe public access is very important. FDOT abandoned their plan as a result of the Village objections. Now the Village has been working on their own plan and will submit it to FDOT hoping it can be implemented. The Village plan tentatively would be to limit the length of

stay to 2 – 4 hours, charge for parking to pay for an attendant during busy times. They will be putting porta potties there soon.

4. Bike Path –

Restoration of the “No motor vehicle” signs and boulders used to delineate the narrow bike path sections to the way they were before the repaving after the sewer installation. This would prevent making much of the path an alternative to US One for garage trucks, delivery trucks, and vehicles by bypassing heavy traffic on US one.

Some of the gravel turn offs from the highway to the bike path have significant drop offs... making it difficult for bikes to get on and off the highway.

General maintenance of bike path

Mark Riley invited the Village Manager to view the bike path with him to see the issues first hand. When a member mentioned issues with vehicles turning off highway without adhering to the intended turn-offs in the area across from Sea Oats Beach, the manager indicated that he would address that with Village vehicles, UPS, garbage trucks. And suggested the Village could use gravel to better define where vehicles should turn off the highway.

5. Status of canal improvement projects planned pre-Irma. (Example: Weed barrier previously proposed for canal between Cortez and Columbus Dr)

Peter addressed this issue. First the canal clean-up from the hurricane is nearly completed. There are 13 of 16 canals completed and the last three should be done in the next couple weeks. The project has gone smoothly – all with funding from a grant that the Village is now hopeful can be used for dredging some of the canals that have significant silt as a result of the storm. The Village has applied for silt removal for nine canals, seven on Lower Matecumbe, and are optimistic that it will be approved... should know within the next couple weeks. Purpose is to avoid future flooding, not navigation. (But it should help navigation)

The Village is hoping to get the weed curtain installed on the canal at Columbus Dr after the dredging. Another weed curtain by the Matecumbe Resort that had already been installed was destroyed and they hope to get that replaced.

6. Collapsed condo building at MM74.8 – status

Complicated permit process with numerous agencies involved as well as approvals from all condo owners, but the permits have now been issued and the Village has gotten notification that the demolition will begin within 72 hours.

7. General state of Village finances – FEMA money, outlook for future taxes

The Village spent approximately \$8 million on Irma clean-up anticipating reimbursement from FEMA. As of now, none has been reimbursed. They do not know when or how much will be reimbursed as several audits of the records must be done by FEMA to insure accuracy of requests. This expenditure depleted all the village reserves (fund balances). The Village has approved a line of credit with the bank for nearly the same amount to be used in case of emergency and for needed projects.

Because of expenses related to Irma, the Council had to increase the millage rate on the property tax by 14% this year. The manager felt this is a one-time thing and will not happen next year.

8. Mini Season... Any chance it could be eliminated for Monroe County or Islamorada

The Village Manager does not think this will happen. It is a state issue and the state believes it is advantageous to the tourist industry. Islamorada had an extra 20 deputies on duty and that seemed to help significantly this past summer. That will be continued.

9. What are the plans to deal with the almost constant heavy traffic through Islamorada? In view of this, why are more tourist facilities encouraged?

No ideas! Mr. Lawless did mention that FDOT is now working on future plans to replace the Snake Creek Drawbridge but that the actual construction is 19 – 20 years away.

10. How many property owners on Lower Matecumbe have not yet hooked up to sewer?

Approximate numbers – 900 hooked up, 60 in permit stage, 30 to go.

11. Status of simplification and speeding up of permit process in Village, especially after storms.

A virtually all new planning staff has been hired – including the new Director of Planning Ty Harris... an attorney. Mr. Lawless encouraged us to invite him to a meeting to speak. The new effort “Find a way to say yes.”

Mr. Lawless described the computerized system the building department uses that allows you to track your information regarding planning, building and code enforcement for your property online ... City View.... Go to the Building Department on the Village website to get to it.

12. Sea Level Rise – changes in regulations, infrastructure we might expect?

Monroe County is elevating a one-mile road but we will not be seeing any project like this for Village streets in the near future. There is discussion regarding where to measure the 35’ height restriction as construction is now required to be 1’ above the base flood elevation on flood maps.

13. Code enforcement – now taking anonymous complaints?

Yes

14. Garbage containers... continual problem with some people leaving garbage containers out long before and/or after garbage day. No enforcement of regulations.

This is a problem recognized by the village. The Village is mailing out brochures explaining the rules hoping owners will comply. They are planning periodical sweeps of the village to find property owners not adhering to the rules and having garbage containers out too long before/after pickup. There will be a sweep shortly starting with Lower Matecumbe.

15. Dock and boat lift permitting.... On some of the extremely narrow canals where docks extend out from the vertical wall and davit/boat lifts are installed – is the width of canal considered when permits are issued? Sometimes the lifts are left submerged with no boat on them which can be an extreme navigational hazard.

Peter stated that the regulations allow docks, lifts to extend out into a canal up to 10% of the width of the canal. If a canal is 100 ft – the dock or boat lift can go out 10’ from the vertical wall of the canal. Enforcement – code enforcement issue. Call if you have a problem in your canal.

16. Is there anything the Village can do to help those of us living along Cortez Dr. & Columbus Dr. deal with Comcast in order to have a proper cable for service installed along US1? The cable came down along with 2 poles during Irma and now the cable has been strung (temporarily) through some of the trees along US1 for over a year causing very poor reception when the weather is bad or the wind blows. We have complained multiple times but are getting only lip service.

Mr. Lawless was surprised this is still a problem. He indicated he would touch base with someone from Comcast. A member reported that Comcast is hoping to put the cable underground. If they can't they will replace the above ground line – no timetable given.

17. There are properties with damage not addressed by their owners since Hurricane Irma, is there any ordinance regarding cleanup & repairs with time constraints to start the cleanup/repairs?

The village has tried to be patient with property owners as the Hurricane created so many difficult issues. It is now a code enforcement issue. They are trying to be gentle but if properties are still being neglected, call code enforcement – it can be done anonymously

18. For property owners with specific Village issues related to their own property what is the best way to get answers?

The Village website has the staff directory... contact someone in the appropriate department, or the manager. The directory has email addresses – send an email.

Questions from floor –

Discussion about funding from DAC – funds come from bed tax which was way down the past year and is specific to the area of the county where tax is collected. The Islander is expected to reopen December 15 and then Islamorada will have approximately 1100 rooms (1300 before Irma). Two small motels are permanently closed – Conch on Inn and Lookout Lodge.

Brief discussion about Alligator Lighthouse – Village totally supports efforts from not-for-profits that have efforts underway to take over ownership and maintenance of light when it becomes available from Coast Guard.

Seaweed removal – Monroe County has a boat that can remove floating weed from canals. Peter was going to check to see if it is available for use in the village.

Iguanas – Manager “Every property owner for himself!” Member reported that Florida Fish and Wildlife has hired someone to remove them from state owned property – have already removed 2000.

Request made regarding the huge number of iguanas on Parmalee property that swim across the canal to Port Antigua and do significant damage. Peter acknowledged that the iguana population there is huge and he would talk to owner.