

BOATING ACCESS TASK FORCE
JUNE 29, 2005
5:00 P.M.

Members Present:

Susan Latvala	Board of County Commissioners
Stephen M. Spratt	Pinellas County Administrator
Bill Stokes	Sierra Club, Alliance for Livable Pinellas
Jim Moore	Home Port Marina
Capt. Doug Metko	Florida Guides Association
Will Wilkins	Clearwater Real Estate Group
Judy Geiger	Central Marine
Bruce Stott	Interested Boater
John Landon	Landon, Moree & Associates, Inc.
Doug Speeler	Speeler Enterprises
Andy Nickolson	PO Box 285, Safety Harbor 34695-0285
Denis Frain	City of Gulfport
Kara Bauer	City of Safety Harbor
Frank Dame	Florida Boaters Guide
Bill Sergeant	Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
Bill Morris	Harbor Master – City of Clearwater
Jim Reed	Home Port Marina
Lynn Rives	City of Oldsmar

Members Absent:

David Dunbar	People's Bank
Cathy Hayduke	City of Treasure Island
Steve Hickok	Yacht Services
Mark Hubbard	John's Pass Marina
Jake Stowers	Assistant County Administrator
Mark La-Prade	Thunder Marine
Bill King	Galati Marina
Capt. Dave Markett	Florida Guides Association
Walter Miller	City of St. Petersburg
Frank Hubbard	John's Pass Marina

• **Introductions and Re-Cap**

Commissioner Susan Latvala called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. and asked everyone at the table to introduce themselves and provide a brief summary of their affiliation and interest in this issue.

Following introductions, Commissioner Latvala advised the members of the audience that, after the meeting, anyone interested would be able to speak for about 3 minutes.

A member of the audience asked if it would be possible to get a list of the people that are on the Task Force and their backgrounds. Commissioner Latvala said that it would be posted on the website,

Commissioner Latvala proceeded to recap how we got to where we are today. She referred to the list of site locations that were discussed at the last meeting. Each of the locations was currently being reviewed, but no decisions had been made at this time. Some are County owned and others are not

and could be quite difficult depending upon the types of partnerships that could be formed. Following an update by Safety Harbor on what they are doing, Commissioner Latvala said that the Task Force would like to add the site to the list of ideas being looked at, if the city is in agreement. She said they are looking for other opportunities around the County.

Commissioner Latvala noted that there would be several presentations. She also noted that the item regarding an Intergovernmental Advisory Committee was very important and would need to be finalized during this meeting. She also noted that they would also be making decisions on what the priorities would be and what can be accomplished over the next few meetings.

Commissioner Latvala introduced Paul Cozzie, Director of Parks for Pinellas County, who provided an overview of the Recreation, Open Space and Culture System Master Plan as it relates to Boating.

Mr. Cozzie indicated that the Master Plan is basically a blueprint for the next 15 years and deals with development of new recreation facilities and management of existing resources. The Plan has six major initiatives. One of those is to strengthen connections to the water, by promoting Pinellas County as the premier boating, diving and fishing center of Florida. He noted that there was much public input into development of the Master Plan, including telephone and written surveys, workshops, meetings with staff and commissioners, meetings with other municipalities and the result were several initiatives. Included were the need for 3 deep water ramps, not necessarily new ramps, expansion of existing ramps, public education on ramp etiquette, remote parking and shuttles, increased management and enforcement, public/private partnerships for storage of vessels and incentives for off-peak use.

Mr. Cozzie added that top priorities identified with respect to their development plans were acquisition and/or development in the north county area for a deep-water ramp, looking at Veterans Park to see if additional ramps and parking are feasible, Park Boulevard ramp improvements, and expansion of municipal boat ramp opportunities. This was all done prior to the Boating Access Task Force being started.

Commissioner Latvala said that what is significant about the Master Plan is that for those who have been in Pinellas County for very long, understand that for many years, the Parks were considered passive, with not too much to do. The citizens of the county are demanding more. The surveys were loud and clear that more recreational opportunities are desired. They are trying to piece that together and find some things that meet the needs of our citizens, while protecting our wonderful parklands – it's a balancing act.

Mr. Cozzie noted that the draft summary of this study went to the BCC earlier in the month. Specific plans will be going back to the BCC in September for final approval.

Commissioner Latvala thanked Mr. Cozzie for his report. She noted that Will Davis, Director of the County's Environmental Management Department, would discuss the staff findings and site recommendations.

- **Staff Findings and Site Recommendations with Feedback from Municipalities**

Mr. Davis noted with respect to the site locations, staff sat down with the County's real estate and planning folks to look at each of the sites. Most of the ones noted at the previous meeting remain on the list, but there were a few that he brought to the Task Forces attention that are probably not feasible. He also said that the sites have been divided into County and Non-County ownership categories.

With respect to County-owned sites, he noted that Sand Key Park and Ft. Desoto Park were left on the

list, with a recommendation from staff that there be further investigation at those sites. The recommendation for the War Veterans County Park was consideration of increasing parking spaces there. Wall Springs Park was discussed but it is now off the list for the time being. With respect to Travatine Island, additional investigation is required.

With respect to Non-County owned sites, the staff recommendation for Honeymoon Island recommendation is to continue discussion with the State and other stakeholders. Another State-owned area is the Memorial Causeway (located next to Seminole Boat Ramp) which will remain on the list. The federally-owned Bay Pines Veterans property is likely too shallow and there are also security concerns as well. With respect to privately-owned sites, the Stauffer Superfund site remains a possibility and there will be ongoing coordination during the remediation process. The KOA property is not for sale, it has shallow water and bridges are low. Staff recommends that this site be removed from the list. Hurricane Hole, a St. Petersburg College Property is still of interest. Municipal sites include the Dunedin Causeway. The City of Dunedin has indicated it is very rocky on the northern side and there is not adequate room for parking. The southern side also has significant seagrasses. Regarding the Courtney Campbell Causeway, the decision would be up to the City of Clearwater. Frenchman's Creek, which is between Eckerd College and Maximo, may not have adequate room for additional boating activities but a mooring field could be a possibility.

Mr. Davis requested that any municipal plans and ideas be provided, such as Safety Harbor, which was noted earlier in the meeting.

There were no questions or comments.

Commissioner Latvala noted that Nicole Elko, Pinellas County's Coastal Management Coordinator, would speak regarding Mooring Issues and Ideas.

- Mooring Issues and Ideas

Ms. Elko noted that Mr. Nicholson of the Task Force was kind enough to put together a presentation regarding mooring fields. He has worked on a number of mooring field projects throughout the state.

Ms. Elko referred to the Mooring Fields report that was provided in the agenda materials. She noted that they have researched what is currently occurring in the State. She noted that Key West currently has a mooring field with 149 moors. Miami has plans for a mooring field with over 300 moors. The City of Sarasota is considering a mooring field, and at this time they are working on an Ordinance that would regulate moored vessels. In Sarasota, there is even a person who is taking old vessels, making them livable and renting them to homeless people. The City of Gulfport has budgeted money to create a mooring field. The overall impression is that people are starting to think about mooring fields. It is, however, obvious that mooring fields come with a high expectation of public service, with upland support being very important. Another obstacle with respect to mooring fields is that there are a lot of permitting agencies involved.

Ms. Elko noted that one of the big issues with mooring fields will obviously be water quality along with upland facilities. She noted that the next slide showed some of the reasons that the counties and cities have gone to mooring fields, with one being that there are fewer and fewer marinas and they can be a less expensive alternative.

Ms. Elko noted that Mr. Nicholson would provide a quick overview of some of the projects he is familiar with.

Andy Nicholson noted that Gulfport is in the process of creating a mooring field with 50 moorings off the Gulfport waterfront. The City will be using a new technology for the mooring field they are planning. Upland support activities include a dinghy dock, restrooms with shower and laundry facilities. He said you have to have your mooring field designated as an anchorage, which helps with regulation. Gulfport's schedule is about a year and a half to project development. Mr. Nicholson noted that mooring field advantages include low cost, high level of storm protection, eliminates dredging needs and generates funds. Disadvantages include the need for water taxis and maintenance and management.

Steve Hickok asked if Mr. Nicholson was familiar with "star" docks or floating docks in an anchorage area.

Mr. Nicholson was not, and then said the nice thing about the moorings for vessels in a storm is they allow the vessels to shift and they move around and it has been noted that there is zero impact to the seagrasses.

In response to a question if the mooring fields would be transient, Mr. Nicholson said that the management program the jurisdiction puts together would set forth how they would want to operate the mooring field.

A citizen asked how is it determined where the designated anchorages are located, and what are the tax ramifications – can people live there forever for nothing?

Mr. Nicholson, in response to the first question, said that the responsible party must build the mooring field. They have to have a piece of submerged land allocated to the project, it must be studied to determine adequate depths. There are a number of issues including water quality, variables of nearby upland amenities, what neighbors would be impacted. There are many criteria and permitting involved.

In response to the second question he noted that a fee is charged for mooring and there would not be tax burden as it is a self-funded enterprise.

Mr. Metko noted that the importance of indirect economic impact must be acknowledged. People using mooring fields with yachts worth a half million dollars or more, those people are spending a tremendous amount of money in the community. They buy fuel, provisions, food, clothes, go to movies, etc.

Another citizen asked if this was safe for hurricanes. He said that it was important that the county be diligent and double check that. Some of the stats have shown that a large percentage of mooring fields have had trouble.

Bill Morris, City of Clearwater, noted that when the Helix (sp?) anchor system is used that problems are not as likely. A long stainless mechanism is screwed down into the ground and uses a flexible stretch anchor line and a buoy that holds it off the bottom. It has proven out over approximately the last 10 years that using a stronger mooring system on a grid basis using helix anchors alleviates problems.

Steve Hickok, Tarpon Springs Yacht Services, said they are actually in the process within the next 30 days of submitting permits and are in the development stage of putting in a boat yard, hopefully to replace some of the boat yards that have recently been lost in Tarpon Springs. It will almost double the capacity in the area. In doing this, he has to compete with the developers for the purchase of the property. All the things that the Task Force are discussing are true. Because they have an existing successful business, he feels that they can survive. He added that there are not many people left with the skill sets to maintain vessels and they are trying to help stop that from happening.

Tim Nachman, Commercial Fisherman, said that slowly developers are taking away the places they can dock their boats.

At this time, Commissioner Latvala noted that there were two representatives from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Harry Michaels and Ted Murray. She thanked them for attending the meeting.

Capt. Metko also noted another guest in the audience, Bill Albright, Florida Council of Yacht Clubs.

Commissioner Latvala asked if there were any other comments or questions regarding mooring fields.

Commissioner Latvala asked Mr. Denis Frain, City of Gulfport, if he had any additional comments regarding Gulfport's plans.

Mr. Frain said that, in addition to what Mr. Nicholson talked about, Gulfport has also budgeted for the permitting and engineering of a 300' floating transient dock capable of handling vessels up to 50' for 05/06. The City has also built a dock in Gulfport waterfront in the last three years with access to downtown Gulfport. That is six lifts for 45' vessels and a smaller landing for smaller vessels to dock. They are in the process of developing a second Marina Master Plan. They recently completed a 10-year \$2.5 million renovation in the municipal marina. It was done in phases in order to keep up the boating demand patterns. The vessels are getting larger and wider and need more power. They also put in a 2-lane boat ramp with adequate parking. They are not quite at capacity, but with the County now charging boat ramp fees, they are getting more visitors. Mr. Frain also noted that they are a "Clean Marina" which is one of the first three in the County and one of the first five in the state. It is wonderful PR for the marina. The City is also looking at the surrounding properties of the marina. There are two yacht clubs on site. They are currently assessing that. Boat City Yacht Club is coming up on a five-year lease and the Gulfport Yacht Club is coming up on a one-year lease. The City is looking at those properties to see what is best for the residents of Gulfport.

In response to a question regarding Gulfport adopting any policies, Mr. Frain said that it was considered a capital project. He said the mooring fields is a whole different ball game. The mooring fields will have policies and procedures. The Harbor Management Mooring Plan will be presented to the Gulfport City Council on July 5.

Ms. Bauer, City of Safety Harbor, noted that the Safety Harbor Marina has 44 slips. They have an extensive waiting list. In fact last year's City Commission decided to purge part of the waiting list and have it only for Safety Harbor residents. It is still close to 120 people and a two or three year wait. They recognize they need to expand their facilities and realize they do not have some of the amenities that other marinas have. The access is somewhat different than other places and they have depth issues. They are at the beginning stages.

Capt. Metko asked Safety Harbor about the ramp at Alligator Lake - it was his understanding that the ramp is operated by FWC. He asked if the City has approached FWC about expanding parking. Ms. Bauer noted that at this time utility work is being done and CSX is working on the railroad tracks. She noted that the park that is located there is going to undergo some changes. Parking is certainly a hot topic.

Mr. Morris expanded on what the City is doing with the Seminole Launch ramp. At the top of Osceola Street there are couple of empty lots. That is one of the areas they are working with. They are looking at the possibility of a high and dry, using a public/private partnership and have it managed by a private operator. At this time, they are looking at the assembling of properties, how the roadway access would be managed. He noted that the Playhouse is willing to move which would significantly change the amount of real estate available, but they would need to find a place to put the Playhouse, so that is a trade off of some other City property. Jack Russell Stadium is hands off right now, although it has been looked at as a 16-acre marine repair facility site, offsite storage. If you could trailer your boat to the launch ramp and run a shuttle service back and forth, that would double the parking available, although staging docks would have to be built. They are putting several sites together, the last being Stevenson's Creek, where there is no water right at this time. There is a dredging project that has been in the works for 6 years and he has been told it is going to start this year. There is also a rather low bridge. But if they start looking at the types of vessels they have, they could get the smaller vessels – jet ski, kyacks, out of a smaller ramp and would take the pressure off of the Seminole ramp. There are a couple of sites they are looking at including the Memorial Causeway. Clearwater has an issue where they seem to like passive parks, but they are more work for the police. Mr. Morris said they become a haven for problems., and he thinks Sand Key Park is a headache as a passive park and fishing site. There is a lot of vandalism and is a nightmare at 2:00 a.m. One of the other things they did that worked out successfully is the City Sailing Center. The City had that center built and staffed by Parks and Rec. and they turned it over to him, prior to him becoming the Harbor Master. They put together a grant application and reduced the City's cost to run the facility by \$120,000. It is now run by a 501-C3. The City maintains the building for \$60,000 per year and they rent it back for \$1,000. per month. The City is looking to let them expand their boat storage for sailboats 20 feet and under. The more smaller boats that he can get out of Seminole will help by using some of the other sites that may not be as easy to access for a larger vessel. One of Clearwater's problems is that the only deep water is in the Pass. When they started looking at mooring fields there was one location along Courtney Campbell Causeway where they would have to be single file. Four years ago someone from the state came to talk about the E-grant program. They were only interested in supporting grants for what they called transient boaters. That is boaters that are using boats 26 feet and larger and where not looking at permanent sites or mooring fields or dockage. The City has the plans to build a marina downtown, but it has to go back to referendum. The City is ready to build a marina – the design plans are for 137 slips with a 150-slip threshold. There needs to be a balance of slips ranging from 25 feet up to 70 feet, plus about 800 feet of transient boat dockage. One of the places the City looked at as an example is on the Mississippi River where they have floated their entire marina – the office, the swimming pool, the fuel dock and fuel tank also.

Mr. Morris said when talking about the Memorial Causeway going out to Clearwater Beach, that was deeded over to the City in 1925. It has a provision called a reverter clause which states 500 feet to the north and 700 feet to the south and the City is not allowed to build anything within that foot print that would generate revenues that did not serve a public purpose. He had a letter from April 1998 when the City was planning a marina over on Island Estates and they did battle with DEP. They had to build it around the reverter clause radius and it became too cumbersome to deal with. Because the City withdrew its application, the state withdrew their attempt to go after ownership of all of the city's bottomland. The impact to the City on that with the reverter clause which goes back into the 80s there is a penalty clause that says that if the City lost the battle with the State, they would have to pay back fees and fines so they elected not to build anything else and to stick within water lot 1 which was specifically deeded over to the City.

Andy Nicholson – said something about riparian rights of owners on each end of the Causeway being preserved.

Commissioner Latvala asked Mr. Morris if the City is considering anything on the Memorial Causeway in terms of ramps, etc.

Mr. Morris said that has come up in discussion on several occasions about what to do when the new bridge is completed. Right now, the state is saying let us get the bridge built. They want to put in a passive park and we will see where they are at that point on what else could be done with that site. The Assistant Director is pushing hard to put a high and dry underneath the bridge, but FDOT is very protective of their bridges and want to inspect them without anything being in the way. It is a beautiful piece of land. Mr. Morris also noted that another gorgeous piece of land that has unfortunately been taken off the table is the area by the airport and where the Turtle Club used to be. He said there is a marked channel in there and there is sewer, water, etc. The nice thing about the property is that the "water works."

Commissioner Latvala said that a lease had been signed. It is airport property and has to generate income for the airport. It was noted that an office building was planned.

County Administrator Steve Spratt said that the water is not off the table though. There is also another basin area, however, there are problems with the Army Blackhawk Helicopters and Homeland Security, but they have not completely ruled out the water access. He said we will still pursue.

In response to a question by Mrs. Geiger, Mr. Morris said that the biggest problem he has outside of dealing with the reverter clause is that if he builds something he is building in the navigable water way because as soon as you get 50 feet from shore, you are back in the mud again. The channels in Clearwater are shallow. He passed around a chart for those to examine that showed shallow vs. deep water. He said there is not a lot of navigable water. He also had a couple of aeriels.

Mr. Morris said there are a couple of good possibilities with expanding Seminole, but he would like to get the smaller boats to other sites which means he is looking at developing a couple of sites and spreading them out. He said that the Park and Rec Department is participating in a program called "Blue Trails" where you have canoes and kayak launch sites. It is not necessary to invest large sums of money to have such sites that people can use and not tie up parking spaces like the Seminole launch.

At this point, Commissioner Latvala said that they would now have to get to work and proceeded on to the next agenda item.

- Policy Issues for Consideration by the Board

Commissioner Latvala said that she would be giving a brief description and suggested that the Task Force then vote on the issues. That would mean that the issue would move forward. These would result in recommendations that might be taken to the BCC and/or City Councils throughout the County. Whatever the Task Force brings forward needs to be shared and brought forward to the cities.

1. "No Net Loss" Policy

Commissioner Latvala referred to the attachment in the agenda materials regarding this issue. She noted that some counties have adopted a "No Net Loss" Comprehensive Plan Amendment limited to existing marinas and boatyards.

Mr. Davis said that for this you have to start with a Comp Plan Amendment, which will typically develop into an Ordinance. Basically it says that when you convert land that is used for residential

use that you have to redesignate another site so there is essentially a "no net loss." Mr. Davis mentioned that Martin County has adopted a "no net loss" comprehensive plan amendment, but it is not yet an Ordinance.

Capt. Metko noted that it was his understanding that several counties were looking at no net loss programs. Miami-Dade and Broward have been discussing this and actually there is no down side to "no net loss". What it will do is slow waterfront residential growth, probably not as much as we would like to see, but some. If you lose a boat slip to a condominium, they have to find somewhere to put another boat slip. The thing is if you can't find the land to replace that boat slip, you cannot remove that boat slip if an Ordinance is in place. That means that the marina is not going to be removed in favor of a condominium.

Bill Morris said that out on Clearwater Beach when a moratorium was suggested, everybody was looking at the skyrocketing values of their property and if you go to a no net less and all of a sudden someone is looking at his next door neighbor got to sell his for \$1 million plus and now his property is maybe a quarter of that it is bad because of no net loss. There are property rights issues.

Steve Spratt said Municipalities have the authority to adopt amendments to their comp plans. You may be able to sweeten it a little bit with density bonuses or with zoning or land use accommodations in order to maintain a no net less. It depends on how firm and rigid it is if there will be resistance to it.

Commissioner Latvala suggested that there be additional research on this issue. She does know that there are other counties that are looking at this. We should see what else is being one.

Will Davis said that the State of Connecticut does not have a "no net loss" policy but one of the things they require is that when condos are developed they have to offer public access to the facility. He showed a slide which showed the difference between the 1996 and 2005 numbers of slips. There is a net loss of approximately 1,300 slips.

Commissioner Latvala suggested that no vote be taken on the no net loss issue but to get additional information.

Commissioner Latvala noted that the next item would be a Tax Deferral Program

2. Tax Deferral Program

Commissioner Latvala said that there was a sheet in the agenda materials regarding House Bill 955 in this regard. She noted that the Legislature recognized that something needs to be done. She said she very much in support of this one. She said with land values increasing every year, it could get to the point where no one but the very wealthy will be able to use a boat ramp and have access.

A Motion was made and seconded to add the Tax Deferral Program/HB955 to the Priority List. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Differential Fees – resident vs. non-resident.

Commissioner Latvala noted that Pinellas County does not differentiate; some cities do.

Denis Frain noted that Gulfport has a \$25 resident permit for one year. It is \$100 for a non-resident. They also provide a 20% discount for Gulfport residents.

Ms. Bauer from Safety Harbor inquired how in reality that is enforced. It was noted that Gulfport uses stickers and it was also indicated that they have someone on site.

Ms. Bauer said that was a real concern in Safety Harbor. Let's say we change residents and non-residents, the enforcement becomes a real issue because they are not on site.

Capt. Metko said that the City of Tarpon Springs has two ramps and they use stickers and also Dunedin does that as well.

Commissioner Latvala said that this was very controversial and there was no vote on this issue.

3. Water Access Impact Fees

Will Davis explained that this would mean when a waterfront use/marina is eliminated by a conversion to another use, the developer must either 1) pay into a fund for waterfront acquisition or 2) restore a certain number of their slips for public use (like an impact fee).

Doug Speeler recommended that a survey be done to determine what is left. As he said in previous meetings, we are about two years too late. He said that he did not think there was a decent marina in the county that there isn't a contract, and probably a backup as well. He further noted that he and Commissioner Welch attended a meeting in Belleair Beach (Joint Legislative Committee) two weeks prior looking at this very thing. Some of the issues applicable to Martin and other counties are not applicable here because we have no space.

Bill Stokes said that it seems like this would be one of the avenues could use.

Doug Speeler thinks user fees are applicable, but you have to have a facility to charge a fee.

Capt. Metko – said that there have been some issues being talked about currently regarding the registration fees paid by boaters in the State of Florida and that a considerable amount of that money is being funneled out and not 100% of those fees are going back into boating. We believe this has been going on for quite a while now. We have asked the state repeatedly to give us documentation on where the money is going, basically an audit of the system, and it has not yet been received. That was when the Office of Boating and Waterways was created last year, which was supposed to fix that problem, and so far it has not. Still waiting to hear how the money is being spent – it is supposed to be going back into boating. The County should be able to get that money back into their waterfront needs and it is not.

Steve Spratt said we are getting disbursements but the question is are we getting all of what we should be getting.

Capt. Metko said Pinellas County has the second largest boat population in the state, so are we getting our fair share?

Mr. Davis said that there would be a report on this at the next meeting.

Commissioner Latvala ended by saying that there would be more information on this at the next

meeting.

4. Zoning and Land Use Ideas were covered by Will Davis as follows:

- . Strengthen the Comp Plan by adding specific policy language to protect (not just give priority to) water-dependent uses: stronger policies would enable the local government to require stronger justification for removing a water-dependent use.

Mr. John Landon – said something about two marinas that want to expand but they don't because they are afraid of going through the DRI process. One way they can be exempt from that is for Pinellas County to change their comp plan to get an exemption approved by DCA. Something needs to be done to beef that up some how.

- . Working Waterfront Overlay – local government could apply this land use/zoning to restrict the use on a property to a water-dependent use.

Commissioner Latvala said that Tarpon Springs has asked us to be working on that. She asked if Mr. Beardslee, Pinellas County Planning Department, was involved with that. Mr. Beardslee indicated that he had not had contact with the City of Tarpon Springs as of yet.

Capt. Metko asked if County personnel had had enough time to go over the implications of HB 955 and 989 yet? Steve Spratt noted that Mr. Stowers would speak to that next time.

Capt. Metko said that between the last meeting and now, House Bill 759 was signed by the Governor. He noted that will streamline the permitting process and will also be a big help

5. Letters of Interest to Marina Owners – Commissioner Latvala said this idea would be for the County to send out letters of interest to marina owners encouraging them to contact the County if they are thinking of selling, which would give the County the first shot a buying.

Someone said that they felt the County will be competing with the developers and it would be very expensive to buy the land.

Commissioner Latvala said that the County has in the past paid some pretty exorbitant prices for land. She mentioned the McMullen Property for \$24 million.

Mr. Davis said that it would be a way to encourage property owners to think about marinas.

Capt. Metko said some of the restaurants that just have docks are filled to capacity every day of the week.

Commissioner Latvala – send letters to waterfront property owners – some may want to keep marinas in business.

Bill Stokes agreed the County will have to step up and acquire properties.

Steve Spratt said we could target waterfront properties and send letters on inquiry. He will come back with ideas.

6. Buy Future Development Rights

Commissioner Latvala noted that Palm Beach County recently passed (11/04) a \$50 million referendum. They do not yet have a plan in place as to how to use the funds. She said we know strongly the committee feels about this.

Steve Spratt said that we have to be careful of taking support away from other major issues such as the Penny 3.

Commissioner Latvala said possibly a portion of the Penny funds could go the purchase of future development rights.

A vote was taken for Support of Purchase of Future Development Rights which passed unanimously.

7. Funding Considerations

Grants - Commissioner Latvala said that these are easy enough to explore and some of the cities are taking advantage of them.

Impact Fees – Commissioner Latvala said that this was previously discussed a little bit. It would have to be part of the Ordinance and could not be done overnight. Charlotte County is still investigating, but it could possibly be too late for Pinellas County

Mr. Nicholson mentioned user fees and Steve Spratt said again they need to be tied to a beneficial service. It would be another tool in the tool box.

Mrs. Geiger noted that federal funds are available through the Wallop-Breaux Act.

Commissioner Latvala mentioned the Penny for Pinellas.

Andy Nicholson – said he thinks we are already late with this concept. The money would not be available until 2010.

Steve Spratt said if the Penny is approved, they could issue tax anticipation notes against future proceeds. He explained that the vote is taken about three years before the tax revenue kicks in.

Capt. Metko commented on some of the grants noted in the information provided. He asked where they need to be sent. He could send all kinds of information.

Someone asked about the spelling of the previously mentioned Act. Capt. Metko provided the correct name and spelling – Wallop-Breaux Act. Mrs. Geiger added that it was the Fish Restoration Act.

Commissioner Latvala asked if it was acceptable to retain the Funding Considerations discussed to remain on the table? It was acceptable to the members of the Task Force.

- The next agenda item on the list was to consider an Intergovernmental Advisory Committee

Commissioner Latvala said that they have gotten some of the cities involved, and if there was consensus she would invite everyone – all waterfront communities, to be part of it .

- What are the Priorities – Feedback from the Task Force

Commissioner Latvala said that they would consider both short and long term priorities.

Bill Stokes, Sierra Club said that he has been a boater for over 1/2 century and proceeded to read a letter he wrote to the BCC. The letter addressed concerns that have surfaced in the last two meetings that he wants to bring to your attention. The loss of accessible waterfront by the public is accelerating. He noted in his letter that other Florida Counties have and are addressing this by zoning existing land as multiple family redevelopment and/or by purchasing private waterfront to preserve the commercial facilities for public boater access. The current rapid loss of facilities due to redevelopment is staggering. Even by instituting an immediate no net loss of boat slips, we will be behind the curve. In short, creative alternatives must be implemented in lieu of this already being developed or yet to be developed sensitive green shoreline. His letter went on to say that the single focus of the marine industry is more water access. Any approval needs to be subject to close scrutiny from a conservation and scientific viewpoint. Any decision affecting parklands or yet to be developed public lands should have public hearings coupled with environmental impact studies. If boaters are taken as a percentage of total users of county lands, however, non-boaters would overshadow them. This should be kept in mind when any decision is made that would impact parklands or undeveloped natural areas that can be utilized for passive public recreation vs. development for active motorized use. It is imperative that the county partner with municipalities to prevent this loss of commercial waterfront. Pinellas County is behind - not ahead of - the curve, as indicated by other counties' proactive acquisition, and zoning to protect commercial waterfront entities such as marinas, launches and storage facilities. In closing, Mr. Stokes would caution against any decision made solely on boaters input. The entire populace, whether boater or not, are stakeholders in these decisions and all have equal standing to formulate coastal management decisions on public land.

Citizens in the audience applauded this letter.

Commissioner Latvala commented on the letter noting that with any recommendations there is a whole lot of work to be done. There will be opportunities for public input.

Doug Speeler responded to Mr. Stokes by saying, as a contractor and marine worker in this County for over 35 years he has been involved in probably 80% of the major projects. To the best of his knowledge, he doesn't believe there is an active application for a marina in Pinellas County. He said he has some reports from the County that were run in 2000 saying the industry is worth \$14 billion - it actually exceeds \$17 billion. The impact on this County goes far beyond the boaters and the people that are represented at this table. The marine industry is huge. It is surpassed only by the Florida citrus industry and tourism in this state. We are number 3. Agriculture is number 1. We cannot afford to sit idly by and watch this industry get away from us. He believes we need to give on both sides. It is going to need some invasion of the environment, not a lot, but some. The environmental issues are going to have to be somewhat compromised. Zoning issues, comprehensive land use plans - they are all going to have to be modified and compromised to meet this critical demand. I do not think that anyone in this room, unless you are in the marine business like Mrs. Geiger, knows what is really going on now. We have boat-manufacturing plants that have closed. We have people being laid off. What will it do to this County without this economy and without it thriving like it has been. No one has touched on what tourism does for this County. We have already hurt tourism by closing down the mom and pop and small motels and hotels. We are talking about doing away with boating for tourism. This cannot happen and if it does happen I ask you Bill and the environmental groups who is going to pick up the slack? Who is going to pick up the taxes? You will have your pristine environment, but there won't be anything else. We are talking about Penny for Pinellas and infrastructure and all those nice things, but it takes big bucks to run this and we are not going to have it. Mr. Speeler said that this was

his opinion - I am sick to death of abusive and inflammatory accusations against boat owners and the marine industry made by people whose only goal is to tell everyone else what to do. He said a letter that morning in the St. Pete Times was accusing the Task Force of raiding public land. There are no paid lobbyists at this table. All of us work and I don't think anyone is being paid for being here. I tired of the allegations that keep coming from the same people. He said he is normally not like this, but he is really fed up. Tired of people pretending to protect the environment and all they are really doing is trying to reserve public waters for their personal use, by keeping us off the water. These people who want to turn this task force into a stage for their rhetoric, and that is what a lot of this is, it would be a tragedy if we accommodated them. I think we need to start off on a new track tonight and get some new ideas from both the environmental side and our side and see if we can make this work. I don't want to see out beautiful environment go back to the way it was in the 1970s - I was here when Boca Ciega and Tampa Bays were declared dead. We brought this County back and our County waters are a beautiful statement. Pinellas County is the most densely populated waterfront community in the state and yet we have the finest waterfront. We need to get this marina thing off the dime and get it moving now or it will be too late. I feel it is already too late. We cannot start off this rhetoric and I am sorry I am not referring exactly to your letter Bill, but more to the person who wrote the letter to the paper. We can't start off like that and expect to accomplish anything. Thank you for listening.

Bill Stokes said he does agree with Doug on one thing in particular you said - the zoning situation, and concern over rezoning for multi-family development for waterfront property.

Commissioner Latvala replied that most of the rezonings are in cities and the County has no control.

Bill Stokes closed by adding that (to Mr. Speeler), we have more common ground here than we do anything else. We want similar things and can work together.

Capt. Metko said we have to look at a few things here real quick. Things that are going to mitigate the overcrowding we have right now for boat ramps and marinas and we have to do whatever we can do to get the permitting faster and get it done. That is a priority.

He also suggested that Improvements at existing facilities would be the simple approach. This could possibly help as much as expansion could. Also, boater education.

Someone added that I think we could double the capacity of some of our ramps by looking into some of the things that Bill in Clearwater mentioned.

Bill Stokes agreed with Capt. Doug that there are many people buying boats and have no education. They do not know how to trailer a boat.

Capt. Metko also suggested having staging docks - those types of things, having the area set up better for the boats that are getting ready to in the water or have just come out of the water, and get them out of the way quickly. These are simple things at ramps that can make them work better. At existing marinas the same thing. He also said that once you become a "Clean Marina" there is a tremendous amount of grant money available to them for that reason.

Bill Morris said if you want to look at a unique opportunity, look at what we are doing at Seminole ramp. But at the same time, he runs a business. He pays one quarter of a million dollars back to the City for the privilege of working for the City. He does not have enough money left at the end of the year to reinvest in his own business let alone rebuild it. That is why he has to be in the grant business because he is broke every year. If he does not carry it into a CIP down the road, it is grabbed to do something else in the city. That is just the way it has always been.

Denis Frain said Gulfport had the same problem but recently that has changed. We are putting money back into it.

Doug Speeler added that publicly-owned marinas can be profitable.

Commissioner Latvala noted that could become a policy issue that we could direct.

Someone said – address the code itself. Some marinas could go up for sale – work to offer tax deferral.

Commissioner Latvala – said it takes a few months to get that done.

Latvala also said, regarding Stauffer, we are in dialogue with them; on Honeymoon Island – there are potential environmental issues and this would not happen very quickly. Clearwater looks like they are moving ahead.

Doug Speeler said Hurricane Hole is being looked at .

Someone added we need to streamline permitting for county marinas. Commissioner Latvala asked how bad is it? Mr. Spratt mentioned the ombudsman approach they were looking at. But said you still have to make sure the quality of the permit is ok and also have an expediter. Said that the BCC would discuss expediting permitting.

Frank Dame asked about water impact fees.

Mr. Spratt said he does not know how that would work, but he does know that under Florida law impact fees have to pass a rational nexus test. If you have an ordinance that grants developers certain flexibility if you do certain things. You could do those kind of things faster instead of an impact fee.

Bill Morris said one of the things you have to watch with that - there are people in Clearwater that actually own 300 feet of the bottomland of Mandalay Channel. We wanted to run utility lines, but had to face some pretty exorbitant fees to the landowners to run a power line under their property. It kept them from putting docks in to the future. You have to start looking at who owns the bottomland. There are condo projects in the works and one of the reasons they do not have docks attached is sometimes the dock issue holds up getting the permit on the condo project, so they permit the condo and then come back in to permit the dock after they get the condo built, and then you get into who really owns the bottom land. You really have to be careful when you try to tell somebody they have to make 20% of those public and they actually own the bottomland – you really cannot tell them to do that.

Commissioner Latvala asked what were the priorities?

A “No Net Loss” Policy was mentioned. Steve Spratt said this could involve legislation at the city and county levels.

Someone asked, if marinas are leasing bottomland from the state, how can you enforce “no net Loss” if they choose to stop the lease? Steve Spratt replied it was a complicated process and we do not have all the answers.

Mrs. Geiger said staging areas for boat ramps would be beneficial, and Will Wilkins said they need “traffic cops.”

Capt. Metko said that expanding the hours of operation of some of these places will help. He can speak for quite a few of the professionals out there who do not want to participate with the 8:00 a.m. crowd and they fish at night. This could spread out the use.

Tim Nachman asked about the old Sunshine Skyway Bridge? Bill Stokes said it has been looked into and FDOT was asked and they said no.

Doug Speeler said things FDOT has turned down in the past, they have become more feasible lately because of legislation.

Bill Stokes said some of the multi-family developments are huge with many slips. Would there be a possibility to partner for partial use or purchase by municipality?

Karen Bauer, Safety Harbor, said they looked at that with a developer but there didn't seem to be any interest.

Bill Morris noted that off-site parking would help to better manage sites. They are looking at parcels of land in Clearwater that could handle off site storage, Jack Russell Stadium and Stevenson's Creek. There is a lot of parking there, but it would displace the shuffleboard courts. There is a lot more to it than the outside storage. It is a good option.

Capt. Metko said Bill Morris was talking about spreading out the use and putting smaller vessels into locations to the deep-water ramps. He said to Bill Sergeant with FWC, I have seen your studies which support the spreading out of the boating community. Some studies showed that boaters tend to travel to the ramp that is closest to the area they want to recreate in. This is kind of aimed at some of the people that think we do not want any more boat ramps. What this does is eliminate long travel over the grass flats and cut their travel time down drastically. The more boat ramps we have, the better off you are.

Commissioner Latvala addressed the date of the next meeting
It was decided that it would be July 28 at 5 p.m. at the same location.

Doug Speeler reminded the task force that it was important to get the municipalities to attend the next meeting.

Someone said that the website is good.

Norman Bie, a resident of Indian Rocks Beach spoke. He proposed the addition to the agenda of the acquisition of 100 acres of 100 year old oak trees to preserve them, adjacent to Betty Lane in north Clearwater and all of the property from Betty Lane to the Harbor, all of the property in the Myrtle Avenue area continuing on south below the city ownership so that entire area could be turned into Clearwater Harbor. More directly it could be a state park in between Clearwater and Dunedin and it could be equal to Ft. Desoto Park. Money could be obtained. Would have to take out of the bridge. Federal and state funds could turn that into a major, beautiful park.

Bill Morris replied that Stevenson's Creek is on their list.

Paul Robinson suggested multi-level parking in Clearwater.

Bill Morris said that because he has a grant to look at that site, he could possibly have them look at that

as one of the alternatives for that location. Bear in mind they are looking at a high and dry at that site and assembling the properties the City has there. One of the things we talked about was a parking garage, not necessarily at that location. With the ramps and boat trailers and everything else, if you think that watching guys launch boats is interesting, if they are driving up a parking garage with a boat or trailer behind them, backing in and out of those spots! The average parking garage spaces are between \$10,000 and \$15,000 – double that if you were to put a trailer behind a car, it is not very economically feasible. An off-site storage would be a heck of a lot cheaper when the land is cheaper, than building a \$40,000 parking spot used only Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Charles Henry, with Suncoast Mobile Marine Canvas, said that he works up and down the County waterfront. In the last few weeks he talked to a couple of marina owners. They have had permits filed for more docks for many years. Could we get a list together of people who have already been trying to get more docks and are being tied up? Commissioner Latvala said that was discussed – it is on the list.

Michael Whelan, City of St. Pete Beach, said there are two things he wanted to share. They will be closing one of their marinas for repairs and improvements next year. Also in the CIP in the next two years they will be developing launch sites for kayaks and canoes. He further noted that these are very important issues to St. Pete Beach.

Ray Thorn, Palm Harbor, wanted to make a quick note about Wall Springs Park. It is off the list now but wanted to reiterate that it was not just the sea grass issue but it is a very narrow channel.

Jackie Nigro(sp?) said that she feels a sense of urgency to do something on the legal, ordinance side and zoning side for water front properties. She mentioned for those properties that are being newly erected, for example on Edgewater Drive, they have two condos going in and they cost over \$1 million each. If permission is granted they will put in a dockside marina, with, I think, 16 boat slips. If that is the case, couldn't you impose a requirement for a percentage for public use? She said she shared the task forces' urgency.

Richard Selby suggested that there be a marine biologist on the Committee – it was noted that Bill Sergeant is one. He also asked about an environmental impact study on Honeymoon Island. Commissioner Latvala said that Pinellas County and a consultant would be doing that.

Someone asked about the website – www.pinellascounty.org (scroll down to, and click on, *boating access task force*)

Commissioner Latvala thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:30 p.m.