

BOATING ACCESS TASK FORCE
SEPTEMBER 14, 2005
5:00 P.M.

Members Present:

Susan Latvala	Board of County Commissioners
Jake Stowers	Assistant County Administrator
Bill Stokes	Sierra Club, Alliance for Livable Pinellas
Frank Dame	Florida Boaters Guide
Judy Geiger	Central Marine
Doug Speeler	Speeler Enterprises
Bruce Stott	Interested Boater
Kara Bauer	City of Safety Harbor
Heidi Lovett	Marine Research Advisory Group
Denis Frain	City of Gulfport
Mike Whelan	St. Pete Beach
Capt. Dave Marsicano	Madeira Beach
John Doglione	City of Dunedin
Lynn Rives	City of Oldsmar
Reid Silverboard	Belleair Beach
Rodney Chapman	City of Tarpon Springs
Bill Morris	Harbor Master – City of Clearwater
Will Davis	Pinellas County Department of Environmental Management
Jim Reid	Homeport Marina
John Landon	Landon Moure & Associates

Members Absent:

Jay Powers	Navron Corp.
David Dunbar	People's Bank
Cathy Hayduke	City of Treasure Island
Capt. Doug Metko	Florida Guides Association
Mark La-Prade	Thunder Marine
Capt. Dave Markett	Florida Guides Association
Will Wilkins	Clearwater Real Estate Group
Tim Nachman	Commercial Fisherman
Walter Miller	City of St. Petersburg
Steve Hickok	Yacht Services
Bill Sargent	Florida Fish and Wildlife

County staff present:

Jewel Cole	Pinellas County Attorney
Gene Quinn	Pinellas County Department of Environmental Management
Nicole Elko	Pinellas County Department of Environmental Management
Eric Fehrmann	Pinellas County Department of Environmental Management
Liz Freeman	Pinellas County Planning Department
Chelsea Ross	Pinellas County Planning Department
Lyle Fowler	Pinellas County Cultural Education and Leisure Department
Carolyn Kuntz	Pinellas County Planning Department/Recorder

- **Introductions and Re-Cap**

Commissioner Susan Latvala called the meeting to order at 5:11 p.m. and stated that staff would move forward with the recommendations from the last meeting and bring them before the Board of County Commissioners. She welcomed Mayor John Doglione of Dunedin and Rodney Chapman of Tarpon Springs to the Task Force.

- **Boater Etiquette and Education Update**

Lyle Fowler, Pinellas County Cultural Education and Leisure Department, indicated they have been in contact with Palm Beach County and obtained a sample of the signage they use for boater etiquette. He handed a copy to the members. He requested comments be sent to staff and they would compile the information. The County's intent is to use something similar to this, and his Department has included funding in their budget for educational material. The subject of boater etiquette has also been discussed with the Coast Guard Auxiliary and they have agreed to include it in their boater safety courses. In addition, the Coast Guard Auxiliary will distribute this information to the various flotillas in Pinellas County. The Tampa Bay Estuary Program is also willing to assist in getting information on boater etiquette to their users. The intent is to increase the efficiency of the existing boat ramps and reduce rage. Mr. Dame, who is a member of the Clearwater Power Squadron said they have incorporated the boater etiquette brochure into their "Boat Smart Course," which is the same safety course the Coast Guard Auxiliary uses.

Mr. Speeler asked if anything had been done about facilitating movement at the boat ramps for better traffic flow. Mr. Fowler responded this is being considered; staff is currently checking on the design and permitting of courtesy docks, especially for Ft. DeSoto, War Veterans, Anderson, and Chesnut Parks. Staff is also looking at Park Boulevard where a "pseudo" courtesy dock is currently located to see if it could be expanded.

Mr. Morris stated that Clearwater is in the process of designing a courtesy dock at the Seminole Boat Ramp, however, he noted there still is a problem with parking.

Upon query by Mr. Nicholson, Mr. Fowler responded staff could provide a sample of what they come up with to the municipalities for their use and noted that a spin off from the Task Force would be the formation of an Intergovernmental Task Force. Mr. Nicholson suggested buying the signs from the same supplier to help reduce the cost and for consistency. Mr. Stowers responded the County has their own sign shop and would probably make the signs and could sell the signs to the municipalities for cost.

- **Staff Updates on the Following Locations:**

Mr. Fehrmann with the Environmental Management Department provided a brief status of the following sites currently under consideration:

- ❖ *War Veteran's County Park* – The area is under design for expansion of parking; staff is looking at the feasibility of the upland area for additional parking and the potential of additional boat ramps; the site should not have a permitting problem; and it was noted this is County-owned land.
- ❖ *Belleair County Boat Ramp* – Staff is looking at the possibility of expanded parking (possibly 50-60 additional slots); there have been discussions with the nearby condo association; Staff is evaluating the need to expand the seawall; there would be mitigation and environmental issues; would need to go through the permitting process; the County owns the right-of-way;

improvements would begin only after the new bridge is opened to traffic; the redesign of the parking lot at the Belleair Causeway would only add two parking spaces due to the retention required.

- ❖ *Travatine Island (County Property)* – located off Park Boulevard; it is a 100 percent spoil site; exotic species are on the upland area; there would be access and traffic issues; provides access to deep water; opportunities for boat ramps, high and dry, etc.; potential for site restoration along with the site development.
- ❖ *Turtle Club/Airport Lease Property* – large basin; average 6 – 7 feet deep during low tide; vacant property; no seagrass or oyster beds; minimal environmental impacts/issues; the site is located on Airport property and they are interested; and it would be an easy site to permit. Upon query regarding the Black Hawk Helicopters, Mr. Fehrmann responded it is apparently not a high security area and the site has public access.
- ❖ *Hurricane Hole* – located opposite of Bay Pines Hospital; St. Petersburg College owns the property; a lot of issues and opportunities; mitigation would be required; probability of enhancing the water quality by putting in culverts to help with flushing; potential for parking, boat ramp, high and dry; will have to work with the school, permitting issues; site is more complex than others but doable; and has the potential for wet slips. It was noted that a number of boats already use the area, including some boats that are moored in the area. Commissioner Latvala noted that she and Mr. Stowers met with Karl Kuttler (St. Petersburg College President), who is very supportive of this use. Walking trails could probably be provided for the general public. It was noted that the St. Petersburg College owns the submerged lands. It was felt dredging would not be a problem.

Mr. Stowers provided a status on the following sites:

- ❖ *Honeymoon Island (State Park)* – the arrangement with the State is that the County would perform an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); continue to work with the State agency and consultants.
- ❖ *Stauffer Superfund Site* – located on the Anclote River; superfund site; process of finalizing the remediation plan, which is to encapsulate the pollutants; there are certain restrictions placed on the property for future use, which includes ensuring the seals would not be broken; ongoing discussions; concept plans; remediation plan is due first of the year; EPA and the company are supportive of a public use for the site.

Upon a query from a citizen regarding the status of Pop Stansel Park in Palm Harbor, Mr. Stowers responded the property is not being considered at this time.

Mayor Doglione noted Dunedin approved a resolution stating their concerns with the potential increase in traffic and the environmental issues regarding the Honeymoon Island site. Mr. Stowers responded a traffic analysis is part of the review process for each site. Commissioner Latvala added that traffic impacts make a site less desirable but that the County is pursuing all options and will continue with the environmental study so the County has a definitive answer as to the feasibility of the site.

- **Municipal Update (City of Clearwater and City of Madeira Beach)**

Mr. Morris, Clearwater, noted that several tenants of the Cove Cay Apartments have called to complain about boats that have been displaced from marina closings – he said the boaters are essentially starting their own mooring field between U.S. 19/Allen's Creek/Cove Cay Apartments and

the Bayside Bridge. Clearwater has an Anchoring Ordinance but it doesn't apply to this situation and the State doesn't have such an ordinance. He met with one of the boat owners, who refused to move his boat. Mr. Morris asked for a review by Clearwater's legal department and their opinion is that the State Ordinance is broad enough to allow the municipality to enforce its Ordinance if the municipality broadened its Anchoring Ordinance to be more flexible. The City of Clearwater has a 72-hour ordinance, which was challenged at the County level in court. The ordinance was upheld, however, the Judge felt that the 72-hour requirement was too strict. Clearwater's legal staff's research found Miami had a similar issue and changed their ordinance from 72 hours to 7 days and the State is now looking at Miami's ordinance as a model for anchoring. Miami's ordinance gives all the definitions of boats in navigation and not in navigation. He brought copies to share with the staff. Clearwater is looking at rewriting their ordinance so it is more defensible. Currently, Clearwater places a sticker on boats that are anchored where they don't belong and have been there more than three days to let them know they are in violation. In most instances, the boat owner will move their boat. If the boat is abandoned, Clearwater has a procedure to get rid of the boat. The problem with the Cove Cay issue is that the boat is anchored on state-owned bottomlands and, technically, the City ordinance doesn't apply even though the boat's anchor is in City waters because their anchor is on State bottomlands. The State ordinance doesn't specifically prohibit anchoring and only prohibits damaging the environment or restricting other people's use of the waterway. More boats are anchoring in the area, tying their dinghies to the mangroves, and creating a mooring field. Mr. Morris will give the information to the County staff so there can be consistency with the development of an anchoring ordinance that addresses this problem.

Mr. Morris continued, noting he met with the Marine Advisory Board this morning. They are looking at a feasibility study to expand the existing municipal marina. The consultant has developed a configuration to add up to 40 slips; however, in order to accomplish this, the location of the commercial boats would have to be shifted. This has created some concern from the commercial boat owners. The plan is to upgrade the marina, with floating cement docks and additional slips, in addition to enhancing its appearance as an upscale marina. There is an issue with the current from the Mandalay Channel, which the consultant is including in their study. The City would also like to have a referendum approved for a downtown marina. The feasibility study is due to go before the City Council November 14. They will also be looking at the feasibility of constructing a high and dry facility in Clearwater. In the interim, they are looking at the possibility of constructing a courtesy dock, which would cost under \$10,000 in materials. The City crew could build the dock but they would need to get a permit first; however, there still would be a parking problem.

Captain Marsicano, Madeira Beach, indicated they currently have 50 wet slips and are expanding to 80, constructing a 100-boat high and dry facility, and are moving the public boat ramp but will continue to maintain it. The City is interested in talking with the County regarding the mooring field to the south between the back of Madeira Beach and their property. The City has a phased plan, with the first phase being the ship store. The second phase is the construction of a high and dry facility where the Public Works facility is currently located, with the construction of the new Public Works facility surrounding the high and dry facility on the north and east sides. He had copies of the site plan for those interested. Upon query, Capt. Marsicano pointed out the location of the brownfields, noting that the City is interested in that property to allow for more boat ramp parking. Capt. Marsicano then noted the location of the future high and dry facility, indicating the City is moving forward quickly.

- **Discussion of Mooring Fields and a Mooring Ordinance**

Nicole Elko, Pinellas County Department of Environmental Management, indicated that, as wet slips are decreasing, the probability of more boats on the water with no place to go would increase. Staff was directed to research the possibility of mooring fields. Mooring fields are becoming more popular around the State of Florida. The permitting implications are broad since this is a new idea in Florida, with Florida still trying to figure out the process. If the mooring field is developed on State submerged lands, the State permitting is comprehensive and nothing else would be required; however, if it is not on State submerged lands, there might be issues that need to be dealt with. Ms. Elko met with the County's Water and Navigation Authority to discuss potential regulations to allow mooring fields in Pinellas County. It was determined that the existing regulations would probably cover mooring fields since the permitting is similar to a marina. It was determined that mooring fields are a feasible option, in addition to the other options under discussion.

Ms. Elko then discussed a Mooring Ordinance, which would prohibit anchoring in the unincorporated waters of Pinellas County. The Florida Statutes prohibit local municipalities from regulating the anchoring of non live-aboard vessels. She has discussed this with other areas trying to enact this type of ordinance, and apparently it is difficult to uphold if taken to court. Miami's ordinance is considered a model; however, the officials have to prove on a case-by-case basis that it is a live-aboard vessel to be able to regulate the mooring. Currently, Pinellas County does not have an anchoring ordinance for the unincorporated waters but staff recognizes that it could be a problem and are prepared to take an ordinance to the Board of County Commissioners for action if necessary.

A citizen encouraged staff to check into the certified Federal Registry because the problem with controlling these issues has to do with the right of navigation.

Mr. Nicholson gave an update regarding Miami, noting he was performing the engineering and permitting for one of the marinas in Miami for a mooring field. There was a general notice from Key West indicating the design of mooring fields should include a one-foot clearance minimum for vessels so there is zero impact on the seagrasses with a properly engineered anchor. He noted there are three groups of boats in the Miami-Dade area: the vagabond fleet; Dinner Key Marina, and Coconut Yacht Club. The DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) issued notice to issue a permit last April and one tenant of the Coconut Yacht Club wrote a letter of objection, which placed the permit on hold. When Hurricane Katrina hit the area, 25 boats of the vagabond fleet sank with 2 fatalities and 4 people missing. If this had been properly permitted and the anchors properly engineered, the boats would have withstood the storm. He has been in contact with DEP that the permitting needs to move forward. Ms. Elko responded there is not just one correct approach and staff will continue to look at this.

Ms. Lovett questioned if there were requirements of pump-outs for mooring fields. Ms. Elko noted there was a problem in Key West regarding sewage-related issues and that there would be an impact to seagrasses unless the boats are using pump-outs. She had not heard that there is a requirement to use special anchors. Mr. Nicholson responded that technology has changed significantly, noting that the chain and anchor are disastrous to seagrasses, and that they use a screw anchor that is drilled into the ground and holds at least 22,000 pounds and, therefore, has little impact on the grass beds. The City is installing these at their cost and requiring boats to use these anchors when they tie up. Mr. Stowers added there must be the ability to properly manage a mooring field, which is why they are looking at mooring fields that have upland support such as pump-outs and looking at a mooring ordinance.

Mr. Morris noted that the State has a grant program that municipalities can apply for a pump-out boat to service a mooring field.

Upon further query by Ms. Lovett, Mr. Stowers responded that, through the County's Water and Navigation Authority, the County would create a process for permitting mooring fields. Ms. Lovett added that it should be a more comprehensive process instead of individually since there could be broader, long-term impacts.

- **Update – Letters of Interest to Marina Owners and Status of Presenting Funding Options to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC)**

Commissioner Latvala stated a letter was sent to all the marinas in Pinellas County and the responses have been varied and overwhelming.

Mr. Stowers stated the letter was sent approximately six weeks ago and he has received numerous phone calls on various subjects, all the way from “the County should not be regulating marinas,” to marinas who are ready to sell. He has received interest countywide and that the locations of prospective sites would be important when it comes to making decisions. The County has received requests to purchase marinas and request to partner with a marina. The BCC is in the process of developing a countywide strategic vision, with the visioning session yesterday on recreation, open space, and environmental issues, which included boating and beach access. In discussions with the BCC, it appears County might be in a good position to purchase some marinas; however, the County does not want to operate the marina. The BCC feels it's important to move forward with the various funding options; however, they want to ensure the facility would either break even or make a profit.

Commissioner Latvala noted the BCC was asked to vote on two questions:

- ❖ Should the County be proactive in securing the working waterfront?
 - 1 – yes
 - 5 – yes with qualifications
 - 1 – table for future consideration
- ❖ Should the County focus on obtaining boating access facilities?
 - 1 – yes
 - 5 – yes with qualifications
 - 1 – table for future consideration

The outcome of this vote shows the BCC is supportive of the Task Force's efforts and they would support opportunities put forth.

Mr. Stowers stated he let the BCC know that it could cost tens of millions dollars of County funds to move this type of venture forward. Currently, the County does not have funds for this type of venture; however, there are funds available for War Veterans and others. Upon the recommendation of the Task Force, staff will take to the BCC all types of financial opportunities to move forward with securing properties, either through complete ownership or a partnership, so there could not be future development that would result in the loss of public access. The County could continue being a business partner to those interested in a partnership, probably 50% or better. On the properties the County would purchase, the County has a process in place, where the County would place a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit the best business deal. The County has also had discussions with the municipalities to see if there are opportunities for expansion of their facilities. The intent is to take

these recommendations to the BCC, which will then have to make a decision on how to secure funding to be able to secure sites and keep them for water access for the long term. Mr. Stowers added the County is also trying to improve the permitting process and will be discussing taxes later on the agenda.

Some discussion followed regarding Dunedin's marina. Mr. Stowers noted that a public marina would not have to go through a DRI process. Upon query by a citizen regarding the expediting of the permitting process, Mr. Stowers responded the County would be working with DEP and the (Army) Corp on the issue of expediting the permitting process.

- **Policy Decisions to be Considered by the Board of County Commissioners – Update**

- ❖ *Moratorium*

Commissioner Latvala noted that it had been decided previously to not move forward with a moratorium.

- ❖ *Purchase Development Rights*

Mr. Stowers indicated the County might consider this as part of a management of a marina business. Instead of the County buying the marina, they could buy the future development rights so the marina would continue to operator but it could not be developed in the future. He noted there are still some questions that need answered but this is one tool that could be utilized.

- ❖ *Tax Deferral Ordinance*

Commissioner Latvala noted tax deferral was put in the legislation approved last year. This is where payment of the tax, with interest, could be deferred until the property is sold. Jewel Cole, Assistant County Attorney, noted bullet points regarding the pros and cons had been included in the members' packets. She noted this is not an exemption but a deferment of the taxes. Criteria are in place that the property must meet to be eligible for a tax deferral. The criteria includes all outstanding liens cannot be more than 70% of the value of the property, the taxes cannot be deferred to the point where the taxes combined with other liens constitute more than 85% of the value or the taxes over 85% would have to be paid, and interest accrues the entire time.

- ❖ *Tax Value Issue*

Ms. Cole noted this is an exemption similar to agricultural properties, which the County does not have the authority to do on its own. This would require an amendment to the State Statutes and possibly the Florida Constitution that deals with tax issues. She noted there are other issues going forward such as exemptions for affordable housing, etc., that the County is looking into. The other related issue is who would pay for the lost revenue to the local governments. This would result in exemptions being granted to some properties and the balance of the taxpayers would assume the tax liability.

Upon query by a citizen, Ms. Cole responded the State Statute requires a local ordinance to implement it. The County has the authority to implement the ordinance for the unincorporated area, but the municipalities have similar authority and, therefore, can choose to implement an ordinance. The process is, approval of an ordinance, inclusion of the State guidelines to comply with the Statutes, and then coordinate with the Tax Collector. Commissioner Latvala added that the unincorporated area would still have to pay the taxes if a municipality approved an ordinance unless the County also approved an ordinance.

Mr. Stowers stated the BCC will meet with the Legislative Delegation in October and asked if the Task Force recommendations should be discussed with the Legislature, such as tax relief for waterfront property, since these would require legislation.

Mr. Speeler asked why there isn't a blanket DRI exemption and why hasn't it been lobbied for. Mr. Stowers responded that he would address this later in the meeting.

Mr. Dame responded that this affects the entire State and not just Pinellas County. He felt the Legislature would be amenable to change and suggested that Pinellas County get with other counties and address the Legislature together.

Upon query by Ms. Lovett, Commissioner Latvala responded the legislation should be changed to allow for an overlay to keep the use as a marina. Property tax assessments for marinas keep increasing every year because it's assessed as the highest and best use, which in today's market is a high-rise condominium. Ms. Lovett stated this should be incorporated into the working waterfront. Commissioner Latvala agreed.

Mr. Stokes stated they should approach the Legislature.

Mr. Speeler asked Mirella James, of Pasadena Marina, if she would like to address the Task Force. Ms. James agreed the County should address the changes at whatever level is necessary, even if requires a Constitutional amendment. She agreed that a bluebelt designation for marinas was a good alternative in assisting marinas.

A citizen in the audience agreed the Legislature should be addressed. He represents Island Yacht Club, which is a 128-slip dockaminium. A vacant lot located just north of their north dock on Island Estates is tax assessed this year at \$825,000 and 200 yards to the north of the Yacht Club is a 45-unit high-rise condominium that is tax assessed at \$8.2 million. Island Yacht Club tax assessed value for 128 slips of submerged land is \$9.55 million. He stated the marinas need help with the tax assessment.

Paul Warren, Isla del Sol Yacht Club on Island Estates, stated this his is a waterfront facility and that he has been encouraged by the County's efforts. He received his tax assessment and it increased 102%. They have talked to the Property Appraiser's Office but they indicate the property is assessed at the highest and best use, which is a condominium. He noted this is, and has been, a family business and they wish to keep it as a family-owned marina.

❖ *No Net Loss Policy and Waterfront Overlay*

Mr. Stowers indicated that the County is in the process of redoing their Countywide Comprehensive Plan and will include language for the overall review of land uses, zoning, Land Development Regulations, etc., for a no net loss. This would only cover the unincorporated area where the County has control. The County has control on a countywide basis regarding water and navigation authority. This might include criteria that, when someone is asking for a zoning change, they would have to prove why the proposed use would be a better use than a marina.

Mr. Landon queried if that would be considered a Burt Harris action. Ms. Cole responded it could be. She explained that Burt Harris was an act passed by the Legislature in approximately 1995 to codify a takings law; whereby, if a local government passes an ordinance that affects the value of

someone's property, they could sue the local government and claim the difference between what could have been done on the land versus what the local government limited it to.

A citizen noted the number of marinas that are being converted to condominiums and that something needs to be done now.

Mayor Doglione suggested sending a copy of today's meeting tape to each State Legislator so they understand the urgency of this message. Commissioner Latvala noted that Representative Berfield was influential in the passage of the legislation regarding water access. She has had further discussions with Representative Berfield and she is willing to continue in this effort. In addition, there are others throughout the State who are also interested in continuing this effort.

Mr. Speeler noted for the record that the marina industry is worth \$15 billion and is only second to tourism and agricultural and that these issues are not just specific to Pinellas County but is a statewide problem.

Commissioner Latvala reiterated that the Task Force recommendations would be presented to the BCC and the Legislative Delegation, as necessary.

A citizen stated the Task Force should have strong conclusions that can be used in their hearings so they have back-up regarding the urgency.

Commissioner Latvala strongly recommended that each person contact their legislators and make each of their voices heard so they understand the urgency of the message, including a copy of their tax bill compared to last year as appropriate.

Mr. Nicholson indicated he would like a clear policy so that legislation could be adjusted to give the local governments more authority. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will meet on September 21 in St. Pete Beach for two days. There will be an opportunity at this meeting for citizens to make comments. It would be a good idea for someone to present a specific policy on this issue at that meeting.

Mr. Stokes suggested the County take the lead in this issue and meet with the municipalities regarding some of the proposed solutions. Commissioner Latvala stated that staff will be forming an Intergovernmental Advisory Committee, which will be made up of staffs from the County and municipalities. In addition, she will be meeting with the local elected officials regarding this issue.

- **Discussion of County Permitting Processes and Timelines**

Will Davis, Director of Pinellas County Department of Environmental Management, indicated they have countywide authority (Water and Navigation Authority) to issue permits, which is approximately 1,400 permits a year. The concern is the expediency of getting a permit issued through the multi layers of government, which include the Army Corp of Engineers, Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD, DEP, etc. The majority (98%) of the 1,400 permits are processed in 20 days, however, the problem are the ones that require a public hearing and that take 3 – 4 months. This is due to the Special Act that was approved in 1955, which indicates to construct a dock over 500 square feet or dredge more than 100 cubic yards, it must go before the BCC as a public hearing item. In addition, some permits must go through the city and/or state process. The process has already been streamlined so that only 2 – 3% of the permits are required to go to the BCC. The

Charter Review Commission has also looked at this issue and is looking at changing the Special Act or local ordinance to change the thresholds that are required to go before the BCC; however, this would not occur until next fall. Staff has also asked for a legislative change, which could occur this spring. In addition, staff is working on a delegation agreement with SWFWMD, EPA, and the Army Corp for a one-stop permitting process to help streamline the entire process.

Ms. Cole added that the Charter amendment will be a referendum next fall and strongly encouraged everyone to vote in favor of converting water and navigation from a Special Act to an ordinance to allow the County to have more control over the streamlining process. It was noted this control would still remain countywide.

- **Ch. 380, F.S., DRI Exemption for Private Marina Construction**

Mr. Stowers indicated that Chapter 380 regarding DRIs and the criteria for boating facility siting plans was developed because of various locations throughout Florida that were not doing a good job of protecting the environment. A Boating Siting Facilities Plan is required to be developed if you want the DRI Exemption. Staff has reviewed the exemption process, and the boating facility siting plan criteria. The counties or cities that have adopted a boating facility siting plan are the ones who have been required to in conjunction with their requirement to develop a manatee protection plan. Pinellas County is not one of the communities required to develop a manatee protection plan. Staff has sent the Department of Community Affairs the County's program for protecting marina resources and siting boating facilities, but the DCA did not agree with the County that their program met the criteria of DRI Exemption. Staff will send it again anticipating that the agencies are being more proactive now is wanting to support public marinas and review at the local level for marinas. The County already has all of the requirements and has a program that is better than the State's. Adopting a Boating Facilities Siting Plan could create issues since it could actually preclude areas from consideration of boat facilities. There are also conflicts between the State requirements and the County's regulations; the County feels it has a better handle on permitting local boat facilities and protecting the marine environment.

Mr. Landon requested this be placed on the agenda for the Legislative Delegation to get a response from the Department of Community Affairs. Mr. Speeler suggested having someone, such as Frank Matthews, to lead the charge instead of going through the Legislative Delegation. Commissioner Latvala responded that the County has a lobbying team, which includes Pete Dunbar, and she will have them work on this.

Mr. Stowers continued, noting that it would be good to have a process in place so that marinas that want to expand not have to go through the DRI process, with the County still having oversight.

- **Expedited Permitting**

Mr. Speeler stated the Legislative committee would be a good vehicle.

Mr. Landon suggested that, in addition to expediting the Water and Navigation process, Development Review Services (DRS) should expedite site plans for marinas.

- **What's Next?**

- ❖ *Report to Board*

Staff will prepare a final report to go to the BCC.

❖ *Intergovernmental Advisory Committee*

Commissioner Latvala reiterated the recommendations would be presented to the BCC, she will meet with the elected officials, and set up the Intergovernmental Advisory Committee. She then again thanked everyone for their time and effort they contributed to this issue and requested that individuals also contact the other County Commissioners. Commissioner Latvala thanked staff for their hard work. Mr. Speeler thanked Commissioner Latvala, the BCC, and staff for being proactive.

Upon query, Mr. Stowers responded staff would send the recommendations to the Task Force members for comment before they are presented to the BCC. Mr. Stowers noted that any person interested could receive the information by accessing the website.

It was suggested the Task Force create a statement of issue that could be presented along with the recommendations, including data to validate the importance of the marina industry. Commissioner Latvala agreed and the comments should be incorporated into the report. Mr. Speeler stated a Mission Statement is needed.

Upon query, Commissioner Latvala responded that, once comments have been received on the recommendations, it would be presented to the BCC in a report, which would probably take about a month.

Mr. Stowers noted that Liz Freeman is the staff coordinating the information and indicated that her email address would be included on the web page and that comments should be sent to her email address. (efreeman@pinellascounty.org)

Mr. Whelan announced the City of St. Pete Beach has a Request for Proposals for possible business partners to run the operation at its pier and that interested parties can contact Sue with the City.

• **Citizen Comments**

Sue LaBolster, Dunedin, spoke in opposition to using Honeymoon Island due to the fact that it's a barrier island, the need to remove mangroves, harm to the sealife, St. Joseph's Sound is used by small boaters (kayaks, ski jets, etc.) and the possible collision with larger boats if they are also allowed to use the facility, dredging concerns, and the need to protect Caladesi Island.

Commissioner Latvala responded that this site is not high on the list of priorities, staff will continue with the Environmental Impact Study so the site can be taken off the list. She reiterated the Task Force was not formed to choose specific sites, the BCC will make the ultimate decisions, and the BCC shares the same concerns and that the environment is their Number One priority.

A citizen queried if the Task Force's findings would be made public. Commissioner Latvala responded they would be posted on the website; however, anyone wishing a hard copy should give staff their address.

Bill Albright, Florida Council of Yacht Clubs, questioned if staff had information regarding the net loss of wet slips, etc., in Pinellas County and an estimate for the remainder of the year. Mr. Davis responded staff has the information as of a few months back. It was noted this information is on the website. Mr. Albright queried if someone is planning to attend the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting on September 21 to present the Mission Statement. Mr. Nicholson added that it

would be appropriate to make a statement at that meeting. Commissioner Latvala responded staff would check into attending if the report were available. Mr. Stowers added a draft report should be available and that staff might attend to make public comment.

Greg Cahanin, indicated he was one of the organizers for "Save our Sails Initiative" in St. Petersburg and recently heard about the Task Force through a representative of his yacht club. The goal in St. Petersburg should be the same goal for public boat docks throughout the County and the State, which is to always have public boat docks that are accessible to everyone at all income levels at an affordable level.

Commissioner Latvala responded they are aware of that aspect and that government doesn't necessarily have to charge high prices and the point is to keep the water accessible to all the citizens.

- **Conclusion**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.