

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING FOR THE TOWN OF OCEAN RIDGE, FLORIDA, TO BE HELD IN THE TOWN HALL ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1999, AT 6:00 P.M.

The meeting was attended by Town Manager Gregory Dunham, Town Clerk Hancsak and the following members: Bud Aaskov, Kim Beaumont, Jerry Goray, Dr. Victor Martel, Barbara Souther, Dr. Luis Vinas, Dr. Sparks, and Don MaGruder.

The board unanimously approved the minutes of the March 24, 1999 meeting.

Town Manager Dunham suggested that the board discuss Item IV concerning the dune vegetation first since Mr. Baron's item would take less time than Item III. The Board concurred.

IV. DISCUSS DUNE VEGETATION – ROBERT BARON, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Mr. Baron introduced himself and stated that he was asked to address the board by Barbara Souther concerning the current ordinance relating to the trimming of seagrapes on the dune. Mr. Baron advised the board that he has completed approximately 450 projects on the dune and has researched the effects of trimming the seagrapes on the dune. He stated that he felt the wording of the town's ordinance had a tremendous impact on property values because it limits the oceanfront property owner from obtaining a substantial view of the ocean. He also stated that there are no substantial findings to support that windowing seagrapes protects the dune more than cropping or that seagrapes have any historical value to Florida. He cited several studies from 1950 through 1992 explaining that seagrapes are not significant to Florida and that only 9% of seagrapes dominated the beaches in 1974 and they do not protect the dune more than other salt tolerant species. He continued by stating that the University of Florida has released documentation that seagrapes are among the top three worst trees because they are fast growing, have brittle wood and a shallow root system.

Mr. Baron commented that he felt continually maintaining the seagrapes at a lower level helps the plant grow thicker which provides more stability and also allows reasonable use by the homeowner. He added that he felt the current ordinance was not in the public or private interest of the town. Mrs. Souther questioned whether it was healthier to maintain the seagrapes at a lower level to which Mr. Baron advised that he felt it was. Mrs. Beaumont asked whether there was actual documentation that the root system was better if maintained at a lower level. Mr. Baron stated he did not have a definitive answer, however, when the plant grows too tall it can create a toppling force. He added that the only seagrape trees still standing in Key Biscayne after a hurricane were the ones that were behind other trees.

Mrs. Souther suggested that she and Mr. Baron appear before the Town Commission to discuss this issue and requested unanimous support from the board. Town Manager

Dunham suggested that he and the town attorney meet with Mr. Baron to discuss the legal and scientific information prior to presenting it to the Commission. The board concurred.

Chairman Aaskov questioned if any vegetation grows under a seagrape plant to which Mr. Baron advised that the seagrasses kill off any undergrowth species. Chairman Aaskov commented that he had no objection to amending the ordinance.

The board thanked Mr. Baron for his assistance and expertise.

III. DISCUSSION OF GRANT OPPORTUNITIES AND FUNDING SOURCES

Town Manager Dunham mentioned that he has investigated the subject of funding for anticipated projects and has asked Rich Walton and Jim Fleischmann to address the board regarding this issue. He added that the staff and board needed to understand the process for applying for grants and the different strings that might be attached, such as amending the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Walton, Community Development Director for the City of Palm Beach Gardens, introduced himself and advised that Palm Beach Gardens had never applied for grants until 1998 and he discovered that there are always strings attached.

He stated that FDOT has a lot of grant money and also discretionary funds available mainly for landscaping, however, the municipality must remember that once the landscaping is installed it will have continual maintenance and other costs.

Mr. Walton commented that many grants are available on a 50% matching fund basis, however, the municipality must have an approved sealed plan approved by a professional. He then mentioned the Florida Recreation Department Assistance Program (FRDAP) which is a very extensive application with stringent rules. He added that some grants are very competitive and the larger the grant the higher the percentage of matching funds is required. He also stated that some grants might be approved for municipalities that have addressed their projects as part of their Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Walton stated that another significant grant available was the Beautiful Palm Beaches that actually had more money last year than requested.

Concerning the FRDAP grant Mr. Walton stated that the town missed the deadline for funds for the coming fiscal year and strongly suggested that the town started the process for applying for FY 2000/01 and then budgeting the 50% matching funds.

Mr. Walton introduced James Fleischmann, Land Research Management, Inc., who commented that municipalities that have utilized his firm have never been refused a Beautiful Palm Beaches grant.

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Mr. Walton commented that FDOT could also allocate 10% funding for projects that include transportation enhancement such as bike paths. He added that he did not believe this involved a match situation.

Concerning the grant application process, Mr. Walton advised that most grants required Public Hearings, especially for Comprehensive Plan amendments, and felt this was one of the most important aspects in obtaining the grant. Mr. Walton added that he did not believe a comprehensive plan amendment would be necessary for the FRDAP grant for the new park.

Town Manager Dunham explained that the FRDAP a grant was primarily earmarked for parks which offered a graduated matching fund scale depending on the total cost of the project. He stressed again that to apply for this grant it would be necessary to begin the process ASAP. Mr. Dunham stated that the first step was to hire a professional to develop a park plan. In order to do that he was requesting that the board formally recommend that the property be developed into a passive park and identify the desired elements to be brought before the Town Commission in order to seek proposals to develop a park plan. He added that he had spoken with the attorney representing the National Wildlife who stated that they would not object to a passive park with a wood type playground provided the frontage on SR A1A is low key and that there would be no parking.

Mr. Walton commented that discretionary funds might be available for removal of the exotics on the site to which Town Manager Dunham stated that he has received quotes between 10,000 – 20,000 to remove the exotics. He advised that the exotics have been identified but not counted or tagged and added that the town would not want to remove them until the overall plan is completed.

Mrs. Souther moved to direct the staff to advise the Commission that the Environmental Resource Advisory Board recommends that the Beachway/SR A1A property be developed into a passive park including the following elements: clearing of exotics, fit a pedestrian outline, provide an area for children to play, no vehicle parking, permit bicycle parking, providing a shoulder on Midlane Road for visibility from the street, and also butterfly gardens and also that the FRDAP grant process should begin. Jerry Goray seconded the motion.

Roll Call: all yea.

Dr. Vinas questioned whether the FRDAP grant application would preclude the town from pursuing any other funding sources to which he was advised it would not.

Chairman Aaskov inquired whether any funds provided from FDOT come with strings attached to which he was advised the town should seek information from other municipalities that have sought these types of monies.

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Town Manager Dunham mentioned that the landscaping and entry features could be sought through a Beautiful Palm Beaches grant and the funds could be used to enhance roads owned by any of the agencies. Dr. Martel questioned whether the cost of the signs could be included to which he was advised that some rules may apply.

Mr. Goray questioned whether the town could seek Beautiful Palm Beach grant monies while working simultaneously with a planner. He was advised that they would require a professionally sealed plan first. Dr. Martel commented that the town will not receive funding for all the anticipated projects.

Mr. Fleischmann stated that most comprehensive plans include a Capital Improvement Element section and he suggested that the town update this with a five year prioritized plan and review possible funding sources. He added that the Planning & Zoning Commission usually reviews and recommends amendments to the Commission.

The board wished to recommend to the Commission that the Planning & Zoning Commission review and make recommendations regarding updating the Comprehensive Plan.

At this time the board thanked Mr. Walton and Mr. Fleischmann for their input.

IV. GENERAL DISCUSSION OF BEAUTIFICATION PROJECTS

Mrs. Beaumont commented that she did not feel the board should rush into final decisions regarding different projects such as the entrance signs and landscaping. Mr. Goray agreed, however, he felt that the Old Ocean Blvd. signs could be accomplished promptly.

After some discussion the board concurred that the Old Ocean Blvd. signs should state WELCOME TO THE BEACH and NO PARKING WITH ARROWS SHOWING BOTH DIRECTIONS. They also agreed that the beach crossover signs should state NO DOGS ALLOWED ON BEACH and DO NOT REMOVE/DESTROY DUNE VEGETATION. They agreed with the logo depicting the blue fish.

Mr. Goray expressed his concern that using the logo on too many things could produce an overkill effect and may add an element of cuteness rather than elegance. Mrs. Souther agreed and felt that only Old Ocean Blvd. and beach crossover signs should be transformed at this time.

Most of the members of the board complimented the new entrance signs entering Gulfstream and requested that Town Manager Dunham obtain information on the signs.

It was clarified that the next meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 23, 1999 at 6:00 PM.

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As a point of information Town Manager Dunham mentioned that the grant application process would necessitate at least three public hearings after the plan is completed.

Mr. MaGruder questioned what would be needed to irrigate any new landscaping near the entrance signs. He was advised that a water line, water meter, electric, timer, actual system and rain sensor would be necessary.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:40 P.M.

ATTEST:

Town Clerk