

WORKSHOP MEETING HELD BY THE TOWN COMMISSION FOR THE TOWN OF OCEAN RIDGE, FLORIDA, IN THE TOWN HALL ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2016, AT 6:00 P.M.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. and roll call was answered by the following:

Commissioner Aaskov
Commissioner Bonfiglio
Mayor Pugh
Vice Mayor Allison
Commissioner Lucibella

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mayor Pugh led the pledge of allegiance and welcomed the citizens to the meeting. He noted that this is a two-hour meeting, and each citizen will have three minutes to speak.

2. Overview of Old Ocean Boulevard & History – Mayor Pugh

Mayor Pugh gave a brief history of his family at Old Ocean Boulevard since 1967, including family photos and recent news articles. He noted that he has seen changes to the area as a boy and now as an adult. His idea is not to change things, but to preserve how life used to be on the street in light of new housing developments in Boynton Beach. He is interested in hearing from residents on how we are going to keep our quiet sanctuary, but maintain pedestrian traffic and vehicular traffic on Old Ocean Boulevard.

3. FDOT Standards, Rights of Way, Engineering and Related Issues – Town Engineer

Town Engineer Lisa Tropepe was in attendance and available to answer engineering related questions. There were none.

4. Public Comment

Rachel Walker, 5900 Old Ocean Blvd, suggested having Boynton Beach help us pay for the upkeep of the beaches. She also suggested developing a map of all the crossovers for posting it for people who use the beaches. She noted that she does not want to be trapped in case of fire or other hazard in the area. She also mentioned that since we have limited parking in Ocean Ridge, people will park in Boynton Beach and walk to the beach, so traffic should not be an issue.

Bob Weisblut, Sailfish Lane, stated most people want it left like it is, and suggested blocking the A1A side instead of Old Ocean, if we have to block it off at all. He also suggested a trolley provided by Boynton Beach.

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Ted Ritota, 4 Hudson Avenue, stated he would be adamantly opposed to one-way traffic on Old Ocean Blvd. He doesn't feel that we can block off traffic, and the no-parking zones on Old Ocean already accomplishes enough.

Gary Kosinski, 6000 Old Ocean Blvd, does not want to see increased traffic on Old Ocean Blvd. He sent a proposal to Town Hall which doesn't block off east/west roads and doesn't make the street one-way, but stops people from driving the entire distance of Old Ocean. The proposal would cut the route into three parts for vehicles only which minimizes the number of miles driven on Old Ocean because vehicles can only travel one block and then turn.

Greg Van Vliet, 17 Tropical Drive, turned in a petition and spoke against the proposal. He mentioned that heavy construction equipment travelling on Tropical Drive may impact the drainage system on Tropical Drive. He does not want to see additional traffic on Tropical Drive, and suggested placing speed bumps on Old Ocean Blvd. He also recommended greater enforcement of stop signs on Old Ocean Blvd and enforcing the state road setbacks on A1A.

Jim Leider, 6083 Old Ocean Blvd, doesn't favor closing streets. He suggested increasing signage and possibly blocking off Old Ocean Blvd at A1A.

Earl Jones, 14 Sailfish Ln, noted that dead end streets are problematic, and stated that speeding increases on a one-way street. He also mentioned that this proposal would not stop people from going to the beach. He does not want to see restrooms at the beach.

Pat Kropp, 16 Tropical Drive, suggested better signage at both bridges directing traffic to the two public beaches, including mileage to each beach.

Rosemary Petersen, 22 Harbor Drive North, spoke against the proposal and mentioned it would be an inconvenience to residents to block roads.

Barbara Souther, 5821 North Ocean Blvd, spoke in favor of the proposal. For the integrity of the beach and town, Old Ocean Blvd should be a one-way street.

Chris Currie, 27 Tropical Drive, spoke against the proposal and stated he has never had a problem as a pedestrian on Old Ocean Blvd. He noted that vehicle traffic does not own that road; pedestrians do. If the proposal moves forward, we will end up with streets to the North having a quasi-private status at the expense of Tropical Drive which is a private road.

Chuck McIntyre, 5514 Old Ocean Blvd, spoke against the proposal and stated he believes the problem is not Old Ocean. We want people to have less access to the beach. He believes there may be a liability issue with blocking off Beachway Drive as emergency vehicles will not have direct access to the homes. He noted

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the Town may need to accept responsibility if emergency vehicles cannot gain access. He also stated GPS will cause major headaches for people.

David Westgate, I-16 Hibiscus Drive in Briny Breezes, noted we need to address the safety issue and suggests placing signs directing pedestrians to walk on the left hand side of the road facing traffic. He mentioned that people are inclined to go to Cordova to turn left.

Charles Kittler, 35 Hersey Drive, wants speed bumps on Old Ocean Blvd. He stated that people should not walk down the middle of the street.

Mark Hanna, 6400 North Ocean Blvd, spoke against the proposal and asked who will enforce one-way traffic. He noted we need to enforce speed laws. He noted that bicyclists have to obey traffic laws, so if the street is turned into a one-way street, bicycles will have to go one way as well as vehicles. He also stated that Tropical Drive is a private road, so the people that live on Tropical can refuse public traffic.

Don McGruder, 9 Ridge Blvd, suggested placing signage at the end of Woolbright denoting Old Ocean Blvd Promenade (pedestrian traffic), local traffic only, 10 mph.

Daniel Hartwell, Colonial Ridge, spoke against the proposal. He stated a one-way street will invite more pedestrian traffic.

Nancy Flynn, 5900 Old Ocean, spoke against the proposal. She stated speed is a problem, but would like to leave the road as-is. She encourages speed bumps and more lighting.

Peter McMullin, speaking for the residents of Turtle Beach, spoke against the proposal and referenced an email he sent to the Town Commission. He noted that Old Ocean Blvd is a unique street and people use it mainly for pedestrian purposes. He stated vehicle traffic is light throughout the day, and he has never seen an accident there. He also mentioned that emergency response times may diminish.

Terry Brown, Harbor Drive South, spoke against the proposal. He mentioned that parking restrictions have been put in place already. He suggested installing better illuminated stop signs and noted that parking on some of the side streets needs to be looked at.

Gale Bernheim, 5709 North Ocean Blvd, spoke against the proposal and noted that the new building at the corner of Federal & Woolbright didn't increase traffic for Ocean Ridge.

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Richard Sosh, representing the 200 residents at Colonial Ridge Club, stated the residents are unanimously opposed to the proposal and filed a petition with the Town Clerk, along with a list of reasons for their objections. He mentioned that there is no commercial development on Old Ocean Blvd, so unless we can think of a way to make money off the pedestrians, we should leave it alone. He also stated that many people will be leaving town for the summer, so a six-month trial period won't necessarily give us good data.

Betty Bingham, 1 Ocean Ave, stated that Old Ocean Blvd was a county road that was abandoned to Ocean Ridge. She would like to see rules and regulations and fines imposed. She suggested erecting a sign listing the fines. She also suggested installing speed gates that can be removed if they don't work well.

Yves Moquin, 6017 Old Ocean Blvd, is opposed to making Old Ocean Blvd a one-way street.

Christine Schutte, 5 Osprey Court, would like us to encourage residents of Boynton Beach to use their own public beach which would alleviate traffic on Old Ocean Blvd. She asked if the ocean water is tested for bacteria, and Mayor Pugh responded that it is not tested in Ocean Ridge. She stated people use the dunes as restrooms with toilet paper and has witnessed nudity on the beach. She is opposed to additional signs.

Dorinda Burrows, 6013 North Ocean Blvd, stated we need to enforce current laws, decrease the speed limit, perhaps look at speed bumps, increase lighting so as not to interfere with turtles, and avoid unintended consequences on public safety and evacuation routes due to hurricanes. She suggested creating a Planning & Zoning task force as the next step.

Richard Steer, 40 Ocean View Drive, spoke against the proposal. He suggested dedicating a beach patrol officer to the area.

5. Town Commission Comments and Follow-up Questions to Residents

Vice Mayor Allison thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She mentioned that she has received many letters and calls regarding the proposal. She stated it is clear that the majority of residents want the road to remain as is. She would like to see the suggested improvements worked on. She also noted that we have networking here that other towns do not have.

Commissioner Aaskov mentioned that residents submitted some very good ideas, and she likes the idea of the Boynton shuttle bus to its beach, encouraging Boynton residents to use their own beach, and improving lighting, signs, and speed enforcement. She stated it is obvious which way the residents want to go.

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Commissioner Bonfiglio thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He mentioned that several things struck him during the public comments tonight. Several people that spoke mentioned that they like living here and they don't want change. He noted that the quality of life is good because the town has a good Town Commission, Planning & Zoning Board and Board of Adjustment that set and uphold rules and regulations for the town. Years ago, the Town decided to go non-commercial, but if we still had commercial zones in town, we would have half the people in the room saying they want more traffic to help the business. Looking back on that now, it was a good decision for the residents. The quality of life is great here, but we need to decide if we want to restrict access to the beach area and roadways. If not now, we may need to address this in 5-10 years from now as people move to the area, since we may experience twice the traffic then. We may need to address this now to better control it later. There were several good suggestions tonight such as signage. He stated he is not convinced making Old Ocean Blvd a one-way street is a good idea, but we need to be thinking long term. An ad-hoc committee to look at things such as signage, speed control and adding police enforcement may be a good idea.

Commissioner Lucibella thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He mentioned that he was struck by the thoughtfulness and research on the comments made tonight. He noted that there is obviously consensus. He stated that if we were going to look at a one-way solution, probably the only one-way solution would be to move traffic South and North one-way to Beachway Drive and then out, with an island there, but there seems to be no appetite for that now. Some residents perceive there is a speeding issue, some see pedestrians in the middle of road as an issue, and some believe vehicles in the middle of the road is an issue. Without a doubt, we can install signage and possibly speed bumps. He also loves the idea of the Old Ocean Blvd promenade idea with local traffic only. We do have an issue with increased pressure on infrastructure, dunes, beaches, and staff. We can't restrict people from public lands, but we can keep Ocean Ridge as our jewel. Mr. Kosinski's proposal should not be taken off the table; it deserves a second look.

Mayor Pugh stated he is proud to be a resident of Ocean Ridge because everyone has shown they care about the town, and the decorum has been great tonight. He stated he has come up with ideas in the past that have not proceeded. He will not stop coming up with ideas whether they may proceed or not, as he is looking for ways to enhance our quality of life. So many people coming out tonight says so much about our small town. The ideas presented tonight are very well worth looking into. He noted that lighting was looked at around seven years ago, but we didn't get anywhere with it due to the sea turtle issues.

6. Consensus on Next Steps with Staff Direction

There was no discussion.

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ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Minutes adopted by a vote of the Town Commission on March 7, 2016.

Geoffrey A. Pugh, Mayor

ATTEST:

Tracey L. Stevens, CMC, Town Clerk