

MINUTES OF THE HUTCHINSON ISLAND PRESERVATION INITIATIVE, INC.

ANNUAL MEETING HELD MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2019

The Hutchinson Island Preservation Initiative, Inc. (HIPI) held its first annual meeting on Monday, March 25, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. at the Vince Bocchino Community Center, 2369 N.E. Dixie Highway within Langford Park in Jensen Beach. HIPI board members in attendance were Ralph Jones, Dottie Lanci, Todd Berwick, Jim Hodge, Barbara Seaton, Patty Jones, Elizabeth Farrar, Erica Garwood and Paul Laura.

WELCOME: Ralph Jones, President of HIPI, welcomed the audience of approximately 55 individuals. Mr. Jones recognized local officials present as audience members; Chairman of the Martin County Board, Edward V. Ciampi and Rob Steele, new director of the Elliott Museum. (After the meeting it was noted that former Martin County Commissioner Ed Fielding was also in attendance.)

Mr. Jones explained a success story that was the impetus for the formation of HIPI, a Florida nonprofit corporation founded in 2018 and committed to preserving and protecting Hutchinson Island in Martin County. The mission of HIPI is to provide information to property owners of south Hutchinson Island on projects that may impact the unique, natural environment of our area.

The success story was to have over 2,000 signatures on petitions and hundreds of emails to the Martin County and State of Florida representatives objecting to the “beautification” lighting project consisting of 382, 21 ft. tall light poles along N.E. Ocean Boulevard from the Jensen Beach roundabout to the Stuart bridge. These light poles would be staggered every 50 ft. on either side of N.E. Ocean Boulevard. They would be in addition to the already existing 166 utility poles. Also, many of the environmental groups, The Guardians of Martin County, Rivers Coalition, Inc., and Florida Oceanographic Center objected strongly to the proposed lights as they would adversely impact the wildlife including our nesting turtles and change the quality of life for all residents of south Hutchinson Island.

The core group of very concerned residents that passed the petitions and notifications regarding the lighting project decided to form HIPI as residents were not being notified by the County of upcoming projects. With that being said, Mr. Jones introduced Ms. Elizabeth Farrar, HIPI Communications Officer, to speak about the history of the MSTU taxing district funds and their use.

HUTCHINSON ISLAND MSTU HISTORY AND UPDATE: Ms. Farrar had a slide presentation and explained Municipal Service Taxing Units (MSTUs) allow Martin County to levy additional millage rates. One of those MSTUs are Special District “A” (Hutchinson Island) which provides special services and other related expenditures which are specific to the area as defined by their boundaries. Ms. Farrar explained an MSTU is a service unit for which an ad valorem tax is imposed to cover the cost of providing a service or improvement, based upon taxable value. MSTU’s have been established by the Board of County Commissioners through an adopted ordinance that outlines the boundaries of the district and the services or improvements to be provided. The funding is created through a millage rate set by the MSTU’s enabling ordinance.

A millage is a rate applied to a property taxable value to determine the property tax. 1 mill is \$1.00 for each \$1,000 of assessed value. The millage rate for Hutchinson Island Special District was .2331 in 2013 which generated \$256,650. \$150,000 was used for beach Erosion and \$106,650 was used for landscaping and maintenance. Prior to 2012, the millage rate for the Hutchinson Island MSTU doubled from .1118 in 2011 to .2224 to pay for the Hutchinson Island Coalition Master Plan at the request of the

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leader of this organization. The minutes of the March 19, 2018 meeting of the Hutchinson Island Coalition Executive Steering Committee state, "We currently receive about \$106,650 from MSTU funds per year (approximately \$640,000 to date)." The way these funds were spent was per the minutes of the March 19, 2018 meeting of the Hutchinson Island Coalition Executive Steering Committee state: "Completed Phase 1 landscaping (east side of A1A at MacArthur Boulevard), Cost \$360,000. (MSTU funded)." "Completed Phase 2 Landscaping (west side of A1A at MacArthur Blvd), Cost: \$280,000, (MSTU and grant funded)."

The Hutchinson Island Coalition has been dissolved as of March, 2019. How will the tax revenue be spent in the future? Ms. Farrar asked that interested property owners should submit their opinions on the HIPI website at <http://hipi.ch2v.com>; survey under MSTU.

MARTIN COUNTY PROJECTS ON HUTCHINSON ISLAND: Mr. Don Donaldson, Deputy Administrator for Martin County, gave an update on current and planned Martin County projects on Hutchinson Island.

Fire House No. 14, north of the Elliott Museum will be removed and a new station will be built across from the Marriott, west of the gas station on existing County property. This work should begin within four months. The land where the Fire House currently exists adjoins Stuart Beach and is planned to remain vacant at this time.

Mr. Donaldson reported that the County performs beach nourishment every 8 years at a cost of \$5,000,000.00 paid in part with \$100,000.00 of the MSTU funds. They engage Ecological Associates, Inc. in Jensen Beach to monitor the turtle nesting. He reported that Martin County has the longest recorded nesting data on turtles in Martin County. Sail Fish Point is part of an inland management plan to which the owners contribute. In answer to a question, Mr. Donaldson stated there is nothing prohibiting the movement of sand from the inlet north to replenish beaches. MacArthur Boulevard for approximately 1,000 lineal feet approaching Bath Tub Beach will be raised and retaining wall will be installed to prevent flooding of the street in the future. This work should be begin within a few months.

MARK LYNCH, DEPUTY DIRECTOR PARKS AND RECREATION FOR MARTIN COUNTY:

JENSEN BEACH: Mr. Lynch reported there is currently grading swales on the west side of Jensen Beach parking lot to prevent flooding and increase water quality. They will also install some brick paver walks as well as eight (8) 12 ft. tall light fixtures which meet turtle lighting requirements. The Sheriff's Department will also install security cameras to record license plate numbers. There will also be native plants planted. Funding is from County Capital Fund, not MSTU.

STUART BEACH: The County has taken over the operation of a new Chef Shack which is in the design phase for construction. County will demo the existing restrooms and improve parking by removing an existing wood structure. The property is owned by the State of Florida. The time table is planned to go to bid in May with construction in August or September, 2019.

JAMES GORTON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR PUBLIC WORKS FOR MARTIN COUNTY: Mr. Gorton reported that 6 ft. wide concrete sidewalks and ADA curb ramps will be constructed on the west side of N.E. Ocean Boulevard from the Jensen Beach roundabout south to Sand Pebble Condominiums as a "fill-in"

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sidewalk project where there are missing sidewalks. It will include cross walks. Construction will begin late spring.

He explained work to be performed to improve the River Cove Preserve on the left side of the Stuart Causeway. Trash receptacles will be installed.

Phase 3 of a drainage project is scheduled to install a culvert under the access drive to the gas station on the west side of N.E. Ocean Boulevard. It will allow the completion of the drainage swale along that side of the corridor. Mr. Gorton asked for approval from HIPI to proceed with this project which is being funded with MSTU funds.

SEA TURTLE NESTING ON HUTCHINSON ISLAND AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES: Dr. Zak Jud, Director of Education for the Florida Oceanographic (FOS), gave a slide presentation and explained there are seven different types of turtles in the world and we have four (4) of them nesting on our beaches on Hutchinson Island. He discussed the impact of temperature determining the sex of a turtle. He discussed the importance of keeping a healthy environment for nesting turtles; no lights at night, no people or dogs on beaches at night, do not touch turtles or shine lights on them. The FOS has 65,000 visitors annually. The concentrate on education regarding ocean and river life and water quality.

LAKE OKEECHOBEE DISCHARGES AND ALGAE BLOOMS: Mr. Paul Laura, Environmental Director for HIPI, reported on the effect of biosolids and improved quality and control of waters entering Lake Okeechobee and moving waters south. Martin County wants no discharges!!

Biosolids: Control nutrients and you control the bloom. The main nutrients we are trying to reduce are Nitrogen and Phosphorus. Nitrogen and Phosphorus enters our waterways mainly from agricultural lands (80 to 86%).

Many Floridians believe that agriculture contributes the nutrients which are a source for algal blooms but an increasing percentage is contributed by urban population via deposition on ag lands of class B or class AA biosolids. All Floridians are part of the problem. Approx 340K ton/yr of biosolids are applied to farmland.

Sources of nutrients:

Cattle – which is trending down in population

Active Ag lands being cultivated – number of acres is trending down

Fertilizer – current records are not available but was trending down up to 2011

Population – Increasing @ rate of 1.0-1.5%/yr. Since 2014 approx 1.5MM more residents

General Land contribution of Phosphorous due to Florida's limestone geology.

Legislation for bio-solids by US Congress –

WRDA2018 (Water Resource Development Act) and HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM AND HYPOXIA RESEARCH AND CONTROL (HABHRCA)

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Army Corps of Engineers are commanded to find a scaled –up solution to Harmful Algal Blooms.

Legislation by State: Not yet determined but latest update during last weeks of Florida legislation does not look optimistic that any meaningful changes will occur.

Water Conveyance and Improved Quality:

Legislation by US Congress

WRDA2018 (Water Resource Development Act)

Army Corps of Engineers are commanded to begin to develop southern Reservoir. They also are commanded to update the current LORS (Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule). The Army Corps have introduced update as LOSUM and will review all waterways from Orlando to Florida Bay including the Everglades.

Legislation by the State: Have to contribute 50% of cost for the new southern reservoir. The Governor has indicated a number of initiatives. We do not yet know the outcome of bills introduced into current legislation session.

Transparency and accountability of 5 water districts – Fired all South Florida Water Management District Commissioners and installed a new board. (Big Positive)

Update Florida’s reclaimed water quality.

Create A Chief Scientist Officer

Ban Fracking in State of Florida (Gov DeSantis)

Accelerate CERP (Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan), raise Tamiami Trail

Create Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection – SB78

Indian River Lagoon (IRL) – SB368/HR1

Annual minimum dedicated appropriation of \$100 million from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund to the Florida Forever Trust Fund –SB944

CLOSING REMARKS AND JOIN HIPI: Ms. Dottie Lanci, Vice President HIPI, encourage those property owners present to join HIPI. The membership cost is only \$20 per person. Ms. Lanci said we need our voices heard on the issues that are being considered for south Hutchinson Island that may have a negative impact on the environment. We were successful in defeating the unwarranted, unwanted lighting project because of our numbers. The elected officials cannot ignore its constituents when they join together to be heard. She asked that residents check the HIPI website: <http://hipi.ch2v.com> for updated information. Ms. Lanci also asked that those attending fill out the comment cards which were left on their chairs. She thanked everyone for their interest and attending.

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ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Jones moved, seconded by Ms Lanci, to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m. Upon voice vote, the motion carried.

Prepared by Patricia L. Jones, Secretary

Hutchinson Island Preservation Initiative, Inc.

April 9, 2019