



MINUTES **Regular Meeting – March 16, 2026**

BEACH & SHORE PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

John Heanue – Town of Orchid Appointee
Inocensia Hernandez – City of Fellsmere Appointee
Fred Jones – City of Sebastian Appointee
Taylor Dingle – City of Vero Beach Appointee
Michael Korpar – BCC Appointee

David Cox – BCC Appointee
Richard Harris – BCC Appointee
James Power – BCC Appointee
Francisco San Miguel – BCC Appointee
William Ferrell, Jr. – BCC Appointee

Bob Auwaerter – Town of IRS Appointee, Chairman
Joseph Earman – Commissioner, District 3, Commission Liaison

The **Beach & Shore Preservation Advisory Committee** met at 3:00 PM on Monday, March 16, 2026, in room B1-501 of County Administration Building B, located at 1800 27th Street in Vero Beach.

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Joe Earman called the March 16, 2026, meeting of the Beach & Shore Advisory Committee to order at 3:00 PM; a quorum was present. The meeting was called to order. Due to the absence of both the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman, staff opened the floor for the selection of a temporary chair to preside until the Chairman arrived.

ON MOTION by Fred Jones, SECONDED by John Heanue, the members voted unanimously to appoint Mr. William Ferrell as temporary chairman.

Members Present

John Heanue, Town of Orchid Appointee
Taylor Dingle, City of Vero Beach Appointee
William Ferrell, Jr. - BCC Appointee
Michael Korpar, BCC Appointee
Richard Harris, BCC Appointee
Fred Jones, City of Sebastian Appointee
David Cox, BCC Appointee

Members Absent

Inocensia Hernandez, City of Fellsmere Appointee
Francisco San Miguel, BCC Appointee
Bob Auwaerter, Town of IRS Appointee, Chairman
James Power, BCC Appointee, Vice Chairman

Also Present

Quintin Bergman, Coastal Resources Manager
Johnnie E. Sabin, Coastal Environmental Specialist
Max Sherman, Recording Secretary
Steve Barako, Superintendent - Parks, Recreation, Conservation
Joseph Earman, County Commissioner
Kylie Yanchula, Director – Natural Resources
Dakota Whelen, Coastal Environmental Specialist
Wendy Swindell, Assistant Director, Parks, Recreation, Conservation
James Austin, APTIM
Tem Fontaine, Coastal Tech
James Grey, Executive Director of SID

2. Approval of Minutes

ON MOTION by Taylor Dingle, SECONDED by Michael Korpar, the members voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of February 16th, 2026.

3. Coastal Division Updates, including Beach Restoration Projects

Johnnie Sabin provided updates on ongoing coastal restoration work and related outreach activities.

Sector 5 Beach Restoration Project

Staff reported that **sand placement for Sector 5 was completed on March 5, 2026**. The project terminus was adjusted slightly short of the original endpoint due to natural accretion trends and permitted volume limitations. Staff noted that the berm remains continuous and naturally blends into the adjacent shoreline. Dune planting began on March 16 and is expected to last approximately one week. Sea oat and associated dune vegetation planting will total approximately **117,500 plants**, including species such as sea oats, bitter panic grass, railroad vine, and dune sunflower. Staff also reported that all major construction equipment is off the beach, construction access points have been closed, use by the public is reopened, and restoration of disturbed access areas is underway. The project area is expected to be fully stabilized before the beginning of sea turtle nesting season.

Committee discussion included questions regarding the offshore reef near Humiston Park and whether any changes had been observed in elevation or community feedback. Staff reported no notable monitoring changes at this time, but acknowledged there have been some reports of injuries or interactions in the area and stated that updated signage and continued public education efforts

remain in place.

Beach Preservation Plan 2026 Update

Quintin Bergman announced a **public workshop and special call meeting** for the Draft **Beach Preservation Plan 2026 Update** to be held on **April 14, 2026, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.** at the **Indian River Shores Community Center**. The meeting will include a presentation from the engineering consultant, followed by a public workshop and poster session to gather comments from stakeholders and residents.

Staff explained that the draft plan will be made available online no later than April 14. Committee members and the public will have multiple opportunities to provide input through written comments, online forms, and future meetings. Staff anticipates presenting the draft plan to the Board of County Commissioners at a later date, followed by revisions and eventual final adoption.

Sector 3 and Sector 4

Staff stated there were no major new developments for **Sectors 3 and 4**, and both are currently in the monitoring phase for biological and physical permit requirements.

a. Presentation on the Sector 7 Community Survey Results

Quintin Bergman presented the results of the **Sector 7 community survey**, which was distributed to nearly 700 parcels in the area. A total of **371 valid responses** were included after quality control review, representing a strong response rate.

Staff reviewed the project history, noting that the original Sector 7 project had been delayed and ultimately canceled due to insufficient easement acquisition. The project area remains unique because the northern “feeder beach” portion is not critically eroded, while the southern portion is critically eroded and includes many sea walled properties.

Survey results showed that:

- Beach use is high among both oceanfront and non-oceanfront respondents.
- Concern about erosion is high across the community.
- Support for a beach restoration project is strong, including among oceanfront respondents.
- No oceanfront respondent who completed the survey expressed opposition to a project.
- Several oceanfront respondents indicated willingness to consider signing an easement if provided more information or if the easement were temporary in nature.

Staff emphasized that the largest remaining obstacle continues to be acquiring easements from certain owners in the feeder beach area. Staff recommended continued direct engagement with those property owners to determine whether participation in the project is possible.

Committee discussion focused on:

- The history of easement requirements and the shift to perpetual easements
- Funding challenges and reliance on outside sources such as FEMA and state grant programs
- Whether additional alternatives analysis should be pursued for Sector 7
- The possibility of future funding mechanisms such as an MSBU
- The continuing importance of determining whether feeder beach property owners are willing to participate

ON MOTION by David Cox, SECONDED by Richard Harris, the members voted unanimously to support staff's approach to continue engaging feeder beach property owners regarding the beach program and project participation.

b. Announcement of Public Workshop and BSPAC Special Call Meeting for the Draft Beach Preservation Plan 2026 Update

This item was addressed during the Beach Preservation Plan update above. Staff confirmed that additional meeting details would be distributed to committee members by email.

Coastal Education and Outreach Update

Dakota Whelen presented a brief report on recent education and outreach efforts, including:

- A **Protect the Dunes** campaign
- A **Safeguard the Sea Turtles** campaign
- Distribution of an **Indian River County Sea Turtle Lighting Guide** to beachfront property owners
- Creation of a traveling sea turtle exhibit for display in public buildings and libraries
- Public service announcements and media outreach regarding dune and sea turtle protection

Staff also announced the **first sea turtle nest of the season**, laid on March 14.

4. Updates from the Sebastian Inlet District

James Grey of the Sebastian Inlet District reported that dredging of the sand trap and channel is ongoing. Approximately **30,400 cubic yards** of sand had been placed on Sector 1 beaches to date, out of an estimated **100,000 cubic yards**.

The representative also reported that the first sea turtle nest of the season triggered the start of nighttime monitoring by the contractor. In addition, the District is moving forward with **Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the North Jetty rehabilitation project**, with bidding anticipated later in the summer.

5. Status of County Beach Parks

Steve Barako, Parks Superintendent, provides an update.

- At Golden Sands, Ocean Rescue is adding infrastructure improvements including a utility installation and storage area for a UTV to support rescue operations.
- At Tracking Station Beach Park, future improvements are planned for crossovers and pavilion areas, and the northernmost crossover will receive seating bump-outs requested by nearby residents.
- At Round Island Oceanside, Ocean Rescue is adding an ATV beneath the guard stand.

- At Round Island Riverside Park, the boat ramp access improvements have been completed and reopened. Staff clarified that the prior closure referenced walkway repairs leading to the docks rather than the ramp itself.

6. Commissioner's Matters

Commissioner Earman reported that the Florida Legislature is expected to hold a **special session on the budget in mid-April**, after Easter and Passover. Beach-related funding remains under discussion, and staff will continue monitoring developments and providing updates.

The Commissioner also commented on the ongoing challenges associated with Sector 7 easements, emphasizing the importance of continued outreach and education with property owners in that area.

7. Committee Members Matters

No additional committee member matters were presented.

8. Chairman Matters

No Chairman's matters were presented.

9. Public Discussion

Public Discussion occurred throughout the meeting during discussion of the agenda items, particularly under the Sector 7 survey and beach restoration discussions. No additional public discussion items were presented at the close of the meeting.

10. Adjournment

Being no further business, Temporary Chair Mr. William Ferrell adjourned the meeting at 4:41 PM.

****A full recording of this meeting is available in the Office of Board of County Commissioners.****