

**MINUTES — MARCH 8, 2022**  
**CITY OF INDIAN ROCKS BEACH**  
**REGULAR CITY COMMISSION MEETING**

---

The Indian Rocks Beach Regular City Commission Meeting was held on **TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2022**, in the City Commission Chambers, 1507 Bay Palm Boulevard, Indian Rocks Beach, Florida.

Mayor-Commissioner Kennedy called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

**PRESENT:** Mayor-Commissioner Joanne Moston Kennedy, Vice Mayor-Commissioner Joe McCall, Commissioner Philip J. Hanna, Commissioner Edward G. Hoofnagle, Commissioner Denise Houseberg, and City Manager Brently Gregg Mims.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** City Attorney Randy D. Mora, and City Clerk Deanne B. O'Reilly, MMC.

*(To provide continuity for research, items are listed in agenda order although not necessarily discussed in that order.)*

**1A. REPORT OF Pinellas County Sheriff's Office.**

The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office presented the crime analysis report for the month of January 2022.

**1B. REPORT OF Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue District.**

Fire Chief Davidson presented the Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue District's report for the month of February 2022.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS.**

**Nancy Obarski, 708 Beach Trail, #B**, stated the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) is on the verge of holding 60% in Federal dollars for Pinellas County's 2024 Beach Renourishment Project. That is unless 100% of the beachfront property owners sign a perpetual beach easement. The easement that the Corps wants the beachfront property owners to sign would allow tourists and strangers to join property owners for grill outs right at the end of their decks. The Corps has decided to twist the meaning of a 30-year-old law, and Pinellas County is letting them get by with it.

Ms. Obarski stated by statute, it is actually the State of Florida that maintains the beaches. She stated a group of property owners, including herself, armed with solid research have

done their level-best to get Pinellas County for two years to approach this data or at least explore the idea of a legal challenge to this questionable policy change by the Corps. Pinellas County is not interested. Instead Pinellas County prefers to hang their hats on largely ineffective letters by Congressman Charlie Crist and simply wait way too patiently for the City's faith to be handed down.

Ms. Obarski stated the issue is that Federal tax dollars cannot be used for sand on private land. However, during the 2018 Beach Renourishment a minuscule amount of sand was actually placed on the private areas that it could have been done by a couple of kids with buckets and pails. She stated because of that six grains of sand, the Corps is using that as an excuse not to pay their \$26 Million of Pinellas County's \$45 Million Beach Renourishment Project.

**Diane Flagg, 2316 Gulf Boulevard**, thanked Commissioner Hoofnagle for the six years of wonderful service as a Indian Rocks Beach City Commissioner.

**Kelly Cisarik, 448 Harbor Drive South**, stated she is hoping to get more people involved in coming to the Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue District (the District) Meetings. The District is in the early stages of developing a new ballot referendum that will seek to add a new tax to what is paid now. The voters will decide whether or not to permit a new tax to be added to the existing assessment. The initial millage rate has yet to be determined. If and when a new tax is approved, the Fire Commission will be empowered to set any future increases.

**Art McArthur, 414-12<sup>th</sup> Avenue**, stated he is a cyclist and would like to see traffic easing, and reduction in speed limitations in the neighborhoods and Gulf Boulevard.

### **3A. REPORTS OF the City Attorney.**

City Attorney Mora reviewed the following bills:

- *SB512/HB325, Short-Term Rentals*. This bill would create a statewide vacation rental registration system and preempt all local regulation of online vacation rental platforms, but would allow local governments to require the registration of vacation rental properties. *The bills have stalled in committees. There will be no preemptions this session.*
- *SB280/HB403, Local Ordinances*. Impose new substantive requirements on municipalities for adopting and enforcing ordinances. First, the bills require a municipality to prepare a business impact estimate before adopting an ordinance and specifies the minimum content that must be included in the statement. The estimate must be posted on the municipality's website no later than the date of publication of notice of the proposed ordinance. Second, the bills require a municipality to suspend enforcement of an ordinance that is the subject of a civil

action challenging the ordinance's validity on grounds that it is arbitrary or unreasonable or expressly preempted by state law. This requirement applies only if: the action was filed within 90 days of the ordinance's effective date; suspension of the ordinance was requested in the complaint; and the municipality was served with a copy of the complaint. If the municipality prevails in the civil action and an appeal is taken, the bills authorize the court to consider continuing or lifting the stay of enforcement of the ordinance. Third, the bills authorize the award of attorney fees, costs and damages to a prevailing plaintiff in a civil action commenced after October 1, 2022, in which an ordinance is alleged to be arbitrary or unreasonable. The bills require courts to prioritize and expedite the disposition of cases in which enforcement of an ordinance is suspended. The bills exempt various ordinances from the stay of enforcement provision. CS/CS/SB 280 passed the Senate (28-8) and is awaiting action by the House.

- *SB620, Business Damages Against Local Government.* Allow a business that has been engaged in a lawful business in a municipality for at least three years to claim business damages from the municipality if it enacts or amends an ordinance or charter provision that will cause a reduction of at least 15% of the business' profit as applied on a per-location basis of a business operated within the jurisdiction. The bills provide three ways for a municipality to cure the business' claim and avoid paying damages: repeal the ordinance or charter provision; amend the ordinance or charter provision; or grant a waiver to the business from enforcement of the ordinance or charter provision. The bills provide exemptions from business damages claims for various ordinances and charter provisions: ordinances required to comply with, or expressly authorized by, state or federal law; emergency ordinances, declarations or orders adopted pursuant to the state Emergency Management Act; a temporary emergency ordinance that remains in effect for no more than 90 days; ordinances or charter provisions enacted to implement: Part II of Chapter 163 (including zoning, development orders and development permits); the Florida Building Code; the Florida Fire Code; a contract or an agreement, including contracts or agreements relating to grants or other financial assistance; debt issuance or refinancing; procurement; budgets or budget amendments, including revenue sources necessary to fund the budget. The bills specify that in action to recover damages, the courts may award attorney fees and costs to the prevailing party. The bills are prospective and apply to ordinances and charter provisions enacted or amended after the legislation becomes law. CS/SB 620 passed the Senate (22-14) and is awaiting action by the House.

### **3B. REPORTS OF the City Manager.**

City Manager Mims submitted a written report and asked the City Commission if they had any questions about his report.

City Manager Mims stated on Sunday evening, a subject carjacked a vehicle in Dunedin and was driving reckless. No deputies were in the area but the PCSO helicopter was up and was able to pick up the vehicle as it headed down A19. Deputies attempted to stop the vehicle when it traveled through Belleair Bluffs, but it fled westbound on SR686 and turned south onto Gulf Boulevard. The driver then attempted to carjack another vehicle Corvette at 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Gulf Boulevard in IRB, but the owner was able to accelerate away.

The suspect re-entered the vehicle he had stolen from Dunedin and continued driving recklessly down Gulf Boulevard and sideswiped another vehicle at 11<sup>th</sup> and Gulf Boulevard. Due to his ongoing dangerous driving and imminent danger to the public, deputies attempted to immobilize his vehicle. The suspect continue driving reckless and crashed into two vehicles in front of Crabby Bill's. After doing so, he carjacked a Mustang that had been involved in the crash and continued fleeing southbound. The subject sideswiped another vehicle and deputies tried to disable the Mustang but were unsuccessful.

The suspect eventually crashed into a Cadillac on Indian Shores, then stuck a Ford. After doing so, the suspect drove around a condo while running over several PVC fences. A deputy was able to make contact and wedge the vehicle against the seawall. The suspect fled on foot and jumped into the Intracoastal waterway. The PCSO Marine Unit in the water were able to take him into custody.

City Manager Mims stated the subject was charged with: Two counts of carjacking, nine counts of leaving the scene of a crash, and nine counts of DUI/property damage.

City Manager Mims stated all injuries appeared to be minor.

City Manager Mims thanked the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office and the Fire District for their actions taken that evening that saved many lives.

### **3C. REPORTS OF the City Commission.**

The City Commission thanked Commissioner Hoofnagle for his six years of service on the City Commission.

#### **COMMISSIONER HOOFNAGLE:**

- Thanked the first responders for putting their lives in danger for all the citizens in Indian Rocks Beach.
- As a member of the Executive Committee of the Beach Art Center, he thanked the City staff and all the sponsors who helped the Beach Art Center to raise more than \$40,000 to close their operating gap this year through the western gala. It would not have been possible without the support of the City and the sponsors, especially the Loder Family, Crabby Bill's Seafood.

- Thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting. Deliberation and debate is the cornerstone of the City's legislative process. The City Commission gains insight from listening and discussing different views. This is an example of how the City Commission is supposed to work together as a community. He has been very fortunate to have received thoughtful emails, phone calls, and to have meetings with people who wished to share their ideas about the parking situation downtown. He would also like to take a moment to address something that the City Manager included in his agenda memorandum on social media stating it is great for raising awareness, for cat videos, and lost and found. The City Commission is accountable to its citizenry and are prohibited from publicly discussing agenda items on social media. The City Commission is muted by the Government in the Sunshine Law. The City Commission cares deeply, and the City Commission is working very hard on this topic. He stated by coming here tonight to listen, sharing views, and to help the City Commission that really matters. He wanted to thank everyone for showing up.
- Thanked everyone for allowing him to be one of five elected officials to represent the City residents over the past six years. It has been a true honor and a privilege. He would like to thank the City staff, the Charter Officers, and his fellow City Commission Members for their support, collegiality, and friendship. It has really meant the world to him. He thanked everyone from the bottom of his heart. He is taking some personal time. He going to recharge his batteries. He will be active in the community and will consider additional public service opportunity as to when the need arises but it has been his honor to serve the community.

**MAYOR-COMMISSIONER KENNEDY:**

- Stated she is the Chair of Forward Pinellas and advised that Forward Pinellas is looking into the speed limit on Gulf Boulevard for all the beaches.

**4. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS.** None.

**5. CONSENT AGENDA:**

**A. APPROVAL OF the February 8, 2022 Regular City Commission Meeting Minutes.**

City Attorney Mora read the Consent Agenda, consisting of Agenda Item No. 5A, by title only.

***MOTION MADE BY COMMISSIONER HOOFNAGLE, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER HOUSEBERG, TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA, CONSISTING OF AGENDA ITEM NO. 5A, AS SUBMITTED. UNANIMOUS APPROVAL BY ACCLAMATION.***

**6. PUBLIC HEARINGS:** None

**7. OTHER LEGISLATIVE MATTERS:** None

**8A. DISCUSSION of public parking and the pros and cons of a parking garage in the Narrows Business District.**

Mayor-Commissioner Kennedy thanked everyone for attending this evening and everyone who emailed the City Commission with their thoughts. She thanked the City staff for all their assistance with this matter.

City Manager Mims presented the agenda item.

City Manager Mims stated parking in the Narrows Business District (the District) has been the topic of conversation for decades.

City Manager Mims stated there are currently 117 public parking spaces within the District, of which 34 have been added since 2013, including seven motorcycle parking spaces.

When the City relocated the Solid Waste Facility to Largo, the City transformed that space into a sand volleyball court and was able to add 15 parking spaces in that location. The City continues to look within the District and tries to squeeze and add parking where feasible.

The City paid for three different parking studies over the years that somehow related to direct or indirectly to parking:

- 2009 — Special Area Plan/ University of South Florida. The District's joint-use central parking structure to accommodate future parking demand.
- 2010 — Parking Report/Renaissance Planning Group. Public parking structure and surface parking area recommendation in the District.
- 2019 — Forward Pinellas/Visioning Process. Creation of a parking deck or shared-parking garage. Metered parking in the District.

On January 13, 2022, Governor DeSantis visited Indian Rocks Beach, specifically to Crabby Bill's. Matt Loder of Crabby Bill's contacted him before the event to let him know that he intended to bring up parking concerns to the Governor and inquire if there were any State funds for infrastructure. He let Mr. Loder understand that the discussion was fine, but any involvement from the City in developing a public parking structure would require approval by the policymakers of the City, the Indian Rocks Beach City Commission.

City Manager Mims advised that he individually informed each City Commission Member of the Governor's visit to Indian Rocks Beach and the Loder Family's intention to bring up parking in the District.

The Governor visited Indian Rocks Beach. The Governor asked the Loder Family specifically about the business environment in Indian Rocks Beach and their needs. The

Loder Family brought up to the Governor about the possibility of infrastructure money for additional parking or a parking structure in the District. The Governor's staff indicated to the Loder Family that they would go back and look at funding possibilities through the State for that type of project.

On February 7, 2022, City Staff had a conference call with the Loder Family and the Governor's staff concerning possible infrastructure funding for a parking garage. The Governor's staff mentioned funding from the Job Growth Grant Fund.

On February 15, 2022, he informed the City Commission that the Loder Family had approached the Governor about possible funding for parking enhancements in the District. He advised the City Commission that a discussion of the pros and cons of a parking garage has been placed on the March 8, 2022 Regular City Commission Meeting as a work session item.

On March 1, 2022, City staff had a video call with Adam Callaway, Deputy Secretary of the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, and James Sowinski, Program Administrator for Florida Job Growth Grant Fund at the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. City staff concluded that it was unlikely that the City would receive 100% of the funds to construct any parking facilities due to the communication. This conclusion is based on limited State funds allocated under the Job Growth Grant Fund (\$2.6 Million current, another \$9.1 Million in July), 70 pending grant requests, and restrictions on how State funds could be used (lease or own).

As City Manager, it is his duty to bring information forward to the City Commission, as the policymakers, so the City Commission is informed, and the City Commission may provide guidance to him if they wish him to take any additional actions as it relates to parking in the District.

This agenda item is set up in a work session format, so the City Commission can have an open conversation among themselves and the public about the City Commission's ideas or ideas the public has. No official action can be taken tonight, just discussion and input.

Finally, contrary to FaceBook posts and comments on the IRB Neighborhood Apps, no one with the City has engaged anyone to conduct surveys draw conceptual drawings for the construction of additional parking facilities in the District. The only body that can authorize significant City of Indian Rocks Beach Capital Projects is the Indian Rocks Beach City Commission. One person proclaimed that the "parking garage" was being built in the large parking lot at the Holiday Inn Harbourside because they saw a survey crew. He personally called the owner of the Holiday Inn and was advised that this was a private survey crew working for the Holiday Inn.

City Manager Mims reminded everyone that this is a work session item to discuss parking and the pros and cons of a parking garage in the District.

City Manager Mims reiterated that the City Commission would not take action on this item this evening.

**J.T. Corrales, 7850-128<sup>th</sup> Street, Seminole, representing the Loder Family Brand, aka Crabby Bill's**, first and foremost, thanked the City Commission for their leadership and public service to help IRB to continue to thrive and grow.

Mr. Corrales stated he would like to lead by example in saying that everyone shares the same passion about their visions of what IRB could be, they have different perspectives of how the community gets there. He thinks it is okay. His advocacy for something is not his opposition to anyone personally here this evening. He has a lot of friends who have been vocal about the opposition of it. He has had the opportunity to speak to them and tell them that he appreciates their passion, and even though they are on the opposite end of a polarizing issue, they are still friends to him. He would like to continue to move with that in mind. There is enough ugly in the world right now, so he hopes that everyone is courtesy and respectful to one another and to all the City officials.

Mr. Corrales stated that Crabby Bill's Family Brands has been in the community since 1983. Their business has contracted and has grown, but their heart and interest have always been in Indian Rocks Beach. Crabby Bill's focuses so much on cultivating their relationships and participating in all community events. Crabby Bill's has never said no to anything, and they have never asked for anything in return. From A2K to the Rotary to the Beach Art Center to the Fire District, the IRB Homeowners' Association, and many others.

Mr. Corrales stated Indian Rocks Beach is absolutely amazing, and residents live in paradise. Indian Rocks Beach has grown and developed over the years. Because Indian Rocks Beach has so many wonderful things to offer, people will continue to flock here in droves. Currently, the City does not have the proper infrastructure or land use to accommodate the influx of people.

Mr. Corrales stated the issues that they have historically seen over the years that will only compound from where they are today are:

- *Traffic on Gulf Boulevard, which is a State road.* The traffic bottlenecks throughout the day (daily) on Gulf Boulevard in front of Crabby Bill's. People try to find beach parking in the business parking lots within the District. They will circle around and around until they find an open parking space.
- *Street parking.* Beach-goers are parking in front of residential homes, leaving trash, blocking residents in at times, and noise, which has to be a burden for those residents.

- *Private parking for businesses.* Crabby Bill's sees day in and out people come and unload a full day's worth of beach gear as they walk across the street to the beach. It puts businesses in a very peculiar spot because morally, they do not feel like they can tow somebody and then have that negative effect fall back on them and the community. It is a lose-lose for businesses.

Mr. Corrales stated Crabby Bill's is proposing a solution. Today, they are speaking about a parking garage, something in the District, 3-stories tall, ground level, 2nd level, and 3rd level. The parking garage would be aesthetically pleasing and fit into the community with centralized alternative transportation, i.e., scooters and golf carts, to get the cars off the road.

Mr. Corrales stated Crabby Bill's loves the community, and they understand the challenges that come with considerations like this. There are a lot of hypotheticals that are being suggested surrounding this topic. The facts are that the City is dealing with development inadequacies keeping the City from handling the state influx that the City is experiencing today. All the problems that the City is experiencing today will continue to exasperate as time goes on.

Mr. Corrales stated Crabby Bill's is not asking for a parking garage today. They are not asking for a yes. They are just asking that the City do the research, enlist the experts, and understand the economics of what a parking garage for IRB would actually provide.

Mr. Corrales stated that if anyone is present to save IRB, that could be done today by preserving the integrity of what makes this community special, supporting one another, keeping the beach clean, and visiting the businesses. He stated if more residents volunteer and participate in City organizations together, more can be done for IRB than fighting for or against a parking garage. Together everyone can do great things.

Mayor-Commissioner Kennedy opened the public comment.

**Mary Rose Holmes, 718 Beach Trail, representing the Plein Air Cottage Artists,** stated they have been working over 20 years painting the wonderful old-fashioned Indian Rocks Beach. The Plein Air Cottage Artist has tried to raise awareness of how beautiful this old-fashioned, old Florida Indian Rocks Beach is. She does not think a garage would fit in Indian Rocks Beach.

**Joe Romano, 359-12<sup>th</sup> Avenue,** stated he has been a resident of Indian Rocks Beach for 20 years and has watched the City grow. He is a little upset about the commercialized going on — Airbnbs, street parking, infrastructure, life safety. He stated from Thursday through Sunday it is hard for anyone to get anywhere in Indian Rocks Beach because of the traffic on Gulf Boulevard. He said he had been involved in three parking garage projects. The City of Clearwater parking garage was supposed to help traffic flow and

parking, but it only helped the parking and did nothing for the traffic flow. He stated that more cars would be put on Indian Rocks Beach if the City built a parking garage, not solving anything. Cars need to get off of the beach. Maybe the businesses could come together and develop a valet system like they did in Siesta Key.

**Chad Golub, 520-2<sup>nd</sup> Street, co-creator of IRB Life Page on FaceBook**, stated although they have an audience of over 20,000 people on the FaceBook page who live and vacation in Indian Rocks Beach, he can only speak for himself. The combination of only having a two-lane draw bridge going into a major artery of IRB, one stoplight, two one-way streets downtown will be a disaster for the traffic going into and off this south side of the island. Imagine emergency vehicles trying to maneuver through that traffic if there were an actual two to four hundred cars a day in the heart of IRB. People come in the morning, and those parking spots would be taken. They leave in the afternoon, and those parking spots would be taken. If it is two hundred cars, that equals four hundred cars. He is not saying the City does not need more parking. The City does need more parking, but there has to be a better solution than a parking garage downtown.

Mr. Golub stated that if the proposed parking garage is for beach-goers, it should be built in the middle of the island around 23rd Avenue, where there is some land. So, both the Belleair Beach Causeway and the Walsingham Bridge would have equal access. If the proposed parking garage is intended to be built in the Business District Triangle to bring in more business downtown and not beach-goers, he is against it.

**Brian Gauldin, 420-18<sup>th</sup> Avenue**, stated he came here to speak in favor of a parking garage. He thinks many people, for some reason, believe a garage is going to bring more people here. He asked who goes to a beach town because they have a parking garage. The beach-goers are already coming here. The number of people coming to IRB will continue to grow. It is not good, but a garage will not bring more traffic to town. It is going to give traffic that is coming to town a place to park. A parking garage would provide people with a place to park to go to the beach or walk around the Business District Triangle. Instead of parking in a restaurant parking lot and maybe buying a beer to find a parking spot, and then they leave and go to the beach using that valuable space for a restaurant patron.

After listening to the City Manager, Mr. Gauldin stated he does not think a parking garage is feasible, but the City needs to explore other alternatives. He has been to beach towns on the other side of the State with a golf cart trolley system and bike and scooter rentals and stated the City should have paid and metered parking at the beach accesses for the City to make money. If the beach accesses are so crowded, residents cannot get a spot.

Mr. Gauldin stated that the City should explore other ideas, and a parking garage would not bring more traffic to IRB. The parking garage gives the ones coming to IRB a place to park.

**Peggy Cordle, 420-18<sup>th</sup> Avenue**, stated she is not a first responder but travels every single street of IRB very often because she goes into people's homes and cares for them. She said the parking up and down the side streets, especially on the weekends, is very difficult for her to get to her patients' homes this time of year. It bothers her that IRB does not have alternatives for people who come to IRB to have a place to leave their vehicles to walk, bicycle, or to do things like take a shuttle, a trolley, or do whatever they need to, to get to the various businesses, and to the beach accesses.

Ms. Cordle stated she hopes the City explores the possibilities of easing the number of cars on the road and maybe do a little better job of not letting people park on the side streets in Indian Rocks Beach. She stated more "no parking signs" have been put up, but she would like to see them on every road, except for residents.

**Laura Meares O'Donaghue, 3375-21<sup>st</sup> Place SW, Largo**, stated she is part of the original Meares Family that goes back generations in Indian Rocks Beach. She said someone emailed her a flyer that they found on the ground that said there would be a general meeting regarding a proposed parking lot. She called her family, who lives on IRB, and asked them if they received a flyer, called several other IRB residents, and businesses, and all advised her that they had not received a flyer. No one had received this flyer.

Ms. O'Donaghue stated she thought this was not fair to the residents, homeowners, shops, stores, and restaurants on Indian Rocks Beach, so she shared this generic flyer that was found on the ground on social media. During this time, she was fortunate enough to come across other long-time homeowners that were also deeply concerned about this proposed parking garage. Together they went door-to-door and notified all the residents about this proposal.

Soon after going door-to-door, many citizens contacted the City directly, and another mailer was suddenly sent out by the City (the little postcard). Then just a few days later, all this new information about the old parking studies appeared on the City website, which was just a few days before the meeting, which hardly gives anybody time to research that information. There is an 8 to 10-year-old traffic study, a 10-year-old parking study done by Forward Pinellas, and a letter drafted by the Business District Triangle business owners that is made up of all Crabby Bill's locations and all the businesses located in that area on the City website. This letter stated" *"The businesses of Indian Rocks Beach have established a unified message. We want to communicate our message to the City and hope the message is received in the spirit in which the topic was originally broached. Although, we don't know the answer. We hope for serious consideration and discussion that will help solve the parking and traffic issues on our beach. We believe this may be a possible solution and encourage a discovery process to develop a better answer to traffic and parking in IRB. We appreciate the commission and the difficult position they are in to consider a solution that impacts all our community. We only ask for open minds and forward movement in finding answers."* She stated that Mayor-Commissioner Kennedy sits

on the Forward Pinellas Board of Directors. She stated she is unsure, but it appears that it would be a conflict of interest to be a part of any parking study that could possibly affect the outcome of a proposed parking structure and should not be allowed.

Ms. O'Donoghue stated she feels it is high time that the elected officials start doing their jobs, and start preserving and protecting this beautiful City, and stop neglecting the quaintness and beauty that makes Indian Rocks Beach such a desired destination. There is no more room to build. Indian Rocks Beach is officially at capacity.

**Matt Loder, Sr., Crabby Bill's Family**, stated this is unbelievable that a City that his family has called home for so long. His family has given their time and lives here and has contributed to the City as much as anybody else. The personal attacks against his family business simply because they say they have to have a solution to the parking issue. He met with one of his IRB neighbors, who agreed to disagree. He can respectfully tell everyone that he loves the guy and is a great neighbor. He is an excellent asset to the community. He stated people will continue to come to Florida and Indian Rocks Beach. It is not a Crabby Bill's issue. It is an Indian Rocks Beach issue. The public beach is what draws people to Indian Rocks Beach and the amount of free parking.

Mr. Loder stated it is tough to take these personal attacks against his family business.

**Bob Linderman, 2414 Coral Court**, thanked the City Commission for listening to what everyone had to say. He is apologetic for the villainization of the City Commission, the City Manager, the Loder Family, and other people. This whole thing, as everyone heard, somebody finds something on the ground and puts it on social media. He has only lived here for 32 years. Thirty-two years ago, he would not have thought IRB would have had to deal with parking issues as the City has to today. Every day, the parking issue gets worse in Indian Rocks Beach. The quality of life for Indian Rocks Beach residents goes down because the City is trying to figure out how to accommodate all the people who come to IRB. The City does need to do something about parking. Maybe a parking garage is a way to go, but he does not know. But, something has to be done.

Mr. Linderman stated anyone who villainizes the Loders knows nothing about Indian Rocks Beach. The Loders have supported Indian Rocks Beach through everything that the City has done for at least the 32 years that he has been here. He is sorry to see the villainization that is going on and the dark side of technology, which is social media.

**Lauren Golub, 520-2<sup>nd</sup> Street**, stated, "Urban parking lots are dead or dying, and how we use the curb is changing," said Rich Barone, Vice President of Transportation for the Regional Plan Association of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

Ms. Golub stated parking in downtowns will "morph from being big massive surface lots and garages to much smaller areas configured for pickup and drop-off of autonomous

vehicles," Barone said. "Cities will be more walkable, more people-friendly, and there will be more space for parks and other amenities."

Ms. Golub stated a severe environmental problem in parking lots and garages is water pollution. The parking lots accumulate a lot of pollutants (such as oil, grease, heavy metals, and sediment) in the water runoff because they do not absorb the water that flows into the waterways, thus affecting drinking life and sea life.

**Cecily Pond Benga, 264 Larchwood Drive, Largo**, her business address is 2035 20th Avenue Parkway, stated she is a local of 44 years out of 45 years of her life. She is a professional pet sitter. She stated she has the hardest time getting in and out of traffic on Indian Rocks Beach, and she has an electric bike, a motorized scooter, and a vehicle. She supports the idea of the proposed parking garage because she needs help getting to and from the homes to take care of the residents' animals when they like to go vacationing.

Ms. Benga stated something has to be done. The cars are coming no matter what. The City has to figure out a solution for the parking issue amicably, nicely, and positively. She stated the negativity and threats have to stop.

**Diane Flagg, 2316 Gulf Boulevard**, stated she is almost speechless at the overreaction and what she considers friends and neighbors in this room tonight to try to develop a way that the community can solve traffic, congested streets, and parking issues. This is not new. The City Commission has been talking about this, and she does not think there has ever been a crowded meeting like this in the last 15 years when the City Commission discussed parking. It is nice to see everyone out, but everyone needs to learn and listen because the Business District Triangle has needed parking relief for many years. It is hard for her, as a local, to even go to one of the restaurants there now because she cannot get a parking space. The community needs to think about the future of Indian Rocks Beach. She would recommend reviewing the feasibility of a low-rise parking garage. Something that would fit in the Business District Triangle would help all the businesses and help the residents get to and from.

Ms. Flagg stated there are other remedies, such as paid parking and improving traffic flow, within the Business District Triangle, and the City should look at that in addition to the parking garage.

Ms. Flagg stated the City could not ask for a better business and partner than Crabby Bill's. She is appalled that anybody would think differently about their motive to get parking in the Business District Triangle.

**Eric Meyers, 2316 Gulf Boulevard**, stated the Loder Family are good stewards of Indian Rocks Beach. The Loder Family came to the table with an idea that could or could not work. It is an idea, and the City should never shut down an idea. The City should look into

it and see if it would work. The City needs to move forward on some type of parking solution.

**Carol Sampey, 434 Harbor Drive North**, stated she is against a parking garage because she thinks it would bring more cars to IRB. She said the traffic flow at Gulf Boulevard and 4th Avenue (in front of Crabby Bill's) is congested and backs up traffic north and south because of the number of people crossing the street at that flashing beacon. She does not know if a person can regulate that or have a timed crosswalk.

**Bob Coplen, 447-20<sup>th</sup> Avenue**, stated he has been a resident since 1985, has served on multiple City boards/committees, and is active in the community. He noted that the quality of life in IRB has been degraded. There is a public safety issue caused by traffic, and parking is the symptom. He suggested the business owners build a parking garage off the beach with their own money and run shuttles to the beach and their Business District Triangle.

Mr. Coplen stated there is no legal obligation to have on-street non-resident parking east of Gulf Boulevard. However, the City does have an obligation to have on-street parking west on Gulf Boulevard for federal beach renourishment funds, which the City has more than what is required. The City already rejected the County's offer to build a parking garage on Gulf Boulevard between 23rd and 24th Avenues, stating it was not in the City's best interest.

**Olivia Bush, 336 La Hacienda Drive**, stated her name is Olivia Bush, and she is 26 years old and has lived in IRB her entire life. She is fortunate enough to live on the same street her mom grew up on. Part of what sets this beach apart from others is the small-town charm that has been endured for generations. This unique community feature has stood the test of time despite the significant influx of newcomers.

Ms. Bush stated that there had been a lot of talk about this parking garage over the last few weeks. So many residents have become passionate about this topic because the future of the town that everyone loves is in jeopardy. This proposed parking garage is a solution to help with the recent influx of traffic. She does not think it would alleviate that issue. In fact, she feels that the parking garage would add to the problem. With the addition of a three-level parking garage, the town would face new issues pertaining to safety, added congestion, and the loss of the town's quaintness in the near future. The addition of more visitors that use the parking garage would present safety concerns because people avoid using the crosswalks if they are overcrowded. The parking garage would also cause more traffic jams and longer wait times for first responders. Lastly, this would erode the very essence of the iconic three-mile slice of paradise.

**Don House, 2104 Beach Trail**, stated about 20 years, he suggested the City purchase the old GTE Switching Station, 300 5th Avenue, for a parking garage. The City does not need

a parking garage. The restaurants and the other businesses in the Business District Triangle need a parking garage, and the businesses should pay for the parking garage in the Business District Triangle.

**Nancy Obarski, 708 Beach Trail, #B**, stated a parking garage would bring more people to Indian Rocks Beach. A fraction of the beach is left with significantly more bodies out there. She stated the beach was so crowded that she had to walk in the water when she walked the beach last weekend.

Ms. Obarski stated she could see the need for more parking for the businesses in the Business District Triangle. She does not have any good answers, but the City does need to find them and find them quickly because the City does not want to lose these businesses.

**Bill Snyder, 425-18<sup>th</sup> Avenue**, stated he has lived in Indian Rocks Beach for about 25 years. For anyone to think bringing more cars to this City will alleviate traffic is ridiculous. The traffic is a problem. He cannot even go to Publix on the mainland on the weekends because of the traffic on Gulf Boulevard. He sympathizes with the Lodgers and their situation.

**Hugh Burton, 1102 Beach Trail**, stated his family moved to the beaches in 1958 and has been on this beach or near this beach that entire time. He thinks that maybe the wrong question has been asked. The question before the public is: "Will a three-story parking garage address congestion on streets and access to the beach?". He stated that the City should be asking what type of community the taxpayer residents want to live in. The City is already at capacity. He believes that most people that live here do so because it is a little slice of paradise.

Mr. Burton stated the residents live here because it is not highly commercialized, like Clearwater Beach or St. Pete Beach, and it is not just a residential area like Belleair. It is a sleepy beach town. The City has the right mix of businesses and restaurants for its geographical size. Over the years, it has become more attractive because it is not as crowded as Clearwater Beach. Over the past several years, Clearwater Beach has added hundreds of new hotel rooms and at least two parking garages.

Mr. Burton stated that some say that the City needs to increase the infrastructure to make it more appealing. He responds by saying it is already appealing. But again, the City is just full at the moment. Try Indian Shores or further south. This is not anti-business. It is just reality. Increasing only one infrastructure component will not solve the perceived traffic and parking issue. Developing a potentially workable solution requires more land, and the City does not have any actual real estate to maneuver with.

Mr. Burton asked how many cars will the proposed parking garage hold. There is no more room to put in additional roads to move that volume of people. He cannot imagine the line of traffic coming and leaving the beach on any given day or the number of pedestrians trying to cross Gulf Boulevard and how that would back up traffic.

Mr. Burton asked about public facilities. He lives on the beach, and on several occasions, he has been requested by beach-goers if they could use his facilities.

Mr. Burton recommended building a parking garage on the mainland and using shuttles to transport people to the beach. He stated there is land available on the mainland.

**Jeff Gurney, 11787-160<sup>th</sup> Court, Seminole**, stated he does not care whether the person is a resident or business owner. He has played on this beach for 12 years, and he loves Indian Rocks Beach. He loves the residents, and he loves the people he works for, Matt Loder. He stated he would not own a home or have a family if it was not for Matt Loder and his family. He said there is a lot of traffic in Indian Rocks Beach and people have a hard time finding a parking space, and they circle the Business District Triangle until they find a parking space. He stated the night shift employees have difficulty finding parking spaces because the parking spaces are full of beach-goers.

**Erika Dietz, 534 Harbor Drive North**, stated the City needs to be looking for solutions. People are coming, the traffic is coming, the beaches are full, and people are not going to stop coming. She would urge the City Commission to form a separate committee, perhaps to prepare a study of this issue.

Ms. Dietz stated the idea of a free shuttle for guests of hotels and short-term rentals is potentially a good one. Indian Rocks Beach is one of the only communities that allow short-term rentals, which means there are hundreds, if not maybe a thousand or more. What if the short-term rental owners could offer up some parking spaces when renters do not bring their cars.

Ms. Dietz stated St. Pete Beach has something called the "Freebee Shuttle Service," a free door-to-door shuttle with pickup and drop off anywhere in the service area of St. Pete Beach. She loves the idea of the shuttle from the mainland, but she does not know how feasible that would be. But, perhaps the City could consider hiring a consultant for this. She stated this is not the first time that any community has addressed a parking shortage problem. The City should hire someone who can give the City some expertise in this field. Everyone wants to live here and get up and down Gulf Boulevard more easily.

**Paul Jenkins, Jr., Crabby Bill's Family Brands**, stated everyone is talking about how great it was in the 70s and 80s, and he can agree with everyone on that. But, the City needs to start working on some solutions for what the City is today and where the State, County, and City are. He stated this is just not a Pinellas County or an Indian Rocks Beach

issue. The City needs to talk about solutions, and he understands that there have been three studies in the past 10 or 12 years that have all talked about the need for more parking infrastructure and solutions. But the same people who are saying that there should not be any extra parking structure in the Business District Triangle are the same ones who said that the City needs to eliminate parking on the side streets. She would say that the City cannot do one without the other. Many of them came here as visitors, and now the residents do not want those visitors to have those same amenities.

Mr. Jenkins stated if residents do not want cars parking in front of their homes, then a parking facility would solve that problem.

**Mary Wilkerson, 490 Harbor Drive North**, stated she and her husband owns several businesses. She said to everyone the current traffic crisis needs to be addressed. The City needs to be open to new technologies, parking management, and enforcement. Let's think about possibilities that would benefit the entire beautiful island. Over the years, the residents have fought to keep a small residential community defined by low-rise cottages and businesses with an old Florida feel.

Ms. Wilkerson stated as citizens of Indian Rocks Beach, the City should think about how to implement controls that benefit the residents, the businesses, and visitors. Things are becoming seriously out of balance, and the discussion about building a parking garage would potentially add thousands of visitors to Indian Rocks Beach daily. As several speakers have stated, she stated that the City's sandy beach is a precious resource. Day trippers tacking to the beach in mass with all their gear will not necessarily add dollars to the City's restaurants or shops. What everyone loves about Indian Rocks Beach is the human scale.

**Kelley Cisarik, 448 Harbor Drive South**, stated that the City has 18 free City public parking spaces inside the Holiday Inn Harbourside parking lot near 2nd Street. She noted those spaces are very unutilized. She stated she went to use one of those spaces during Taste of IRB and other times, but Holiday Inn would not allow her to park her car in one of those City public parking spaces.

Ms. Cisarik stated before the City contemplates building a parking garage structure, the City should be better at utilizing those 18 parking spaces in the Holiday Inn parking lot. She suggested that the City label those parking spaces on the outside of 2nd Street, advising that those are free City public parking spaces. She also suggested making another entrance for easier access to the City's free public parking spaces in the Holiday Inn parking lot.

**R.B. Johnson, 1206 Beach Trail**, stated that Belleair Shore, Belleair Beach, Indian Shores, Redington Shores, North Redington Beach, and Redington Beach do not have parking problems because those communities provide very little if no public parking. The

City has parking problems and congestion and traffic issues because the City is so generous with parking.

Mr. Johnson stated he would suggest that the parking issues the City has in the Business District Triangle are not so much a lack of parking, but it is the allocation of parking spaces. The on-street parking spaces on 1st and 2nd Streets, 4th Avenue, and Miami Avenue were all meant for the local businesses and restaurants in the Business District Triangle. He stated a heavy percentage of those parking spaces are occupied by people going to the beach. It does not seem like it makes any difference how much parking the City adds down there. It does not help the businesses. It is sending more and more people to the beach. As several people already noted, the beach is pretty full here. He knows the City is a very small community and is already generous in providing free public parking at the beach accesses, on side streets (where there are issues), and at the south end of town on the street. He stated at the very least hopes the City Commission would seriously consider ways to attack the issue of people parking in those spaces down in the Business District Triangle on the street that goes to the beach and not to the businesses.

**John Ballock, 436 Harbor Drive North**, stated there are people for and against the parking garage. Indian Rocks Beach is an island, and unless someone knows how to make the island bigger, the City is landlocked. The City can use technology to help with its parking problem. He explained that Google Maps had brought a lot of the traffic to Indian Rocks Beach. Everyone uses Google Maps to find and get to places, and Google Maps uses algorithms. The City can use those algorithms to its advantage. Encourage residents and visitors to use Uber and Lyft. No parking spaces are needed.

**Matt Campo, 416 20th Avenue**, stated the City is over its capacity and how does the City bring down its capacity. He noted the City should eliminate the side street parking because those are not seasonal rentals. They are beach-goers. He said a parking garage would not solve the parking problems north of Walsingham.

Mr. Campo stated without question, parking is needed within the Business District Triangle. He suggested having more golf cart parking since they take less space.

Mr. Campo stated the City has a capacity of how many cars it can fit, whether it is on the streets, the beaches, or in the Business District Triangle. The City has the ability to control how many people are in the City in that realm. He heard people say the people are going to come. They are only going to come and stay if they have a place to park or if they come another way.

**John Pfanstiehl, 448 Harbor Drive South**, stated the Walsingham Bridge area is too congested. He waited in traffic eight blocks trying to get off the beach through the Business District Triangle area. There were no accidents, no construction, it was not rush hour, and

it was just too congested. Adding shuttles and constructing a parking garage would make that area more congested.

**Gary Holcomb, 301 Gulf Boulevard, aka Mr. Beach,** stated 35 years ago, the City Commission was in this room discussing parking problems. The grocery store parking lot would fill up before he got there in the morning with beach-goers. The City and businesses in the area knew there was a problem, and after 35 years and three reports paid for by tax dollars with all of them recommending some type of parking structure, nothing has been decided, and nothing has been done.

Mr. Holcomb stated the Lodgers are really Indian Rocks Beach to every tourist and visitor that come to this State. The Lodgers have worked hard to come up with solutions and offer ideas, and that is all they are. Just ideas to help the City and the residents work together and develop a solution.

**Paula Hamlin, 2112 Gulf Boulevard,** stated she respects the Loder Family and loves their restaurants. She does not understand a parking garage as a solution because it is finite and the community is finite.

Ms. Hamlin stated St. Pete Beach has a "Real-Time Parking" App that allows a person to see what parking spaces are available and said that maybe all the beaches could get together and use this same App.

Ms. Hamlin stated that beach-goers that use the businesses' parking lots should be penalized, and maybe the businesses should use valets during peak times.

**Steve Page, 9130 Oakhurst Road, Seminole,** stated he does not live in Indian Rocks Beach but comes through IRB every day as a visitor. There is a parking problem here, and everyone can see as they enter the Business District area.

Mr. Page stated one of the greatest assets that the City has is the Loder Family.

**Heidi Wilkers, 312 Bahia Vista Drive,** stated Mr. Corrales said that the towing of beach-goers cars is not a solution. She would like to recommend that the businesses rethink towing vehicles parked in their lots and enforce it because it would benefit their businesses.

**Art McArthur, 414 12th Avenue,** stated there was a lot of good input. The residents are looking for the City Commission's leadership and movement on the parking issue because it is a bigger issue than parking. That is a symptom of the overall problem.

Mayor-Commissioner Kennedy closed the public comment session.

## **CITY COMMISSION COMMENTS:**

**Commissioner Hoofnagle** thanked the Loder Family for putting forth a discussion about a potential option to solve a problem. It was just an idea to solve an issue that needed to be looked at, and that was a noble undertaking. He said the Loder Family had highlighted the need to support the City businesses and ensure that the City gets the right mix of commerce into the City. The very goodwill gesture that the Loder Family done was misinterpreted on social media and turned into something it never needed to be. The way that this City Commission works is that an idea is put up, there is a work session maybe more than one, and then the City Commission goes through a very deliberative process, which may result in a committee or some other kind of workgroup, it ends up in a budget item, and takes a long time to get something done. The Loder Family started it, and that is going to help this community in the future. The City owes the Loder Family a debt of gratitude. He regrets that the Loder Family had to withstand some of the reckless social media interactions for trying to do a good thing. He thanked the Loder Family for getting the City started, and he hoped as a City and community could work together to make it a good result.

**Vice Mayor-Commissioner McCall** stated a tremendous amount of good ideas had been brought forth by the public. He said the last analysis that they had done was ten years ago. With technology completely changing, especially with Google, he would like to see an updated analysis with a parking garage as an opportunity and the other items that need to be addressed, such as safety, congestion, and first responders. The recommendations should include short-term options, then a long-term solution.

**Commissioner Hanna** thanked the Loder Family for everything they do for the City of Indian Rocks Beach and thanked the audience for bringing up great ideas. He stated the City does have a traffic problem. Is the City treating the symptom or the problem? He has been an advocate since he became a City Commissioner in 2009. He does not understand why the City has free parking. He is like everyone else, if he can get something for free, it's from him. He did his research and found out that IRB has more beach accesses than any other beach community, and the parking is free.

Commissioner Hanna stated he does not think that the proposed parking garage will be free, and he does not believe many beach-goers would be using the parking garage if they had to pay for parking.

Commissioner Hanna commended everyone on their beautiful ideas.

***MOTION MADE BY COMMISSIONER HOOFNAGLE, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER HANNA TO EXTEND TO THE MEETING TO 9:45 P.M. UNANIMOUS APPROVAL BY ACCLAMATION.***

**Commissioner Houseberg** stated there had been so many ideas here perculating, and there is a lot to disgust. It is going to be a handful of little changes that the City will make

that will improve a lot of things. The City needs to talk about, test them, and try them, and then the City needs to figure out does or should the City need a parking garage. All these are unanswered questions.

**Mayor-Commissioner Kennedy** stated the City has been discussing parking for 35 years, and the City does need to come up with a plan now.

Mayor-Commissioner Kennedy stated she reached out to St. Pete Beach Mayor Alan Johnson about LIBELIUM. LIBELIUM is a proto-type program that is a radar sensor device that detects parking availability indoors and outdoors.

Mayor-Commissioner Kennedy advised the City is working with Pinellas County to see if there are solutions on the mainland.

Mayor-Commissioner Kennedy stated the City Manager would be looking into the solutions and ideas that were presented this evening.

Mayor-Commissioner Kennedy stated staff would put a timeline together, and the City will get through this.

Mayor-Commissioner Kennedy stated Indian Rocks Beach has the greatest community on all sides. She said she appreciates everyone coming.

**9. OTHER BUSINESS.** None

**10. ADJOURNMENT.**

***MOTION MADE BY COMMISSIONER HOOFNAGLE, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER HANNA, TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9:35 P.M. UNANIMOUS APPROVAL BY ACCLAMATION.***

April 12 2022  
Date Approved

/DOR