

MINUTES
CITY OF INDIAN ROCKS BEACH
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 13, 2024 @ 6:00 PM
1507 BAY PALM BOULEVARD INDIAN ROCKS BEACH, FL 33785

Mayor-Commissioner Houseberg called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor-Commissioner Denise Houseberg, Vice-Mayor Commissioner Janet Wilson, Commissioner John Bigelow, Commissioner Hope Wyant and Commissioner Jude Bond.

OTHERS PRESENT: City Manager Gregg Mims, City Clerk Lorin Kornijtschuk, Finance Director Dan Carpenter, Public Works Director Dean Scharmen and Code Enforcement Officer Manager Mike Kelley.

For continuity, items are listed in agenda order, although not necessarily discussed in that order.

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

A PCSO representative read the July 2024 report.

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

Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue District Fire Chief Jeffrey Davidson reviewed the fire district's monthly report.

Fire Chief Davidson thanked those who attended the housing ceremony for the newest fire engine. He invited the public to join the Third Annual Commemorative Walk on September 11.

Fire Chief Davidson stated that the purchase of the land for the new fire station at the northern end of Indian Rocks Beach will be finalized soon. He planned to set up an advanced life support unit in temporary housing on the property starting April 1st, instead of waiting two years for the fire station to be finished. He stated that the County Director of Emergency Safety was not going to recommend the additional funding to the Board of County Commissioners. He requested the Commission reach out to Pinellas County to secure the needed funds. The Fire Department requires approximately \$360,000 for the EMS fund from April 1, 2025 to September 30, 2025.

Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson asked whom the Commission should contact at the county. Fire Chief Davidson stated he would get that information out to her.

Commissioner Bond inquired if the requested funds were for temporary housing and where the funding for the following year would come from.

Fire Chief Davidson clarified that the funds were for personnel, not temporary housing and that the following half-year's funding would come from the next fiscal year. Currently, there are 67.3 million in reserves, which will increase to \$103 million in the 2025 fiscal year. The \$360,000 required is less than 1% of the reserves.

Mayor-Commissioner Houseberg asked if they ever received the pay raise.

Fire Chief Davidson explained that the proposed ad valorem tax was due to an inadequate funding mechanism. Most of the increase was intended for capital needs, and he continues to work with the union on a wage increase.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS.

Beth McMullen, 481 Harbor Drive South and Tom McMullen, 481 Harbor Drive South, Ms. McMullen spoke about ongoing issues with a short-term rental across from her home, which has been operating since 2021. She has contacted the City and Commission with her concerns, emphasizing that the short-term rental ordinance, which was enacted to protect residents, should be enforced to address these problems. She called for stronger enforcement of the ordinance to ensure neighborhood protections are upheld.

Don House, 2104 Beach Trail, shared his frustration with the lack of respect from some members of the Commission.

John Pfanstiehl, 448 Harbor Drive S., described the negative impact of short-term rentals on residential neighborhoods. He urged the commission to take bold actions to prevent Indian Rocks Beach from becoming like Anna Maria Island.

Linda Newton, 438 Harbor Drive North, reflected on the changing dynamics of the neighborhood due to short-term vacation rentals, stating families cannot afford to live here.

Kellee Watt, 431 Harbor Drive South, stated she had reported vandalism and criminal trespass from a neighboring short-term rental property which continues to create issues with noise.

Dave Goodwin, 1006 First Street, described how the neighborhood has changed, with hotels surrounding his home and constant noise from parties.

Christine Bergman, 2207 Bay Boulevard, expressed disappointment with the abundance of no-street parking signs, which limit parking in her neighborhood.

Scott Shapiro, 2032 20th Avenue, advocated for re-creating advisory boards. He expressed frustration with the city removing his parking rights in front of his house without prior discussion.

Teresa Pruchniewska, 316 6th Avenue, thanked the public workers for their hard work in keeping the city clean and beautiful. She described issues with a neighbor.

Mayor-Commissioner Houseberg closed the Public Comment.

3 A. REPORT OF the City Attorney. None.

3 B. REPORT OF the City Manager.

City Manager Mims stated the city supplied sand and sandbags before the storm and thanked the City team for the preparation and clean up from Hurricane Debbie. The smell on the beach is due to the large sponges washing up; the city is actively raking the beach.

City Manager Mims stated that the Nature Preserve is closed for renovation and is expected to reopen on or before the first of January. He thanked the Friends of the City of Indian Rocks Beach Library for the thousands of hours of volunteer work. He informed the Commission that

the City has received renewal of the Community Rating System Program, which saves policyholders in Indian Rocks Beach about \$700,000 annually.

City Manager Mims reported that a pedestrian shelter was destroyed in a traffic accident near Villa Gallace in June. The Finance Director is working with the drivers' insurance company.

3 C. REPORT OF the City Commission.

Commissioner Wyant stated she has been busy in the neighborhood as a Commissioner and thanked Fire Chief Davidson for the invitation to ring in the new fire truck.

Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson reported she would be attending the Florida League of Cities Conference in Hollywood, Florida. She expressed excitement about networking with other leaders from similar communities and exploring long-term solutions for Indian Rocks Beach. She also planned to look into joining significant committees that could benefit the city.

Mayor-Commissioner Houseberg stated that the smell on the beach is not only due to the sponges. She read in the Tampa Bay Times that one hundred million gallons of wastewater were released into the waterways because the sewage systems in the Tampa Bay area were overwhelmed by Hurricane Debbie. She also reported that IRB Home is looking for volunteers for the Holiday Tour of Homes.

4. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS. None.

City Attorney Mora read Consent Agenda 5 A through 5 F.

5. CONSENT AGENDA:

- A. APPROVAL OF** the July 9, 2024, Regular City Commission Meeting Minutes.
- B. APPROVAL OF** the July 16, 2024, Special City Commission Meeting Minutes
- C. CONFIRMING ACTION** taken during the July 16, 2024 Special City Commission Meeting.
- D. APPROVAL** of the July 16, 2024, City Commission Budget Work Session Minutes.
- E. APPROVAL OF** the FY 2025 Law Enforcement Contract with the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office.
- F. ACCEPT/FILE** June 2024 Year-to-Date Financial Report.

Motion by Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson and seconded by Commissioner Wyant to approve the agenda Items 5 A through 5 F.

Vote taken: Unanimous approval by acclamation.

- 6. PUBLIC HEARINGS:** None.
- 7. OTHER LEGISLATIVE MATTERS:** None.
- 8. WORKSHOP:** Discussion of possible paid parking program in Indian Rocks Beach

Mayor-Commissioner Houseberg asked if there was a consensus to discuss implementing a paid parking program. Unanimous consensus to discuss paid parking.

City Manager provided a report in the agenda packet listing other nearby beach communities that charge for parking and provided insight into their parking hours and parking fees. He stated the Commission would need to consider the impact on three principal areas if paid parking is implemented: (1) beach accesses, (2) business district, and (3) parks, including the Nature Preserve, Kolb Park, 10th Avenue Park, and Brown. The average rate for public parking is \$4.00 per hour.

Commissioner Houseberg asked if the County Park at the 17th Avenue beach access would stay at \$2.50.

City Manager Mims explained that it does not need to remain at \$2.50. The City has an interlocal agreement with the County and the City receives 60% of the proceeds from the county lot which helps cover janitorial costs. If the Commission decides to implement paid parking, he will discuss adjusting rates with the County Administrator who can adjust rates administratively.

Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson asked if the designated resident parking space would remain.

City Manager Mims recommended allowing all property owners with a city parking decal to park without a fee, consistent with other beach cities like Indian Shores and Bellaire Beach. He suggested keeping designated spaces for residents.

Mayor Commissioner Houseberg asked if different hours would be set for beach accesses as compared to parks.

City Manager Mims stated that cities in the report have various hours. He recommended discussing specific hours for beach accesses, whether 24-hour or specified times and if a set time for no parking is needed.

Mayor Commissioner Houseberg suggested that residents should be able to park overnight at beach accesses.

City Manager Mims stated that the city code currently allows overnight parking on a public right-of-way or beach access for up to 72 hours

Commissioner Wyant stated she wanted to hear from the business district, as it would be most affected. She stated that a resident decal should not be needed for overnight parking. She likes to visit the beach after midnight and our neighbors in Largo should be able to as well.

Commissioner Bond inquired if any towns have a 24-hour paid parking program.

City Manager Mims stated that municipalities have various approaches.

City Manager Mims suggested obtaining guidance from the Commission, so he can have a discussion with the business triangle group and provide their feedback to the Commission.

Commissioner Wyant expressed concern about parking around the Little League Field.

City Manager Mims suggested having separate discussions about beach accesses, the business triangle, and parks, as they are all different situations. He cautioned that too many exceptions might make the program unworkable.

Commissioner Wyant proposes signs reading “No Beach Parking” or “Two-Hour Limit.” She expressed concerns about parking at some parks. She suggested revisiting the subject of no parking signs.

City Manager Mims said enforcing “No Beach Parking” signs would be challenging. If the program is implemented, clear signs explaining the rules would be necessary to avoid confusion.

Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson highlighted the lack of sidewalks and safety concerns when walking down the street.

Mayor-Commissioner Houseberg proposed a rate of \$4.00 per hour, which she considered a middle ground based on the other beaches’ charges. Commissioner Bigelow suggested \$5.00 per hour and Commissioner Bond agreed. Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson was comfortable with either \$4.00 or \$5.00 per hour. Commissioner Wyant also agreed with either amount.

The consensus was to consider paid parking at \$5.00 an hour.

Mayor-Commissioner Houseberg moved the subject to determine parking hours and if it was needed.

City Manager Mims clarified parks with legally set hours from 7 a.m. until sunset: Nature Preserve, 10th Avenue Park, and Brown Park.

Commissioner Bond recommended 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. for beach accesses.

Mayor-Commissioner Houseberg proposed 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. for beach accesses, with parking being free after 8 p.m. and until midnight for those without a resident decal.

Commissioner Wyant disagreed with no parking at beach accesses after midnight for non-residents.

Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson suggested 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. in the business district to encourage turnover. Commissioner Bond agreed.

City Manager Mims noted that Kolb Park is a complex area, including City Hall, Art Center, Little League Field, and Senior Softball League, which complicates implementing a consistent parking plan.

The Commission acknowledged that Kolb Park’s parking situation would need separate consideration.

Mayor-Commissioner Houseberg opened Public Comment.

Kellee Watt, 431 Harbor Drive South, questioned if free parking is a problem. She supported the idea of a two-hour limit parking sign.

Don House, 2104 Beach Trail, supports paid parking at \$4.00 per hour and does not like allowing overnight parking at the beach accesses.

Maria Heshmati, 315 La Hacienda Drive, expressed support for paid parking.

Robert Johnson, 1206 Beach Trail, stated he did not have a problem with paid parking and suggested limiting parking after 11 p.m. or midnight. He noted that parking was initially intended

for businesses, restaurants, the post office, and the museum, and now is overutilized by beachgoers and condo residents.

Beth McMullen, 481 Harbor Drive South asked if paid parking would be implemented in front of Nektons, Groupers and Crabbybills.

Commissioner Bigelow responded that those are private property and that they have hired a tow truck service.

Scott Shapiro, 2032 20th Avenue, stated he does not see a problem with free parking. He suggested doing a straw poll or placing it on the ballot for the residents to vote on this issue,

John Thayer, 1819 Bay Boulevard, stated he fought hard against paid parking because Indian Rocks Beach is a little town. He does not see an issue with the parking. He requested the Commission to take it slow.

Matthew Barrowclough, 211 11th Avenue, urged the Commission to consider the reasons for paid parking and its impact on access for working families and communities.

Christine Bergman, 2207 Bay Boulevard, stated that after COVID-19, the beach was visited by everyone but there was an overreaction by placing the abundance of no parking signs. She is proud that Indian Rocks Beach is the last beach to have free parking.

Mr. Heshmati, 315 La Hacienda Drive, supports paid parking to manage overcrowding and more control of the city.

Commissioner Wyant asked City Manager Mims how the money from paid parking would be used.

City Manager Mims explained if implemented, staff would provide a projected revenue, work it through the budget process, and have the Commission decide the best way to allocate the funds.

City Manager Mims explained that this item was placed on the agenda for discussion a while back but was delayed due to the resignation of commission members and the appointment of commissioners to get a fully seated commission. He stated the need for a citizen advisory board is a fallacy, as elected officials represent their constituents.

9. OTHER BUSINESS: None.

10. ADJOURNMENT.

Motion by Commissioner Bond and seconded by Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson to adjourn at 8:23 p.m.