

MINUTES
CITY OF INDIAN ROCKS BEACH
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2024- 6:00 PM
HOLIDAY INN HARBORSIDE- 401 2ND STREET-PELICAN SAND PIPER ROOM
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 Jude Bond, Commissioner John Bigelow, and Commissioner Hope Wyant.

OTHERS PRESENT: City Manager Gregg Mims, Finance Director Dan Carpenter, Public Works Director Dean Scharmen, City Clerk Lorin Kornijtschuk, Planning and Zoning Consultants Hetty Harmon and Craig Fuller.

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 reviewed the September 2024 Crime Analysis report.

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

Nothing reported.

1 C. REPORT OF Recovery Efforts from Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton.

City Manager Mims stated that residents' guides, which include frequently asked questions, are available on the city website and contain valuable information. He also mentioned some positive progress regarding letters many people have been waiting for.

City Manager Mims provided an update on tracking property damage assessments and the permit process. The city has engaged Civilsurv to monitor the status of properties, which will help track where each property stands in the evaluation process. This system will allow the city to keep up-to-date records before county permits are issued, with Planning and Zoning Consultant Hetty Harmon signing off before the county can issue permits.

Public Works Director Dean Scharmen provided several updates regarding ongoing recovery efforts. The debris management program is nearing completion. Crews, including DRC, emergency services, and the City of IRB, are still actively working. He stated the city is partnering with Pinellas County for a Household Chemical Collection event on Saturday, November 23rd, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Belleair Causeway Boat Ramp. Residents can safely dispose of hazardous household items, but there are restrictions on what will be accepted (e.g., no fire extinguishers, propane tanks, or medicines). Residents will need to present proof of residency to participate. Regarding beach access and parks, dune repairs, and sand removal are progressing well, with 12 out of 15 beach accesses now reopened. Parks have also started to reopen, including Brown Park (excluding the tennis courts), 24th Avenue Park, Kolb Park, 12th Avenue Park, 10th Avenue Park, Chick-C-C Park, and Keegan Clair Park. Some parks may

still have non-operational lighting due to the storms. Scharmen thanked the community for their patience during the recovery process.

Planning and Zoning Consultant Hetty Harmon provided updates on the city's permit process and damage assessments. She also clarified that letters will be sent to all residents regarding whether their property has sustained substantial damage. These letters will come from the city, and the updated information can be found on the city's website.

Harmon noted that the website has been updated to include guidance for properties with non-substantial damage, along with necessary application forms. For properties within floodplains or impacted by substantial damage, there will be an appeal process. This process will involve a re-evaluation of cost estimates and appraisals, managed by county subcontractors.

CivilSurv representative Craig Fuller provided an update on the permitting and damage evaluation process. The city has just received a data set and is cleaning it up before sending out letters to residents. He clarified that, although there are thousands of homes and businesses in the county, the number of properties with substantial damage within the city is relatively small, though this is subject to change as more evaluations are completed.

Fuller emphasized that the initial evaluations are for structural soundness, not a full damage assessment. These evaluations are to ensure buildings are not at risk of collapse, and they are not meant to be final determinations of the overall damage. He also noted that there will be an appeals process for those who disagree with damage assessments. This process will involve submitting estimates, appraisals, and documentation of the damage, with the county bringing in external contractors to review and confirm the findings. The goal is to ensure that repairs are made, and improvements can progress, helping residents return to their homes as quickly as possible.

Mayor Commissioner Houseberg asked who was the Flood Plain Manager for the City?

Public Works Director Scharmen Public Works Director Scharmen responded that he is the city's designated floodplain manager but has the authority to delegate certain responsibilities to other staff members. Specifically, Hetty, Craig, and the CivilSurv team have been assigned various tasks related to floodplain management.

Mayor Commissioner Houseberg asked when the Dog Park would be open. Public Works Director Scharmen replied that the City is working on it.

Mayor-Commissioner Houseberg opened Public Comment.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS.

David Whiteside, 446 Harbor Drive North, expressed appreciation for the city's hard work but raised concerns about the delays in issuing damage assessment letters.

Diane Daniel, 309 10th Avenue, thanked the city for its hard work. She suggested bringing back parking stickers. She stated she plans to demolish her house and requested that the demolition permit process be expedited and separate from the rebuilding process. She expressed concern over the lack of official communication from the city.

Nancy Mariani, 515 Hidden Harbor Drive, stated she is frustrated over the lack of progress on permits that were submitted before the storms. She also stated the city should have a unified approach regarding garbage pickup.

Paul Osborne, 2504 Gulf Boulevard, expressed gratitude for the efforts to restore Indian Rocks Beach and praised the work done so far., He raised concerns about the condition of the beach. He urged the commission to make beach restoration a priority.

Laura 115 12th Avenue, raised concerns about the delay in permit applications. She also expressed confusion about how residents with non-substantial damage will be notified.

Mark Arnold 1204 Harbor Drive, expressed concerns about the permitting process, particularly regarding projects that were submitted before the storms. He noted that some businesses have already completed repairs and reopened, while homeowners are still waiting for permits. He raised concerns about a fire on their street, where multiple structures are similar.

Elsa Segal, 12th Avenue, thanked the city for providing information on its website and for offering a hazardous waste recycling event but would like clarification on how to properly dispose of fire extinguishers, and requested clearer signage for the city's recycling station. She also inquired whether homeowners are responsible for restoring their front lawns.

Mr. Lindsey, 432 18th Avenue, expressed gratitude for the efforts being made in collaboration with Pinellas County He suggested that the city approve a magistrate to handle short-term rental issues, which could help free up resources and allow the city to allocate additional staff to assist with the recovery process.

Kristin Bergman, 2207 Bay Boulevard, shared information about the Community Recovery Project, which offers free support services to help people cope with stress during the recovery process.

RB Johnson, 1206 Beach Trail, made a historical comparison between Hurricane Elena in 1985 and the recent storm, highlighting the differences in impact due to changes in the beach and infrastructure over the years. He explained that while both storms were similar in their coastal

paths, the damage was vastly different. In 1985, the beach was much narrower with exposed sea walls, and the storm caused extensive damage along Gulf Boulevard, including destroyed seawalls and properties. The storm's 48-hour duration intensified the impact.

In contrast, the recent storm had a higher storm surge but was mitigated by the wider, more vegetated dunes that absorbed the impact, preventing the same level of destruction. Johnson emphasized how the improvements made to the beach over the years, including the wider beach and dunes, helped reduce the damage compared to 1985. He noted that the recovery process after Hurricane Elena took years, while the current recovery has been quicker, underscoring the significant difference in the outcomes due to the changes in beach infrastructure.

Scott Shapiro, 2032 20th Avenue Parkway, expressed frustration with the ongoing recovery process, emphasizing the emotional and financial toll on residents. He raised concerns about the lack of communication regarding whether residents can proceed with repairs or rebuilding. He also urged the city to explore FEMA flood mitigation grants or Alternative Dwelling Units to help homeowners.

Hilary King, 327 Bahia Vista Drive, asked for clarification on the role of the city's flood management process, questioning whether the city has the authority to streamline its own procedures while still retaining FEMA grants and assistance.

Mayor-Commissioner Houseberg closed Public Comment.

Planning and Zoning Consultant Craig Fuller responded to residents' concerns regarding the permitting process and flood recovery efforts.

1. **Outsourced Permitting Process:** The county handles inspections and permits, and the city is receiving updates from the county. While the city was informed two weeks ago that they would receive data, it only arrived recently, and they are working to process and distribute it to residents by the end of the week.
2. **Substantial vs. Non-Substantial Damage:** The city is distinguishing between properties with substantial and non-substantial damage. Non-substantial damage (such as minor repairs) can move more quickly through the permitting process, while substantial damage requires more time due to additional regulations and requirements.
3. **Communication:** Updates from the county are typically provided on a weekly basis, and the city is working to ensure information is shared as soon as it is available. The team is also preparing FAQs to help clarify the process, though they are cautious about releasing information prematurely due to incomplete data.
4. **Flood Mitigation and Construction:** For homeowners with substantial damage, there are temporary solutions for making homes habitable, such as minor repairs to address mold or other issues until a more permanent solution can be reached. The team emphasized that floodplain regulations are crucial, as all properties are within a floodplain and must comply with building codes and flood mitigation standards, including ensuring that structures are elevated properly and have GFI outlets.

3 A. REPORT OF the City Attorney.

The City Attorney Mora provided an update on the ongoing short-term rental litigation, noting that settlement discussions are still in progress. He formally requested a "shade meeting" under Florida Statute 286.011, to allow for private discussions about the litigation and settlement strategy.

He also acknowledged the frustration of residents, especially in light of the challenges they face due to recent events. While recognizing that the city's efforts may not always feel responsive enough, the Attorney explained that the city is working within a complex framework of guidance from local, state, and federal governments, which are often inconsistent.

3 B. REPORT OF the City Manager.

Reported on Agenda Item 1C.

3 C. REPORT OF the City Commission.

Commissioner Bigelow asked for an update on the Harbor Drive North construction project, which has been ongoing since April.

The Public Works Director explained that he cannot provide a definitive completion date for the Harbor Drive North construction project. He mentioned that there are ongoing conflicts with the county regarding water main and sewer line issues, which are causing delays.

Commissioner Wyant expressed her commitment to listening to residents and addressing their concerns. She mentioned discussing issues with residents like RB Johnson regarding beach vegetation and Scott Shapiro regarding temporary housing needs. The remaining emergency resources from her business have been transferred to Saltwater Hippie in Madeira Beach, which is now offering a larger operation to assist the community.

Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson shared that she has attended the first two legislative committee sessions for the Florida League of Cities and will be participating in a conference next month where the League will focus on five key areas to address in the upcoming legislative sessions. She anticipates having more information by January. Wilson emphasized that the Florida League of Cities prioritizes "home rule," which ensures cities retain the ability to make their own decisions.

Mayor-Commissioner Ms. Houseberg shared several upcoming community events:

1. Project Hope: A free "Me Meal" will be provided tomorrow, Wednesday, November 13th, from 4 to 8 p.m. at Calvary Episcopal Church.
2. Christmas Tree Lighting: The annual Christmas tree lighting will take place on December 6th at 7 p.m. at 12th Avenue Park, featuring a new Christmas tree.
3. IRB Christmas Parade: The Christmas parade will occur on December 8th at 1 p.m., with participants encouraged to walk, bike, or use golf carts.
4. IRB Boat Parade: On December 21st, it will be a more relaxed boat parade with no prizes. Everyone with a boat is welcome to join and participate in the parade.

4. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS. None.

The City Attorney read Consent Agenda 5 A through 5 E.

5. CONSENT AGENDA:

- A. APPROVAL OF** October 29, 2024, Regular City Commission Meeting Minutes.
- B. RESCHEDULING** the March 11, 2025, Regular City Commission Meeting to Tuesday, March 25, 2025, due to the IRB General Election.
- C. RESOLUTION 2024-12:** A Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Indian Rocks Beach, Florida, making findings; approving and ratifying all emergency declarations and extensions thereof; providing for severability, and providing for an effective date.

Motion by Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson, seconded by Commissioner Wyant to approve the consent agenda, consisting of agenda items 5 A through 5 c. Unanimous approval by acclamation.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS: None

7. OTHER LEGISLATIVE MATTERS: None.

8. WORK SESSION: None.

9. OTHER BUSINESS: None.

10. ADJOURNMENT.

Motion to adjourn was made by Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson and seconded by Commissioner Wyant adjourn at 7:18 p.m. Unanimous approval by acclamation.