



Resort Advisory Commission
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RESORT ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES

DATE: October 2, 2014
TIME: 3:00 pm
PLACE: Virginia Beach Convention Center, Meeting Room 5AB

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Billy Almond
Gerrie West
Preston Midgett
Bobby Melatti
Joe DaBiero
Laura Habr
Nancy Creech
Sam Reid
Craig Roback
Bill Gambrell
Randy Thompson
John Hawa
Tom Brown
Bryan Cuffee

Kristina Chastain

OTHERS PRESENT

Karen Forget, Lynnhaven River NOW
John Uhrin, Council
Dan Horne, VDH
Bradley DeLashmutt, Envir Health Supvr., VDH
Mark Johnson, COVB Pub Works
Greg Ward, BCF
Chuck Applebach, CVB
Jim Ricketts, CVB
Diana Burke, VBHA
Bill Reed, BEACON
Matt McInerney, VBPD
Mike Eason, SGA/Resort Mgmt.
Robin Hart, SGA/Recorder

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

Michael Cloud-Butler
Sylvia Strickland
Ken Taylor
Jim Davis

Chair Billy Almond called the meeting to order at 3:00p.m.

Motion carried to approve the minutes from the September 4, 2014 meeting as written.

Given the beach closures over the summer, Billy introduces Dan Horne, with the Virginia Department of Health, to provide an overview of the Beach Water Monitoring Program, and Mark Johnson, with Public Works, to talk about stormwater management in the resort area.

Beach Water Monitoring Program - Dan Horne, Environmental Health Manager, Virginia Department of Health

Although Dan’s office is with the Virginia Department of Health, they act as our local health department, known as the Virginia Beach Department of Public Health. There are

35 health districts across the Commonwealth, and each acts as the local health department for that city or county.

Dan provides a brief overview of the marine water quality monitoring that has been taking place since 1974 and the changes that came with the passing of the Beach Act in 2000 that has established the standards of today. The water quality standard is a federal standard (EPA) adopted through the state by the DEQ. The Virginia Department of Health implements it through their monitoring program.

The Beach Act resulted in three changes to the water-monitoring program. It changed the indicator organism for testing, implemented a new water quality standard, and a new testing protocol and frequency.

They now test for bacteria that survive longer in a marine environment. The water standard by which to issue a swimming advisory changed to a single-limit standard exceeding 104 colony-forming units (cfu) per 100M, which allows for a certain number of possible illnesses (16) per 1000 people, based on a number of studies done since 1986. That 104 number gives the public that level of protection at that reading. The sampling location changed from sampling by marine patrol boat to wading out and sampling from the beach, and from sampling monthly to sampling weekly through the season, mid-May through the end of September. The swimming advisories also now incorporate wider notification through press releases (with specific information on location, extent, nature, and risk), and posting results on their public database on the Virginia Department of Health website.

Dan introduces Brad DeLashmutt, Environmental Health Supervisor, who oversees the Beach Monitoring program, in addition to other programs for the department. His presentation illustrates the sampling procedure, shows the number of advisories issued this season, and a history of the advisories issued since 2000.

There are 22 sampling sites, beginning at Chicks beach and ending at Little Island Park in Sandbridge. The sites are 1-1.5 miles apart all along the coast, and have a 6-hour time frame to get the samples run and get them to the lab. They sample at Chicks Beach at 8:15am and are in Sandbridge at 1:15pm and at the lab at 1:50pm. The analyst at the Public Utilities Lab is waiting to run the tests when the samples arrive. Using a chart and black light, the analyst measures the colony forming units' chemical reactions to a reagent additive added to the samples. The goal is to have no fluorescence.

A review of this year for advisories begins with May 20 at First Landing Park. On their resample the next day, the water was back to normal. This is the typical example of readings and advisories in Virginia Beach: one test indicates an advisory and the resample the next day will be back to normal standards.

The August 12 readings prompting the advisory occurred at three sites. The next day's readings were back to normal for the first two sites, but the third site was still out of range; therefore, the advisory continued for a second day. The third resample was within range for all three sites and the advisory was lifted.

The week of September 9 had a heavy rainfall event, and they know that there were pockets of heavy rain. That week yielded several advisories; every base site had an advisory and there were two violations at the oceanfront.

Brad summarizes that, given that there are 450 samples in a sampling season

and we have had only two or three advisories each year (our only outstanding was 12 this year due to a heavy rain event), you can say that we have very clean water in Virginia Beach.

QUESTIONS

The committee members asked questions about possible contamination sources, such as longshore transport, HRSD outfalls, container ships, tidal effects and sand contamination.

Dan replies that the standard set at 104cfu is very conservative, and our exceedances are very small in relation to the big picture. It does not take much in the water to get those types of readings; a large flock of birds could have given the readings. He also says that the beach topography is downhill for all flow. If there is a sewage spill in the James River, it will eventually come down our way, and if there were a correlation between the pollution and HRSD, or any other plants in the area, the exceedance would be much higher.

The areas beyond the breakers are not showing any negative result, so container ships are not a threat. Any aberrant readings are reported to the USCG and they handle it from there; there is no follow-up from the State. Lastly, the sand acting as a filter, and the tide rising up onto the sand both have impacts on the amount of debris that reaches the ocean. Weather conditions can also affect sampling, as the samples are gathered at the same time each day.

One member asked if there any way to accelerate the testing again to under 24 hours if we had a high reading for one sample, and the short answer was “no”. Both test methods that can be run from the samples take 24 hours. For a third test, a molecular method that can provide results in about four hours, it has not yet been determined how to adjust for interference in the readings.

Symptoms someone might have if exposed to the bacteria at the advisory level might be a gastrointestinal illness, or an eye or skin irritation, or respiratory problem. Dan says that that they had two people that called in, and may have gotten sick from exposure, and two more people called Richmond out of concern during the most recent advisories.

There is no caution warning for beach closure; 104cfu is the state water quality standard. The local ordinance prohibits swimming at that level of advisory (so, it is illegal to swim.)

Presentation on Stormwater Management – Mark Johnson, City of Virginia Beach (COVB) Public Works Operations

Mark Johnson reviews the sampling and notification process for advisories, and his department’s responsibilities for stormwater management for the City. The whole process involves the Department of Health, Public Utilities, EMS and Public Works.

The VDH takes the samples, and they are received by Public Utilities. If the lab analyst notices anything odd about the sample development before the 24-hour period is over, they are proactive, and they will run another sample before the 24 hours has elapsed.

If the sample reads above the limit, emails go out to VDH, and EMS makes the

call on where the swimming advisory needs to be posted, Public Works gets the email on where the signs need to be posted and does so.

Mark gives an overview of macro-stormwater management and then outlines the coastal outfalls.

The COVB stormwater management system consists of 25 miles of canals, 237 off-road ditches, 448 miles of roadside ditches, 2500 miles of pipe system, over 700 lakes and ponds, and have 16 stormwater pump stations. Stormwater management involves three components: (1) flood control, (2) water quality and (3) maintenance and operation.

A good example of flood control is the 61st Street pump station outfall, which controls flooding on Atlantic Avenue between 55th and 64th Streets.

Water quality protection includes city-owned BMPs. They dredge old lakes in communities, and inspect post-constructed dry pond systems, notifying owners when they require maintenance. Street sweeping (4 sweepers) is also included in this component. The idea is to keep sediment off the roads and out of the waterway.

Maintenance and operation includes the first two areas of flood control and water quality. There is an ongoing maintenance program cleaning out the pipe systems in neighborhoods to avoid cave-ins. The operations program includes pump stations, some they rebuild every five years, and are part of the Hurricane Protection Project. The Army COE inspects them annually, and the city then develops its annual maintenance plan from that inspection.

Trash collection cans on the beach use heavy liners in the cans and the waste collection vehicles are sealed as best as possible, to avoid losing liquids to the beach.

There are several coastal outfalls, one at Chicks Beach, twelve in the Cape Henry area and one at First Landing Road; there are six outfalls along the oceanfront area at pump stations from 79th Street to 16th Street. The outfall at Rudee Inlet is for that area alone at 1st Street. They actually have very few coastal outfalls for the region, which is a good thing. All those ocean outfalls run 1100 to 2000 feet out into the ocean, and the depth is approx. 18 feet, to avoid the wave action pounding the end of the outfall.

Mark reviews the swimming advisories issued this year, the August 11 & 12 and the Sept 8 & 9 event. They review rain events as to whether or not any stormwater can be correlated to an advisory, but a storm surge from other areas can affect samples. You can have the best maintenance practices possible, and do everything right, but an unexplainable event cannot be controlled.

The outfalls are not tested in the same way the beaches are tested, as this water is stormwater runoff, and it is known that it is not clean. Because of that the pump stations are constructed out 2000 feet, and they are required to run VPDES tests, which allowable certain pollutants to be discharged at allowable levels.

QUESTIONS

Karen Forget comments on why the water monitoring for the Lynnhaven area is different from that of the oceanfront, saying that their water testing is required by the DEQ and the Department of Health Sanitation Shellfish District and not under the same

regulations as the oceanfront. Only swimming beaches are on state property. The level acceptable at the Lynnhaven area is 14cfu, not 104cfu, in order to keep the shellfish beds open for harvest.

A question was asked about what our stormwater fees cover, and Mark replies that the fee is dedicated to stormwater quality and flood control costs, and to ongoing projects such as working with the Core and Lynnhaven River.

The beach testing is mandated to be performed weekly, and Dan comments, saying that testing is mandated during the swimming season and the Division of Epidemiology in Richmond sets those dates at mid-May through November 2.

When the question was asked on what people can do to reduce beach closures, Dan replies that there are things that people should be looking at that they can do themselves to can contribute to cleaner water, such as be alert and focused on how you deal with that environment on a personal level. The overall effort will have a larger impact. Educate, via civic leagues, etc. that what you do affects the water. Watch what you put down your kitchen sink that may cause a backup, clean up after your pets (even at home). Clean up when you see it.

Karen Forget comments on their approaches with the Lynnhaven River. The first are to implement the suggestions that Dan had mentioned and the second is to take a comprehensive approach to controlling resources, such as people, boats, wildlife and dogs. She believes that it is too hard to tell what cause of the advisories are. The Scoop the Poop campaign, the Don't Feed the Ducks and Geese rule was passed for all city properties, but it does not include seagulls. What you do on public property should also be good for your own backyard, as it all ends up in the water, as everything flows downhill to the water's edge. Maybe a subgroup could be created that would like to work with Lynnhaven River NOW to apply their ideas to the beach.

For the residents, it is simply an education process. For tourists and others, it was suggested that maybe better enforcement would make a difference.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Transportation, Parking, Pedestrian Committee (TPPC)

Preston Midgett reports that the committee met last month, and one of the issues they discussed was for trolley design.

They have selected a wood composite to save on cost and maintenance, without sacrificing authenticity. They selected the two-color scheme. They will have wooden seats, and then the cushion will be from the manufacturer, with a two- to three-inch pad. There will be spiral brass rails with paint accents.

For the outside of the trolleys, there will be a small HRT logo, design to be determined. There may be advertising panels on the side with a space for advertising on the back engine panel, but that is also to be determined. Jim Ricketts requests that the "Live the Life" logo on the trolley be added to the wish list for the RFP. There are several options still in the works and more is to come.

Kevin Hershberger gave an overview on the commercial parking lots what is

going on with popup lots that happen on the weekends and holidays. We gave them some ideas and suggestions and he will come back to see what works. Preston notes that Kevin is the only inspector for the city for commercial parking lots, penalties are not effective, and they are looking into it.

Planning and Design Review Committee (PDRC)

Billy Almond reports that the PDRC did meet this month.

They talked about replacing the 17th and the 31st Street stage canopies and Mike Eason will come back to them with more information and options.

They discussed the oceanfront benches.

Frank Fentress talked about the turf in the parks, and, for now, the turf is doing very well. He is still exploring using artificial turf, but the cost is high, so they may continue to use the Celebration turf.

They looked at the types of plans that are reviewed by PDRC and came to an agreement on that.

Oceanfront Enhancement Committee (OEC)

Sam Reid reports for Jim Davis that the OEC met last month, and they discussed the oceanfront benches, passing a motion for Mike Eason to bring this to the RAC.

They are continuing their discussion with the oceanfront services, and still investigating a lot of issues, one regarding drug and alcohol treatment. There are to ask the Commonwealth Attorney to talk to the committee about it.

Resort Investment Committee (RIC)

Billy Almond reports for Ken Taylor that the RIC met this month.

They nominated Preston to be head of the nominating committee.

Preston says that we need to nominate a chair and vice-chair for next year for the RAC. Anyone who wants to be on the committee, tell him, and anyone with any nominations, tell him. The voting will be at the November meeting.

In addition, they discussed the presentation on water quality, John Uhrin gave them updates on various projects and they discussed the status of the oceanfront benches.

Oceanfront Visionary Committee (OVC)

The OVC did not meet.

G.R.E.E.N. Committee

Laura Habr reported that they met last Wednesday and they discussed the clean water program, and they will be following up on education ideas.

There is an event coming up on October 21 at 7:30am, at Town Point Club. The discussion, headed by Skip Stiles, will be on Sea Level Rise.

Staff Report – Mike Eason

Benches Pilot Program –

Mike has asked three committees about the benches pilot program, regarding adding the center armrests to the benches between 18th and 20th Street. All three RAC

subcommittees (TPPC, PDRC and OEC) agreed that we should have them, as they are an effective tool against sleeping on the benches and they support the armrest to be a feature of the benches at the boardwalk in the future.

The next issue was to decide where to put them. The ideas are (1) a hotel may add a bench in front of their business and pay for it, and/or (2) replace benches as needed in the spots that need them most (17th through 24th Streets) and move the others out, since we replace benches at a rate of approx. 14 per year.

Mike asks RAC for direction and support.

Motion carried to support the ideas of having the armrests on the benches at the oceanfront and support the subcommittees' recommendations on how they should be replaced, as stated above.

Joe DaBiero says the hotels are willing to help, but not sure of the thoughts from all of them. Preston then opens the bench purchases to anyone that wants to get into the program. Mike says that even with the artwork on the lifeguard stands is well protected, so we would need to be careful about putting any information on the benches purchased by others. Nancy Creech recalls that they bought 50 benches for the Kings of the Neptune Festival, and will be considering purchasing more.

Mike notes that even though the season is symbolically ended with the Neptune Festival, the resort management office is still averaging 15-20 events per weekend through November.

Economic Development Report

Bryan Cuffee has no report this month.

Old Business

Nancy Creech reports excellent turnout and good success with the Neptune Festival this past weekend. About 1100-1200 people touring the sand sculptures daily.

New Business

Billy Almond mentions that they want to follow up on the Strategic Plan in November or December, just to go over the plan and see what has happened over the last year. In the spring, we can devote another meeting to generate new ideas.

Public Comment

None

Meeting adjourned at 4:42p.m.