



Fort Myers Beach Management & Planning Session

**Town Hall Council Chambers
6231 Estero Boulevard
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931**

Minutes**Thursday, March 5, 2026****9:00 AM**

ORDER OF BUSINESS

I. CALL TO ORDER

Members Present: Mayor Dan Allers, Vice Mayor Scott Safford and Council Members John King, Rebecca Link, and John McLean.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A. Joint Session with Public Safety Committee

Joint Session with Public Safety Committee

Public Safety Committee Chair Dawn Thomas noted that recently, there has been a lot of redundancy in the committee's meetings and several issues that have already been addressed by Council or staff. She noted that the Committee is seeking guidance and updates on their purpose.

Town Manager McKannay proposed that the committee start a neighborhood watch program. He noted that such group would need to coordinate with the town and the County Sheriff's office. There are also potential opportunities for studying the effects of the adopted ordinance on bicycles and for the traffic and safety of Estero Boulevard.

Raleigh Baker, Neighborhood Services Coordinator, agreed with the idea of a neighborhood watch program. She also suggested that the committee could revisit finding grant funding for emergency call boxes, which can be placed in parking lots or near tram stops.

Vice Mayor Safford and Mayor Allers mentioned the former Civilian Emergency Response Team (CERT), a group of certified community volunteers that would respond to emergencies and provide services (like directing traffic) during town events. Mayor Allers noted that the town would allow the team to use the boat during the aftermath of Hurricane Irma. Vice Mayor Safford said that the team likely dissolved due to underutilization and lack of workflow management. He stated that the membership and engagement were high and that volunteers truly wanted to assist the community. He requested that Mr. Farrell look into the reason for the dissolution of CERT.

Town Manager McKannay stated that he was confident that he could work and come up with solutions for leadership responsibilities and the delineation of work for the volunteer group. He stressed the importance of identifying boundaries and roles between the volunteer watch program and CERT. He reiterated the importance of such groups and their significant impacts during emergency situations and town events.

Council Member Link conducted research on what similar projects other small island communities are doing. She started by asking Chair Thomas if she or the committee had any issues they would like to prioritize.

Committee members identified issues related to increased traffic, Estero Boulevard, bicycle safety and guidance, pedestrian education and safety, and broken lighting. Chair Thomas mentioned the committee's work on implementing a bicycle educational program. The Public Safety Committee has also tracked statuses on dilapidated buildings and coordinated communication between the Fire Department and residents not at home during hurricanes. Chair Thomas noted that when ideas are brought up to staff, they usually receive an update that the issue is still in progress on the staff's end or that state agencies have control over that area.

Council Member Link proposed an idea for informational pamphlets on local laws that can be distributed to the public, such as preparation for a hurricane. Mayor Allers also suggested distribution of information via radio or television. Council Member Link then presented the remaining ideas under the following headings: 1) emergency preparedness and disaster response, including hurricane evacuation planning and communication, disaster communication systems, and post-storm debris removal; 2) public workshops; 3) traffic and pedestrian safety, like crosswalk safety, golf cart and scooter regulations, and seasonal traffic management plans; 4) water and beach safety, such as rip currents and alerts; 5) safety for kayaks and boats; 6) high-rise fire preparedness; 7) code enforcement and building safety, such as occupancy limits, vacation rentals, and flood compliance; 8) police and community safety, including educational sessions, seasonal strategies, and coordination with CERT.

Committee Chair Thomas asked Council Member Link how the committee should go about completing such tasks without overwhelming the Public Information Officer. She noted that they had brought educational and informational materials to the staff member, who then stated that she is working on the items and informed the committee of her limited capacity. Mayor Allers noted that there are many ideas. However, there is also a lack of delineation on process, organization and responsibility. Committee Member Farrell noted that there seemed to be a gap between ideas and implementation.

Council Member McLean also noted that the committee lacked a strategic plan and procedures. He would like to make similar improvements with AAC and their committee chair. He hopes to establish something similar across all committees.

Town Manager McKannay acknowledged that the AAC Chair had sent him processes that she would like to implement for the committee. He says that committees can send him a request for a staff member to attend their meetings. Staff can then be assigned based upon availability. He also noted that staff members want to be included in the process and discussions.

Lastly, he mentioned that Abby Eberhart, the new Public Information Officer, wishes to work closely with the committee on ideas and ways to implement them. Town Manager McKannay stressed that committees should bring up ideas to him, even if the proposals have a cost. He could work with them on weighing the pros and cons. He noted that Rileigh Baker is their liaison, but he can also assign additional staff members for specific topics. He also presented the possibility of the new Public Information Officer attending the next committee meeting.

Council Member McLean suggested that the committee could also focus on lightning detectors, especially with the higher incidents of lightning on beaches. He stated that learning the community's wants will help the committee to determine how to prioritize ideas.

Mayor Allers brought up an idea for a workshop where the community can learn about the Public Safety Committee and have an opportunity to submit input. He also brought up a potential second event where the committee can request donations, similar to what AAC currently implements. He also noted potential training opportunities for the community members on new technologies and safety features. Council Member Link also noted how the public outreach event can be marketed as a "Welcome Back" event that marks the beginning of a new season. She also suggested inviting different speakers and setting up individual booths.

Vice Mayor Safford brought up ideas on crosswalks and research on barricades for mitigating traffic. He also proposed that the committee could identify pothole and lighting issues. He also supported ideas on sidewalk safety and education, as well as emergency call boxes. Mayor Allers noted that the data is already available on emergency call boxes due to the committee's past work on them. He suggests that the committee use the existing data and proceed from there. The Mayor additionally stated that the committee should also find ways to look for funding for their projects.

Chair Dawn Thomas asked if staff members with experience with grant writing could assist the committee, as no member on the committee is a professional grant writer. Mayor Allers stated he knew of volunteers who could assist in serving as grant writers. Council Member Link mentioned she may also know someone who can help.

Thomas Yozzo, Emergency Services Director, noted that the lightning detection was an excellent idea. He also mentioned that there may be federal funding and grant opportunities that the staff and the committee can look into. He emphasized the importance of volunteer emergency response teams. Staff is currently working with the county and is going back and forth on acceptable bicycle-related signage. He noted that the County was not very open to the idea of painting sidewalks.

The County is going through a lot of changes on their end as well. He believes that barriers on Estero Boulevard would be a great asset. Director Yozzo responded to Chair Thomas' concerns about redundancy with staff work. He noted that there were many aspects that staff did not cover, including vendors, comparisons of different materials for the barriers, and addressing the potential large cost for the project.

Vice Mayor Safford discussed the importance of having people assigned to the crosswalks. Council Member Link asked if these individuals could be volunteers. Vice Mayor Safford said that volunteers were utilized in the past. Director Yozzo noted that it would be best to keep CERT for emergency situations only and to use neighborhood watch programs in this case. He also noted that they should work with the legal team to ensure that proper training is conducted for volunteers.

Mayor Allers stressed the importance of data, which the state and county use for their decisions for approval.

B. Proposed Ordinance: Smoking/Vaping

Discussion item only

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF FORT MYERS BEACH, FLORIDA AMENDING SECTION 18-30 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE TOWN OF FORT MYERS BEACH, FLORIDA TO PROHIBIT SMOKING AND VAPING IN THE TOWN'S PUBLIC PARKS, AND IN COUNTY PARKS AND BEACHES LOCATED IN THE TERRITORIAL BOUNDARIES OF THE TOWN; DEFINING THE TERMS "SMOKE" AND "VAPE;" EXCLUDING FROM REGULATION UNFILTERED CIGARS; AND PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS, SEVERABILITY, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Town Attorney Stuparich presented that Town Manager McKannay had asked her to work with him on an ordinance on smoking and vaping. In her research, she found a Florida ordinance from 2022. Florida law has preempted local governments from establishing smoking inside buildings. In 2022, the Florida Clean Air Act (formerly the Florida Clean Indoor Air Act) contained a new carve-out from the preemption that would allow local governments to establish smoking regulations in public beaches and parks, with the exception of unfiltered cigars. Lee County has updated their regulations to include vaping, and she noted the boundaries within public parks and beaches. Town Attorney Stuparich, after confirming with Mayor Allers, stated that the town did not have a public beach but did have a public park. She also provided that any county park inside the town would also belong to its jurisdiction. She drafted an ordinance and shared it with the Town Manager. Additionally, the Town Attorney noted that the town's code included smoking restrictions in recreation centers and community buildings. This language is not enforceable, and she therefore recommended amending the code.

Town Manager McKannay believed that this was a timely and prudent time to bring up a discussion on smoking and vaping regulation. He stated that this ordinance would protect public health and comfort, preserve the natural beauty of the beaches and parks, reduce litter and environmental harm, and enhance the overall visitor experience of the town. He recognizes that there is a balance of personal freedom and shared responsibility. He noted that he intended for enforcement to be a balance between punitive and educational measures, prioritizing the ~~former~~ latter.

Mayor Allers requested that the staff focus on clear communication on what the ordinance would be restricting. He noted that there had been news reports that the town was banning smoking on the entire beach, which was not true.

Council Member McLean noted his concerns about enforceability and lobbyist intervention at the state level, citing the exception of unfiltered cigars. He believed that this ordinance may be a bit of an overreach. Mayor Allers added that, in his discussions with the Town Attorney, there is a need to establish ordinances that would address situations that may occur later on. He referred to the issue of canal dredging as an example. Council Member McLean wishes to prioritize cleaning up any unenforceable language.

Council Member Link stated that she was surprised by the significant environmental impacts of vaping and smoking. She noted that unfiltered cigars were biodegradable. She said that she was in support of Council's consideration of the ordinance. Vice Mayor Safford echoed Council Member Link's remarks on litter and pollution from vaping and smoking (especially the former). Council Member King believes that this is not governmental overreach but governmental support. He is disappointed that Florida law allows for smoking in outdoor areas of open-air restaurants. He also noted the importance of enforcement.

Town Attorney Stuparich provided a summary of the next steps. She also noted that the City of Sanibel is also considering a similar ordinance that was on second reading last Monday. She also acknowledged the similarity of the language between the ordinances.

IV. AGENDA MANAGEMENT

A. March 2026

Vice Mayor Safford and Council Member King wished to follow up on their request to establish a community redevelopment agency (CRA). Mayor Allers noted that there was past action to establish a CRA and that Council has already provided direction on this matter. He also stated that staff is currently working with Lee County Commissioner Mulicka. Town Manager McKannay announced that there are parallel efforts for the CRA path, with one for educating leaders and one for receiving approval from the BOCC. He stated that a study is being drafted and that staff could come back at the next Management & Planning Session to discuss. Vice Mayor Safford asked Town Attorney Stuparich if there is state legislation that may affect or expedite this process. She responded that there is none at this time but will also follow up to confirm.

Vice Mayor Safford provided a summary of updates on the Charter Review Commission. He stated that proposals will be brought before Council on April 20, 2026. Town Clerk Amy Baker stated that so long as the ordinance is finalized before summer break, there are no issues with timing.

Council Member McLean reconfirmed that the AAC is working on more formalized policies and procedures. He hopes that there will be consistency among all advisory committees.

Mayor Allers noted the addition of the discussion on shelter for town equipment on the next Council meeting agenda. Vice Mayor Safford provided his consent for this item.

Town Manager McKannay requested a change in the next Management & Planning Session meeting date to April 15, 2026. Vice Mayor Safford and Council Member Link both noted that they can attend virtually. Mayor Allers requested that the Town Manager work on finding a date.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Council Member King moved to adjourn, seconded by Council Member McLean. The meeting was adjourned at 10:33 a.m.

Minutes adopted as amended, April 6, 2026. Motion by Council Member McLean, seconded by Council Member King.

Passed 4-0.



Amy Baker, Town Clerk