



## Fort Myers Beach Management & Planning Session

Town Hall Council Chambers  
6231 Estero Boulevard  
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931  
Wednesday, April 8, 2026

Minutes

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. Presentation: Shoreline Protection Due Diligence Protection Study (Wave Wall)

**Project update from JR Evans Engineering**

Elizabeth Fountain, Felicia Munford, and Austin Wise from J.R. Evans Engineering, P.A. provided an update on the current completed work, findings, and next steps on the current shoreline due diligence study. Ms. Fountain stated that the firm has done an island-wide data collection and analysis. They used drones to gather footage that captured the entire island's conditions and conducted site visits to specific properties to characterize existing conditions and assist with coastal analysis. The firm also completed island-wide spatial analysis to document all existing surge information that is available through FEMA, as well as a site-specific wave propagation modeling analysis to identify the criteria for shoreline protection features. The team focused on the target top elevation needed for walls and structures to mitigate the wave action enough to lower the risk of damage to landward structures. Mr. Wise then reported that, during the island-wide data and spatial analyses, the firm first looked at the island as a whole and identified priority areas, locations that would be subject to the greatest amount of damage. One of the exhibits, a flood zone map, was projected during the presentation. He explained the various boundaries and the corresponding wave heights for each area. He noted that the exhibit was based on FEMA's identified conditions for a 100-year storm, or a 1% annual chance storm. The second portion of the analysis focuses on maximum stillwater elevation, or

maximum storm surge elevation. Such data would indicate what the elevation would be, if the water is completely still. Wave height would be added to this number. The team found that the center of the island would have the highest levels, with lower values towards the ends. Ms. Fountain noted that the middle of the island, due to its concave form, draws in the surge. Mr. Wise added that because Estero Island is bowl-shaped, the area would catch the greatest amount of water, which does not spread until it reaches a specific height. He said that the firm is still in the process of reviewing the zoning and planning criteria on the island but emphasized that this work is still in progress and can be very site-specific. The team is currently looking at the concentration of land uses, like commercial or condominium. Beach fortification would benefit all properties behind those improvements.

Mayor Allers asked if the team used zoning districts to determine the process for building fortification. Ms. Fountain clarified that the analysis was used to determine the design criteria, as they believed there would be variations and unique opportunities in different parts of the island.

Ms. Fountain reported on the findings of the site-specific wave modeling and noted that structures would need a 7.5 to 8.5 feet to reduce wave height and go from a VE to an AE zone category. She cited multiple factors that impact a property's specific requirements, including ground elevation and the presence of additional improved property.

Mayor Allers confirmed with the team that the elevation would be based on the actual elevation. He also asked how high the wall would be, as compared to the town's sand berm project. Ms. Fountain answered that the project would be landward and would not interfere with the engineered beach and dune plantings. She noted that this fortification would be the second line of defense but would be able to withstand the forces of a 100-year event. Mayor Allers then inquired if, in the event of such a storm, the sand berm would eventually be pushed up against, or even over, the wall. She responded that that could certainly be the case and also noted that the team is currently working on hydrodynamic modeling as a visual demonstration of this analysis.

Ms. Fountain reported that there would ultimately be about a two to three feet difference between the top of the wall and ground elevation. Mr. Wise added that this would be based on the current ground level, which can be supplemented with additional nourishment. Such smaller improvement opportunities can bolster the wall and assist during smaller storms.

The team presented illustrations of potential structures for site-specific areas, including Times Square and a typical single-family house structure. In both locations, Mr. Wise noted that there would be continuity through overlapping structures, which would break any incoming waves and allow beach access to individuals. He also stated that the purple dashed line represents what FEMA identifies as a primary frontal dune (PFD). He disagreed with the agency's identification, stating that the area is flat and does not have the characteristics of a PFD. There was a question from Council on the team's proposal to place the structures behind the setback line. Mr. Wise provided

that it was a decision choice. The team also explained that the hydrodynamic modeling will help to capture any potential risks to other properties created by the structures.

Mayor Allers inquired if the change in the flood zone maps would also reach more inland properties. Ms. Fountain responded that this would most likely not be the case. Nearby properties, however, may have one foot of their base elevation lowered. Council Member McLean asked what beach accesses would look like. Ms. Fountain believed that there would be a typical boardwalk or breaks with an offset. She also pointed out that walls do not need to be straight and can take on multiple shapes or forms. Council Member Link confirmed with the team that breaks would be needed at the beach accesses. The team presented visual examples of the structures. Mayor Allers requested photos of the projects for Bonita and Marco for the next presentation, to show a better understanding of what the structures would look like locally.

The next site-specific study was on Newton Park, a public space towards the center of the island. Mayor Allers confirmed with staff member Chadd Chustz that the illustration currently does not show the beach nourishments and requested that staff provide this data to the firm. Ms. Fountain noted that the studies would verify the structural capacity of the existing wall. Vice Mayor Safford asked if investigations would need to be conducted on the entire wall or a portion of the wall. She responded that the latter would be sufficient.

Council Member Link questioned if scour protection would be needed along the wall. Ms. Fountain answered that there would need to be landward protection, and the team has proposed a splash pad, which could be a pedestrian path or sidewalk. Council Member Link then stated she was more concerned about the seaward side and sand erosion. Mr. Wise expressed his preference for scour protection entirely around the wall but noted the permitting issues. One alternative is to build a stronger wall with deeper paneling and to replace sanding as needed. Another potential method is to use rock formations, with enough sand covering to meet sea turtle nesting standards. Ms. Fountain said that, for developed areas like Times Square, scour protection is not as much of a concern.

The last site-specific study focused on Castle Beach. The limited amount of space does not make it ideal for building large structures. However, this location may be a great candidate for ecological restoration with an added series of dunes of approximately five feet. Council Member King noted that there may be existing critical wildlife and nesting birds in that particular area. The firm's next steps include creating hydrodynamic models and conceptual cross-sections, as well as identifying potential funding sources and strategies. They are also working in parallel with property owners, including some at Times Square, for specific properties' wave mitigation structures. Mayor Allers confirmed with the team that such plans would be integrated with the overall town project. There was a question about the status of the approval process. Ms. Fountain responded that they were very close to completion, with a current pause in state permitting until an ultimate plan is finalized.

FEMA has also provided conditional approval. She described the most recent approval at the state level for Hickory Island. They will receive certification in the near future. Ms. Fountain asked if Council had any requests for additional locations to be reviewed at this time. She believes that the site-specific studies shown today represent the island as a whole.

The team then transitioned into the topic of public spaces and structure features. Ms. Fountain emphasized that these structures can be aesthetically pleasing and fit in with its environment. Mayor Allers commented that it would be interesting to see the public's views. She agreed and noted that she had a similar idea of a survey to identify the community's priorities and needs. He added that property owners may provide essential information in what trade-offs they would be willing to accept.

The group provided two additional discussion points to Council: additional target areas and the possibility of review of a pilot project opportunity at the public parking area near 1240 Estero Boulevard. Mayor Allers noted that it may be a good idea to discuss this project with the property owners on either sides, so that there would be a larger sample size. He has personally been in contact with both, and they have expressed their interest in involvement. Ms. Fountain then described a current study that the Florida Gulf Coast University is conducting on hybrid dune conditions and structures underneath dunes.

She noted that they would love to be involved and that it would be a good opportunity for the town to show their support in their programs. There were signs of support voiced by some Council Members, with no objections to the involvement. These topics are being discussed and taught in coastal engineering classes in several Florida universities. Mr. Wise added that, during his own schoolwork, he was taught to use a holistic approach before identifying limitations based on the space. There were ways to incorporate nature into hardened structures, gaining benefits from both aspects. Council Member Link mentioned the potential funding opportunities that may be available if the town became involved with the program.

Council Member King asked if the team is considering Hurricane Ian a 500-year event or a 100-year event. Mr. Wise responded that, for this town, it would be stronger than a 100-year event.

Vice Mayor Safford and Council Member Link thanked the team.

Council Member McLean also expressed his appreciation and commented that the town should prioritize placing this information before the public. He also highlighted that, once structures are built, adjoining properties will face increasing needs to follow suit, as they could face greater risks in exposure. He noted that this pattern can help properties along the beach to willingly participate. Vice Mayor Safford agreed and cited to similar cases in the past. Mayor Allers emphasized the importance of education, which can be used as an investment to ease the buy-in process between the town and the owners. Council Member King asked about the classifications for Hurricane Milton and Hurricane Helene. Mr. Wise noted that those would be closer to 25-year or 50-year storms, with Hurricane Ian being a 100-year storm. There was a subsequent inquiry from the Council on how the walls would break a wave

with a stillwater elevation of 11 feet. Mr. Wise responded that approximately 80% of the wave would be above that level, and that the wall would break the entirety of the wave, dissipating its energy throughout. Mayor Allers commented that, with the decrease in energy, the structure would also reduce scouring.

Council Member McLean inquired about the process of determining and predicting whether a FEMA line would be moved. Ms. Fountain noted that there would be similar analyses to the ones done for this project. The team would also conduct a structural and coastal analysis. She identified the various FEMA requirements for particular points of the design. A technical review would be conducted by the agency, who ultimately determines classification as a certified flood mitigation structure. There are also several steps in the process, including a FEMA conditional letter of map revision, operation and maintenance plan, and notice to the town, who must sign and acknowledge the proposed revision. Council Member McLean commented that the town should prioritize building resiliency, rather than simply meeting the minimum established standards. Ms. Fountain agreed.

Council Member Link requested the cost range for meeting the requirements for wall maintenance, as well as a balanced set of analyses, with one group of students reviewing from the environmental perspective and another from the mitigation standpoint. Mayor Allers added that the team should also explore funding opportunities that coincide with maintenance. He also believed that the town will need to educate and respond to the public on maintenance-related costs.

Ms. Fountain listed the following next steps: finalization of modeling efforts, creation of conceptual cross-sections, identification of grant and funding opportunities, and the production of a final deliverable. She predicted these steps would be completed between the end of May and early June. Mr. Wise added that the hydrodynamic modeling, due to its detailed nature, may cause the date to be slightly pushed back. Mayor Allers proposed that, for the next presentation, the meeting be structured like a town hall setting. Town Manager McKannay stated that he was also considering a public information event and that invitations can be sent out to the public, media, academia, and other groups to ensure that all sides and issues are represented. He also noted that this presentation is available on YouTube and that information will be provided to the public on accessing the meeting.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Mr. Wise showed one last photo of Estero Bay of an oyster bar dissipating incoming waves. He noted that, since the picture was taken on a sunny day, it would not illustrate exactly what would occur during a storm. However, he hoped that this example would help to show the effects of wave mitigation wall. Mayor Allers thought that the image was very useful. Council Member Link asked if mitigation could exist in the water. Ms. Fountain stated that there are options available, including reef balls. However, they may impact boat and water access. Mr. Wise added that these structures may also add hazards and impact tides and waves. They may also be visually unappealing.

B. Per Council's request, and update on the Town's CRA process

**Per Council's request, an update on the Town's CRA process**

Town Manager McKannay provided a brief introduction of the item. Frankie Kropacek, Community Development Director, began with a background of the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). They are currently focusing on the downtown district, Old San Carlos and Times Square. While the rough draft of the resolution contained only Times Square, they have now expanded it to include the entire downtown district — all the way to Pearl Street and encompassing the entirety of the Diamond Head Resort. The intention was to isolate the commercial development and exclude all residential areas.

Council Member King asked for a definition of the CRA's purpose. Mr. Kropacek responded that the agency is tasked with taking the incremental tax revenues and serving a function similar to the Small Business Administration. He highlighted its role in determining the necessities of a specific area. He also referred to rebuilding projects, including Bayside Veterans Park, which was achieved a couple of weeks ago.

Mr. Kropacek noted the success in obtaining a grant to assist with the comp plan. The scope of the funding was then expanded to include AECOM. They are working with the CDBG on a CRA study. He predicted that they would be able to present their findings to Council by mid-summer. If approved, they would then present to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). Once all the steps are completed, and the study is acknowledged by the board, they should be able to start by Labor Day of this year. Informational meetings with stakeholders are scheduled throughout the timeline. He characterized this study as a win-win opportunity for the town and noted that this is the time to act.

Council Member McLean expressed concerns that revenue generated in a specific area must be spent there. He commented that the south end of the island needs more support, which may not be offered due to the current structure. Mayor Allers pointed out that the town may be able to use TIFF funding for existing projects that allow for such revenue use, then reallocating normal tax revenue to those areas. Mr. Kropacek stated that a majority of costs is related to infrastructure, and funding is typically provided from the normal tax base.

Town Manager McKannay outlined the next steps from a governance perspective. Council would need to give its approval, then appoint a director and a board that would manage the CRA and report back with its findings. Mr. Kropacek provided Cape Coral and Fort Myers as examples of the positive impacts that a CRA can offer. He asserted that the agency can offer benefits to the town, including canal dredging for water taxi access.

Vice Mayor Safford asked if, after its establishment, the board would be able to represent different areas of the island. Mr. Kropacek answered that, once that CRA or TIFF area is requested, and a board is created, that board can then oversee the entire island.

Council Member Link noted that CRAs can be wonderful but also acknowledged, for the public, that this would mean an increase in property tax and a restriction of those funds for specific use. She expressed that she also believed that the CRA should not be limited to the downtown area. She believes that a lot of projects are already directed to this location and that the town must focus on both residents and tourists. She also wished to consider if the Council (or some of its members) can participate as board members.

Mayor Allers asked if it was typical to have boards serve as an advisory council that reports back to the town for final approval. Mr. Kropacek stated that that was his understanding. Town Attorney Stuparich noted the importance of compliance with the specific process outlined by statute. These include noticing requirements and adoption of certain resolutions. She provided that the CRA is both a separate legal entity and a special district that is dependent on the Council. She identified the finding of necessity study as the single highest priority at this point in time. Following this step, they could then review and address the criteria. Council Member Link expressed her agreement and hoped that the town would tie this into their comprehensive and strategic plans. Deputy Town Manager Traci Kohler noted that the strategic plan refers to the finding of necessity as both an action item and an objective.

Town Attorney Stuparich inquired about an expected date for the finalization of the study. Mr. Kropacek provided that a draft has been completed and that the findings should be before Council by the end of May.

Vice Mayor Safford also noted that Council should consider this as a comprehensive package. Council Member Link asked if he believed that the CRA should cover more than just the downtown area. He responded that there can be a multistep process, with the first stage being the recommended location. Council Member Link stated that she would like to see detailed ways that the CRA would be able to help reallocate funding. She also hopes that the agency could contribute to the wave mitigation wall project. Mayor Allers explained the historical background of discussions on both topics and how the issues are intertwined. Mr. Kropacek asserted that there are potential opportunities for the CRA to assist with mitigation construction, including replacement of water and sewer lines.

Council Member King noted that the town has been trying for at least a couple of years to form a CRA. He believes that Council should begin the process and focus on the big picture. He also acknowledged the disproportionate focus on the north end of the island. Vice Mayor Safford noted that, two years ago, the body considered this issue but any decisions made would have been rushed. Council Member McLean expressed his appreciation for the expertise and compliance with the process.

Mayor Allers stressed the need for a good plan, as it will ultimately be decided upon by the BOCC. Approval would also create costs for the county. He looks forward to having something more tangible to discuss and give directions to the staff, before voting and sending the plan to the county level.

Town Manager McKannay stated that the purpose of this discussion is to receive input from Council. Staff will review and come back to the body.  
Mr. Kropacek recognized Jason Freeman and his essential role in this process.

#### IV. AGENDA MANAGEMENT

##### A. April 2026

Council Member McLean announced that there is an open position on the Anchorage Advisory Committee and requested that Council move forward in filling the position.

Council Member Link would like to see a demonstration on the town's use of the new technology for short-term rentals. Mayor Allers suggested bringing in the hired consultants to provide a presentation.

Vice Mayor Safford stated that the Charter Review Commission has held its final meeting and will bring forth five charter change recommendations at the Council meeting on April 20, 2026.

Town Attorney Stuparich followed up on concerns around the Local Planning Agency appointment. Due to his multiple committee roles, Mr. Schoonover has submitted his resignations from his positions on the Anchorage Advisory Committee, the Bay Oaks Recreational Campus Advisory Board, and the Charter Review Commission. Mr. Schoonover may still apply, and the Town Attorney believed that this process would be the best course of action, given his resignation and the lack of a waiver from Council. Vice Mayor Safford provided that the vacant position on the Charter Review Commission may not need to be filled, since the body does not expect to meet in the future. Town Attorney Stuparich noted that the Commission terminates on April 20, 2026. She asked Council to allow the Town Clerk to post the vacancies. There were no objections to the request.

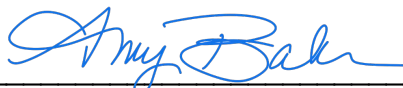
Town Manager McKannay provided that, for the Management & Planning Session scheduled on May 7, 2026, the item labeled "Leadership Forum Strategic Planning" will actually be an opportunity for Council to participate in the strategic planning. Deputy Town Manager Traci Kohler reported that, following discussion on the bicycles, there would be a planning session that should end around 1:00 p.m. There would not be separation to make this into a full-day event.

#### V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:22 a.m.

Minutes adopted as amended, May 4, 2026. Motion by Council Member King and seconded by Council Member McLean.

Passed 5-0



Amy Baker, Town Clerk