DRAFT

MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
MARINE ADVISORY BOARD
FORT LAUDERDALE FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT
528 NW 2ND STREET, STATION #2
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA 33311
3RD FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2026 – 6:00 P.M.

		Cumulative Attendance May 2025-April 2026	
Steve Witten, Chair	P	7	0
Robert Washington, Vice Chair	P	7	0
Norm Bekoff	P	5	2
Tyler Brunelle	P	7	0
Jeffrey Coburn	P	6	1
Courtney Day	P	3	0
Jason Dunbar	P	7	0
Barry Flanigan	P	5	2
Robert Franks (via Zoom)	P	6	1
John Lynch	P	6	1
Sam Mitchell	P	4	0
Ted Morley	P	4	0
Dr. Bret Ribotsky	P	6	0
Bob Swindell	P	5	2
LaRhonda Ware	P	6	1

As of this date, there are 15 appointed members to the Board, which means 8 would constitute a quorum.

Staff

Andrew Cuba, Marine Facilities Manager
Marco Aguilera, Chief Waterways Officer
Shari McCartney, City Attorney
Bob Dunckel, Assistant City Attorney
Todd Hiteshew, Deputy Director, Public Works
Broward Sheriff's Office Police Chief William Knowles
Fort Lauderdale Police Chief William Schultz
Sergeant Travis O'Neal, Marine Unit
N. Day, Recording Clerk, Prototype, Inc.

Communications to City Commission

None.

I. Call to Order / Roll Call

Chair Witten called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Motion made by Dr. Ribotsky, seconded by Mr. Mitchell, to authorize Bob [Franks] to join via Zoom. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

It was noted that while Mr. Franks will be able to hear and participate in the meeting, he would not be able to vote while attending remotely.

Chair Witten introduced new City Attorney Shari McCartney at this time.

II. Statement of Quorum

It was noted a quorum was present.

III. Approval of Minutes – December 4, 2025

Motion made by Mr. Morley, seconded by Mr. Brunelle, to approve. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

The following Item was taken out of order on the Agenda.

IX. Discussion – "Charting Our Course for 2026." Laying Out a New MAB White Board. *Starting with a clean slate.* Goals (short & long term), Challenges, Headwinds, Key Initiatives. *Picking up where we left off…*

Chair Witten reviewed some of the topics addressed by the Board during the previous calendar year, which included:

- Appointment of the City's first Chief Waterways Officer
- New speed restrictions on Fort Lauderdale waterways
- New anchoring regulations on Lake Sylvia

Chair Witten reviewed ideas to be included on the Marine Advisory Board's (MAB's) whiteboard in 2026, which included:

- Focus on the New River, particularly with respect to Mr. Mitchell's concerns for the North Fork area
- Education and enforcement regarding waterway measurements
- Commercial use of dock space
- Living seawalls
- Illegal discharge
- Discussion of waterway areas where the 25% or 30% rules may not apply
- Responsible stewardship of the City's waterways, particularly with respect to water quality

Mr. Mitchell advised that he has met with Fort Lauderdale City Commissioner Dr. Pamela Beasley-Pittman, who is fully supportive of addressing issues on the North Fork of the New River.

IV. "Kicking Off the New Year" – A Visit from Our State Representative Chip LaMarca
Discussion of Challenges, Goals and Where We Need Chip's Help

Florida Representative Chip LaMarca advised that the 2026 Legislative Session is scheduled to begin on Tuesday, January 13, 2026. He recalled that in 2025, he worked with Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue to secure funding for a Fire boat. He emphasized the importance of the MAB's work, and encouraged the members to reach out to his office with issues they feel are important, noting that not all Florida Representatives have experience in districts with significant waterways. He concluded by thanking the Board members for their volunteer service to the Fort Lauderdale community.

Chair Witten requested clarification of any items or issues on which the Board could assist the Fort Lauderdale Police Department through advocacy. Fort Lauderdale Police Chief William Schultz replied that the Marine Unit currently functions as a day shift unit, and stated it was his goal to provide at least two shifts from that unit. This will require the addition of both personnel and boats.

Chief Schultz continued that the Marine Unit should be regularly funded through the City's General Fund in addition to the grant funding it currently receives. He also acknowledged the Florida Legislature's discussions and potential actions regarding property taxes, which could make it more difficult to achieve this goal.

Chair Witten emphasized the importance of being proactive with regard to law enforcement. He also addressed the City's capital replacement program, suggesting that it may be preferable to recycle engines before the end of their useful lives in order to provide resale value for them. Chief Schultz confirmed his support for this idea.

Representative LaMarca reported that the Florida Legislature has put forth seven House Joint Resolutions involving property taxes. While all of the proposed plans would lower property taxes in the state, none would eliminate these taxes altogether. The Senate, however, does not have matching bills for all seven House Resolutions. One Senate Bill focuses on updating regulations regarding homesteads. Two special legislative sessions are planned in 2026 to address redistricting and property taxes respectively.

Chair Witten advised that he would work with both Chief Schultz and Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue Chief William Knowles to discuss their priorities. Chief Knowles stated that one of Fire Rescue's greatest challenges at present is adaptive response, as the Department's two Fire vessels are not staffed on a full-time basis. If a marine call comes in, Station 49's land-based units are taken out of service while their personnel respond

via Fire boats. A Fire boat should be staffed by five personnel on a 24-hour basis to provide an adaptive response.

Ms. Ware requested clarification of the funding available to keep Fort Lauderdale's waterways safe, including water quality as well as Police and Fire service. She expressed concern that the City and its representatives are unable to secure this funding. Representative LaMarca replied that additional concerns include wastewater, recalling that multiple pipes in the City's wastewater system have failed in recent years. This resulted in a significant fine from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which has been reinvested in improvements to the City's water quality efforts.

Representative LaMarca continued that there are 412 other Florida municipalities and 67 counties which make requests based on their needs. Fort Lauderdale must compete with these other entities for state funding.

Dr. Ribotsky addressed the privatization of waterway building, citing the example of docking fees charged by waterway businesses. He urged Representative LaMarca to keep this in mind and share this concern with his fellow lawmakers.

V. Waterway Crime & Boating Safety Reports:
Sgt. Travis O'Neal (FLPD) / Capt. Chad Robertson (Fire Rescue) / Edward Eason (Code)

Chief Knowles reported the following Fire Rescue activity from December 2025:

- A dog was rescued from a delinquent vessel
- An individual on a disabled boat was transported to a medical facility
- A boat taking on water at Coconut Isle was relocated

Sergeant Travis O'Neal of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department's Marine Unit reported the following activity from December 2025:

- GPS devices were stolen from three vessels

Sgt. O'Neal advised that the theft of Garmins and similar devices is a statewide issue. He has been in touch with different law enforcement agencies through an information-sharing platform so they can keep each other apprised of issues and developments.

Sgt. O'Neal requested that the Board members speak to their neighbors regarding the importance of allowing the Police Department to process burglarized vessels, as this can be the only way to identify suspects.

Sgt. O'Neal continued that he plans to provide a PowerPoint presentation at a future meeting on how the Marine Unit is working anchorage issues. He concluded that the Winterfest Boat Parade was a success, with few issues and no injuries.

~~Chair Witten stated that Code Compliance was unable to provide a report at tonight's meeting, but has sent a written report noting that their boat is currently out of service for maintenance. It was clarified that while Code Compliance is not currently patrolling proactively, they are responding to complaints.~~

~~Mr. Bekoff expressed concern with the funding issues described by the Police and Fire Rescue Chiefs, particularly in light of the approval of expenses for a new City Hall.~~

~~Mr. Mitchell advised that he had been informed that Marine Unit equipment cannot pass beneath the Broward Boulevard Bridge at the North Fork River. He has requested that the Police Department look into the purchase of a vessel that can access this area for patrols.~~

~~Chair Witten recommended that the Board members reach out to their individual Commissioners to share these and other concerns.~~

VI. Dock Permit – 701 Cordova Road / Garrin and Ana Paul Rose

Chair Witten stated that the Board has received no letters of objection to the Application.

Eileen Gonzalez, representing the Applicants, explained that the request is for a new dock and boat lift. She reviewed visuals of the area, including the subject and adjacent properties. The elevator boat lift can accommodate weights of up to 15,000 lbs. The proposed marginal dock would be 7 ft. 4 in. x 75 ft. The maximum distance of the dock and lift would extend 18 ft. into the waterway.

Ms. Gonzalez briefly reviewed engineering plans for the site, noting that the boat lift would lie within the 25 ft. waterway limit.

At this time Chair Witten opened the public hearing. As there were no individuals wishing to speak at this time, the Chair closed the public hearing and brought the discussion back to the Board.

Motion made by Mr. Morley, seconded by Dr. Ribotsky, to approve. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 14-0.

~~VII. Dock Permit – 823 SE 2nd Street / Roger & Mary Ann Edwards~~

~~Chair Witten noted that he has visited the subject location, characterizing it as sensitive and environmentally challenging, due in part to the presence of mangroves. The site is located on a narrow area of the Himmarshee Canal. He identified the location of the mangroves as shown on one of the Applicants' slides.~~

~~Ms. Gonzalez, representing the Applicants, stated that the request is for installation of a new dock. She showed different views of the property and adjacent canal. The structure~~

would be a 6 ft. x 14 ft. 9 in. marginal dock with a 3 ft. wide walkway. The dock would be supported by wood pilings placed at distances of 6 ft. and 12 ft.

Ms. Gonzalez continued that the proposed dock was designed to minimize impacts to mangroves as much as possible. She pointed out that walkways in the subject area are limited to 4 ft.; the Applicants' proposed walkways 3 ft. in width. She showed additional renderings of the area, including vegetation that would need to be cut back. This includes a silver buttonwood tree which would be trimmed, as well as seedlings that will be removed if Broward County approval is granted.

Ms. Gonzalez advised that mangrove mitigation will be done at Coontie Hatchee Park and identified the locations of these mitigation efforts.

Dr. Bekoff asked what entity owns riparian rights over the property's mangroves. It was clarified that these rights belong to the City. Dr. Bekoff also requested additional information on how mangrove mitigation at Coontie Hatchee Park related to the Applicants' request. Ms. Gonzalez explained that the Applicants submitted an application to Broward County for the mitigation of mangroves that would be removed from the site.

Dr. Bekoff pointed out that the mangroves at Coontie Hatchee Park were brought in by Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) Florida. Ms. Gonzalez replied that Broward County has an agreement by which mangroves can be removed from certain canals in order to allow the installation of docks.

Assistant City Attorney Bob Dunckel advised that other docks installed along City canals do not interfere with mangroves. Chief Waterways Officer Marco Aguilera added that mangroves are the property of the City, which means the City would need to apply for a permit to trim them. He clarified that the City would need to plant a small number of mangrove seedlings "elsewhere in the City" in order to achieve the necessary mitigation. Attorney Dunckel noted that the Applicants have secured the appropriate licenses from Broward County.

Mr. Aguilera continued that for the next five years, the City is required to provide annual reports on the mangroves planted for mitigation in order to ensure their survival. Ms. Gonzalez added that should those mangroves not survive, more will need to be planted in order to provide adequate mitigation.

Mr. Morley asked for more information on the Applicants' operational plan. Ms. Gonzalez replied that the dock would be installed using a water jet, which would lessen erosion at the site. Attorney Dunckel further clarified that if there are any problems at the site, the Applicants must notify the City.

Chair Witten concluded that environmental issues on the site have been addressed to the satisfaction of Attorney Dunckel. Ms. Gonzalez confirmed that the requested dock would

be constructed on a temporary basis, as a new seawall will be installed on the property at a later date.

At this time Chair Witten opened the public hearing.

Suzee Bailey, representing Residents 4 Resilience, asked if the surrounding neighborhood and homeowners' association has been notified of the Applicants' plans regarding removal of mangroves. She also asked if the City is aware of this proposed removal. It was clarified that the seawall at the location will be replaced within the next five years, and that most of the homeowners on the street are aware of the need for this replacement.

There was also discussion of water quality issues at the location. Mr. Aguilera emphasized that the City is making an effort to improve this quality and has installed an aeration system on the subject canal.

Ted Inserra, member of the public, pointed out that the City Commission recently passed an Urban Tree Ordinance in order to help protect the City's trees. He requested additional clarification of what mitigation at Coontie Hatchee Park has to do with the project that is before the Board. It was explained that the City has identified that location as the best place to plant mangroves to replace those that are removed elsewhere.

As there were no other individuals wishing to speak at this time, the Chair closed the public hearing and brought the discussion back to the Board.

Motion made by Mr. Dunbar, seconded by Mr. Mitchell, to approve. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 9-5 (Vice Chair Washington, Mr. Bekoff, Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Morley, and Ms. Ware dissenting).

VIII. Dock Waiver – 401 Idlewyld Drive / Nancy A. Daly and Pal E. Daly, Co-Trustees of the Nancy A. Daly Revocable Living Trust

John Piotrowski, representing the Applicants, explained that the waiver is requested because the proposed dock would extend beyond 25 ft. into the waterway. He noted that 401 Idlewyld Drive is located on one of the widest areas of the Intracoastal Waterway, and described the proposed project as smaller in scope and scale than most other residential owners' docks in the area.

Mr. Piotrowski continued that the project has been modified so it is no longer outside the 5 ft. setback for marginal docks as required by the City. He pointed out that there is an existing structure on the property which crosses the owner's riparian rights line. The Applicants ultimately modified their proposal so the request is for building within the 5 ft. setback.

Mr. Piotrowski provided the Board members with a list of similar applications along Idlewyld Drive which were approved, noting that most of these were larger than the project proposed by the Applicants. He also provided letters of support from neighboring property owners. The proposed project has also been reviewed by a reputable local captain. He again emphasized the width of the canal in the subject area, noting that the proposed dock was shortened to ensure it remains within the setback.

Mr. Piotrowski continued that the Applicants have reached out to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to request approval of the project, as well as to the Broward County DEP. They have secured all licenses and permits required for the proposed project other than the waiver requested at tonight's meeting.

Chair Witten noted that the Board has received six letters in support of the project.

At this time Chair Witten opened the public hearing.

Tyler Chappell, representing property owners at 407 Idlewyld Drive, requested clarification of the size of the vessel the Applicants propose to dock at the site. Mr. Piotrowski replied that the Applicants do not currently own a boat, but have discussed purchasing a sailboat. He clarified that the Applicants' backup materials include a rendering of a boat at the dock for illustrative purposes.

Mr. Chappell asked if a survey was conducted on the subject property in conjunction with the preparation of plans. Mr. Piotrowski confirmed this, adding that his company took over the project from a previous contractor and permitting group which had prepared surveys, although they had not completed all renderings and plans necessary for the project.

Mr. Chappell continued that his clients are the Applicants' neighbors directly to the south. He advised that his clients objected to the Application for the following reasons:

- The Applicants' application packet includes discrepancies and does not refer to a survey
- The proposed extraordinary circumstances for the waiver request state that the Applicants need a deeper area in which to moor a vessel; as Mr. Chappell was just hearing what kind of vessel is planned, he was not aware of its draft
- Because dimensions are not shown accurately on the Application, the proposed vessel would lie within the setback granted by the City on the north side of the property; however, there is no letter of concurrence from DEP to allow a vessel within the setback

Mr. Chappell showed the survey used in the Application package, pointing out the distance between riparian lines. A diagram used in the Application to illustrate boat access shows a distance of 43 ft. instead of the actual 40 ft. as well as other incorrect measurements.

~~Mr. Chappell reviewed renderings that indicated his clients would be unable to navigate one of their boats into their own slip. He added that the renderings use a sailboat with a 17 ft. beam as an example of the Applicants' boat, reiterating that his clients and other boaters in the area would not be able to navigate within turning radii if the Applicants' plans are approved. He concluded that the proposed site is also located over seagrass, and reiterated that the Application package's dimensions are not correct or consistent, and plans are not signed and sealed.~~

~~Mr. Chappell noted that his clients had proposed a compromise when the Application came before the Board in November 2025. This compromise would provide the necessary dock access as well as ability to access the waterway in the Applicants' proposed vessel. He showed scenarios from the proposed concepts, pointing out that they offer protection from passing waves and would allow the Applicants to dock their boat in deeper water while still allowing his clients access to their own dock. He requested that the Board deny the Application.~~

~~Chair Witten expressed concern with the suggestion that the Applicants' plans were still inaccurate. Mr. Morley recalled that this had been an issue at the December 4, 2025 meeting, and had ultimately led to the Board's tabling of the discussion with the hope that the Applicants and their neighbors could ensure accuracy and reach an agreement.~~

~~Mr. Piotrowski asserted that the objection to the Application was unprecedented, stating that the Applicants were only requesting a waiver to extend beyond the 25 ft. setback limit, which has been approved for larger structures in the general area. He reiterated the approvals the Applicants have obtained, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Broward County, and DEP, all of which required the completion of surveys. He emphasized that the Applicants' surveys are complete and accurate.~~

~~Mr. Morley explained the Board's responsibilities in reviewing applications, which include address of navigational concerns, environmental impacts, and public welfare. He advised that some questions remain regarding the surveys and dimensions of the Application, which should have been clarified in the interim since the previous meeting. He also felt the Applicants and Mr. Chappell's clients should have had some conversations with the intent of compromise.~~

~~Mr. Piotrowski stated that the Applicants have already made several compromises, which involved adherence to the 25 ft. setback due to submerged land requirements, accommodations related to seagrass, and additional changes and concessions made over the past year. Mr. Morley pointed out that the items Mr. Piotrowski had described as compromises are compulsory requirements that must be met.~~

~~Nancy Daly, Applicant, stated that it was not her intent to impede Mr. Chappell's clients from accessing their property, and she had been working on the Application for three years. She concluded that she wanted a single sailboat.~~

~~Dr. Ribotsky requested clarification of why the Applicants wanted an L-shaped structure. Ms. Daly replied that she planned to dock a boat at the end of the L.~~

~~Mr. Dunbar observed that while the boat proposed by the Applicant would not extend beyond the dock, future docking of a larger boat could be an issue. Chair Witten stated there was no reason to question the Applicant's intent for her dock. Mr. Brunelle did not agree, pointing out that docking a vessel at the end of the proposed L-shaped dock, as Ms. Daly had described, would create a greater impediment and should be considered by the Board.~~

~~Chair Witten expressed concern that the two parties could not reach an agreement and asked if they could meet with the intent of compromise. Mr. Chappell replied that his clients have tried to work through the issue and reiterated their objection, also citing a lack of extraordinary circumstance at the site.~~

~~Chair Witten advised that the Application, taken at face value, is valid. It was further clarified that the possibility of a larger boat being docked at the site in the future was not an issue at present. Attorney Dunckel suggested that if the waiver is granted, limitations could be placed on the size of the vessel to be docked at the site, and recommended that the two attorneys meet for further discussion. Ms. Daly pointed out that the two parties have not previously spoken and were unlikely to meet.~~

~~Mr. Piotrowski and Mr. Chappell reiterated many of their previous comments and assertions, including accuracy of the survey provided in the Application as well as restrictions that could be placed on a vessel docked at the site.~~

~~As there were no other individuals wishing to speak at this time, the Chair closed the public hearing and brought the discussion back to the Board.~~

~~Chair Witten concluded that if the Board votes on the Application, they would be able to include restrictions on the size of the boat to be docked at the subject property, as well as potential additional restrictions regarding mooring. He also pointed out that if the Application is approved, its measurements would be subject to review before final approval and would not be approved if incorrect.~~

~~**Motion** made by Ms. Ware, seconded by Mr. Swindell, to table this.~~

~~Chair Witten emphasized the importance of the two parties working toward compromise.~~

~~In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 13-1 (Mr. Lynch dissenting).~~

~~X. Communication from the Bridge – Marco Aguilera / Chief Waterways Officer~~

Mr. Aguilera reported that the City's pump-out vessel is expected to be active by February 2026. He continued that he would give a presentation to the Board on the City's Living Seawall Assistance Program in February. If a homeowner chooses to install a living seawall rather than a standard one, the City will cover 100% of the permit fees involved.

The City is creating a life jacket loaner station to allow boaters in need of these items to borrow them at no charge. Memorial Hospital is also installing a loaner station and has expressed interest in providing a second station at a boat ramp. They are working with the City to identify potential locations.

Mr. Aguilera recognized Mr. Cuba and Mr. Villanueva for their assistance in the same-day removal of a sunken vessel from the Riverland Woods neighborhood.

A mangrove planting is scheduled for February 28, 2026 at New River Middle School at 12:30 p.m.

The City has installed a total of 18 life rings at various locations throughout Fort Lauderdale.

XI. Old / New Business

- **1409 SW 17th Street – Motion to Reconsider or in the alternative a Motion to Amend as to previous action by the Board. Public hearing has been concluded. This is being returned to the Board only for consideration of the Motion to Reconsider or Motion to Amend.**

Attorney Dunckel recalled that the Board previously saw an application for two finger piers at the above address. The easternmost finger pier extended 36.6 ft. into the waterway; however, further study of submerged lands at the site indicated that the extension should be limited to only 25.9% into the waterway. He noted that the Board would most likely have approved the application at that distance. The item is being presented to give the Board an opportunity to adopt a motion to reconsider; if they adopt the motion, the item would be brought back to the Board in February for further discussion.

Chair Witten emphasized that the Board is not asked to vote to recommend approval of the amended distance at tonight's meeting. They would only vote on a motion to reconsider.

Attorney Dunckel continued that if the item is reconsidered, the Board's subsequent recommendation for either approval or denial would proceed to the City Commission, at which time all involved parties would have the opportunity to address the item once again. The request remains the same with the exception of the distance amendment.

Motion made by Mr. Morley, seconded by Mr. Lynch, to reconsider the 1409 SW 17th Street application. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 13-1 (Mr. Mitchell dissenting).

~~XII. Adjournment Happy & Healthy New Year~~

~~There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.~~

~~Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.~~

~~[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]~~