



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**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
THURSDAY, JUNE 4, 2026 – 6:00 P.M.**

**Cumulative Attendance
May 2026-April 2027**

Steve Witten, Chair	P	2	0
Ted Morley, Vice Chair	P	2	0
Tyler Brunelle	A	1	1
Jeffrey Coburn	P	2	0
Courtney Day	P	2	0
Jason Dunbar	P	2	0
Katherine Fernandez	P	2	0
Robert Franks	P	2	0
John Lynch	A	1	1
Sam Mitchell	P	2	0
Dr. Bret Ribotsky	P	2	0
Bob Swindell	P	1	1
LaRhonda Ware	P	2	0

As of this date, there are 13 appointed members to the Board, which means 7 would constitute a quorum.

Staff

Andrew Cuba, Marine Facilities Manager
Edward Eason, Code Compliance Officer
Sergeant Travis O'Neal, Marine Unit
Captain Chad Robertson, Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue
Chief Alex Bagwell, Ocean Rescue
Scott Stone, Assistant City Attorney
Dr. Pamela Beasley-Pittman, District 3 City Commissioner
Todd Hiteshew, Environmental Services Manager
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 6:02 p.m.~~

~~II. Statement of Quorum~~

~~Roll was called and it was noted that a quorum was present.~~

~~III. Approval of Minutes – May 7, 2026~~

~~It was requested that awards presented during the May 7, 2026 meeting be included in the meeting minutes.~~

~~**Motion** made by Mr. Mitchell, seconded by Vice Chair Morley, to approve [as amended]. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.~~

~~IV. Marine Advisory Board Annual Elections~~

~~Mr. Cuba advised that he had distributed biographical information from Board members who had expressed interest in serving as Chair or Vice Chair. Nominations for office must be made by motion.~~

~~• Chairman~~

~~**Motion** made by Mr. Swindell, seconded by Mr. Mitchell, to nominate Captain Ted Morley.~~

~~**Motion** made by Mr. Swindell, seconded by Mr. Mitchell, to nominate Robert Franks.~~

~~Mr. Franks declined the nomination.~~

~~In a roll call vote, Mr. Morley was unanimously elected Chair.~~

~~• Vice Chairman~~

~~**Motion** made by Mr. Witten, seconded by Mr. Coburn, to nominate Mr. Franks for Vice Chair. In a roll call vote, Mr. Franks was unanimously elected Vice Chair.~~

~~Mr. Witten briefly addressed some of the City's current and pending marine issues, and provided copies of the Marine Advisory Board's (MAB's) purpose and strongly recommended updating this language to make it more current.~~

~~Mr. Witten continued that additional concerns include updating signage posted at George English Park and other City parks, pointing out that the communications channels listed in this signage are no longer used by the marine community. He also recommended a vessel traffic study, which will be necessary in order for the Florida~~

~~Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) to take any action related to speed changes and boating safety on the Intracoastal Waterway.~~

~~Mr. Witten provided tokens of appreciation to Sergeant Travis O'Neal of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department's Marine Unit, District 3 City Commissioner Dr. Pamela Beasley-Pittman, and representatives of the U.S. Coast Guard.~~

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

~~**VI. Visit from District 3 Commissioner Pamela Beasley-Pittman**~~

~~Discussion on: Water Quality, Focus on North Fork of the New River, Navigability~~
~~**Doing Nothing is Simply Not an Option!**~~

~~Mr. Witten requested input from the U.S. Coast Guard regarding the federalization status of the North Fork of the New River in Fort Lauderdale. Coast Guard Commander Dale Cressman explained that in 1978, the Coast Guard identified waters beneath the 3rd Street Bridge, Andrews Avenue Bridge, and I-95 Bridge as navigable waters under Coast Guard regulations.~~

~~Commander Cressman continued that federally identified navigable waterways require Title X permits for the construction of any structures that could impede the waterway in any way. This applies strictly to issues of safety and navigation. He further clarified that the Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for the dredging of waterways that are considered federal channels. He was not aware of any designation of portions of the New River as federal channels.~~

~~Ms. Ware asked if federal entities are responsible for the maintenance, including cleanup, of federally identified navigable waterways. Commander Cressman replied that these authorities are only responsible for the maintenance of federal channels. The City or other entities would be responsible for cleaning the waterway.~~

~~Assistant City Attorney Scott Stone provided additional information on Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, which ensures that the submission of permit applications is required before structures may be built on federalized waterways. These permits are reviewed by the Army Corps of Engineers. After 1970, any construction not permitted by the Army Corps of Engineers which restricts navigation on federally navigable waters can be identified for removal.~~

~~Mr. Witten introduced District 3 City Commissioner Dr. Pamela Beasley-Pittman, who emphasized the importance of the North Fork in her district. She asserted that her goal is to ensure this body of water is clean and can be used by families along the corridor.~~

~~Commissioner Dr. Beasley-Pittman continued that she is awaiting information on the availability of Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) grant funds for the construction of a dock on the North Fork, pointing out that it is currently not safe to access the~~

~~waterway due to water quality. Mr. Witten advised that the waterway is currently not navigable to powered watercraft, even airboats.~~

~~Mr. Mitchell requested clarification of the portion of the North Fork that cannot be accessed, advising that the waterway is navigable from Broward Boulevard to 6 Street. Sergeant Travis O'Neal of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department's Marine Unit replied that he could only take a shallow-draft vessel approximately 60 yards past Broward Boulevard; further access was prevented because the boat's engine struck the bottom of the waterway. While a lighter watercraft such as a canoe or kayak might be able to move further, a powered vessel cannot do so. It is also difficult to navigate airboats past Broward Boulevard because of these boats' height.~~

~~Mr. Mitchell recalled that in the 1980s, it was determined that up to 5 ft. of material was in the bottom of the North Fork, and asserted that the City had pumped sewage into the waterway with the knowledge of both Broward County and the state of Florida. Chair Witten replied that the Board is limited in what it can address regarding the City's waterways. Mr. Mitchell reviewed the history of the waterway and expressed concern that no action has been taken thus far to clean or improve the North Fork.~~

~~Commissioner Dr. Beasley-Pittman requested that the Board transmit a communication to the City Commission clarifying what action they would like the Commission to take. This could contribute to a determination of what the City can or cannot do, and charge the City to move forward in working with other entities that have oversight over the North Fork.~~

~~Commissioner Dr. Beasley-Pittman continued that the Miami Waterkeepers perform water quality testing at several locations in Fort Lauderdale, including microbial source tracking (MST), which helps to identify the source of bacteria. At present, signage related to water quality testing is only posted at a specific docking area to inform the public of bacterial levels and the risk to humans. Many residents who live on the North Fork are not aware of the existing levels of contamination.~~

~~Commissioner Dr. Beasley-Pittman continued that the City is seeking to construct new housing and encourage economic opportunity in District 3, and stated that the waterway can have a strong impact on these opportunities. She recommended that this be addressed in the Board's communication to the Commission.~~

~~Ms. Ware requested information on why a contracted cleanup boat no longer accesses the North Fork. Environmental Services Manager Todd Hiteshew replied that the City's current contractor cleans the North Fork as far as the Sistrunk Boulevard Bridge; the City's jurisdiction ends at 24 Street. The contractor provides 12 cleanings each month.~~

~~Commissioner Dr. Beasley-Pittman noted that community advocates and volunteers help to keep the waterway clean in her district, but emphasized the need for the City to commit to regular cleaning of the North Fork as well. Mr. Hiteshew added that the City~~

~~has recently launched an "Adopt a Shore" program which allows community entities to adopt a segment of the City's shoreline and keep it clean. The City's environmental team also maintains a boat that can access the North Fork as far as the Sistrunk Boulevard Bridge.~~

~~V. Visit from the United States Coast Guard – "New River Navigational Concerns"~~

~~CDR Dale Cressman, Prevention Department Head – USCG Sector Miami~~

~~Mr. Witten introduced Commander Dale Cressman, Chief of Prevention at U.S. Coast Guard Sector Miami, explaining that the Board has ongoing concerns regarding navigation on the New River. He briefly reviewed the Board's history in addressing these concerns, including a proposed moratorium that was ultimately not adopted by the City Commission, and emphasized the importance of clear navigation, particularly to marine businesses based on the New River.~~

~~Commander Cressman advised that documentation shows a portion of the New River came under federal jurisdiction in 1978; however, this does not apply to the entire waterway. The New River converges with the Intracoastal Waterway, which is a federal channel. He provided a list of identified federally navigable waterways in the state of Florida.~~

~~Mr. Witten asked questions relating to locations of historic significance along the New River. Commander Cressman replied that he did not have this information, noting that there have been no additional navigable waterway designations in many years, nor have there been reversals of such designations.~~

~~Commander Cressman continued that the Coast Guard is allowed but not required to mark federal channels or federally navigable waterways as such. The Coast Guard's primary concern is the safety of navigation.~~

~~Mr. Franks noted that multiple enforcement agencies, including FWC, the Broward Sheriff's Office (BSO), the Coast Guard, and the Fort Lauderdale Police Department, patrol the same areas of the City's waterways and typically keep the same hours of operation, which leaves several hours in which there are no patrols on the waterways. It was suggested that these agencies coordinate their hours in order to maintain a more constant presence on the waterways. It was noted that the agencies continue to work toward the goal of greater enforcement; however, there are constraints, including the availability of staff as well as overtime.~~

~~Mr. Franks asked if the Coast Guard can enforce laws regarding structures that may impede navigation. There was discussion of what can and cannot be enforced by various law enforcement entities, as well as clarifications of whom can be cited for specific violations. Sergeant Travis O'Neal of the Fort Lauderdale Marine Unit advised~~

~~that there may be issues which he can ensure are passed on to the appropriate authorities, even if the Fort Lauderdale Police Department does not have jurisdiction.~~

~~Mr. Witten explained that Mr. Franks has been working to map the New River in order to determine whether or not the entire waterway can accommodate barges of a certain size, and how those barges would impact the waterway. He suggested that Mr. Franks provide the Coast Guard representatives with slides from his presentation so they can provide feedback.~~

~~Commander Cressman recognized Mr. Witten for his work on behalf of the marine community during his time as Chair of the MAB.~~

~~VII. Waterway Crime & Boating Safety Reports:~~

~~— **Sgt. Travis O'Neal (FLPD)** — **Capt. Chad Robertson (FL Fire Rescue)** **Edward Eason (Code)** — **Chief Alex Bagwell (Fort Lauderdale Ocean Rescue)**~~

~~Sergeant Travis O'Neal of the Marine Unit reported the following activity from May 2026:~~

- ~~• Zero boat burglaries~~
- ~~• An unmanned sailboat with a dragging anchor which hit a bridge and required power to be cut~~
- ~~• A dog was rescued from the Intracoastal Waterway and returned to his owner~~
- ~~• A trespassed individual attacked a City Park Ranger and ran into the ocean, requiring rescue; the individual was arrested~~

~~Captain Chad Robertson of Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue reported the following activity from May 2026:~~

- ~~• 12 calls for service, five of which came during the Air Show~~

~~Chief Alex Bagwell of Ocean Rescue, which oversees beach and lifeguard activity, introduced herself at this time. She provided an overview of annual statistics from 2025:~~

- ~~• 290 rescues~~
- ~~• 66,000 preventions~~

~~Chief Bagwell advised that Ocean Rescue's top priority is keeping individuals in the water safe. The most common cause of drowning is rip currents, which is the reason for roughly 90% of rescues. Enforcement of beach regulations is typically left to the Police Department. There are 20 lifeguard towers on the beach, all of which post information on how to escape rip currents and fly flags indicating rip current status.~~

~~A question was asked regarding House Bill (HB) 1103, which authorizes local governments to adopt ordinances regulating vessel speed and operation within 300 ft. of a confluence of bodies of water which present blind corners. This is intended to ensure the safe navigation of approaching vessels. Sergeant O'Neal cited the example of waterways adjacent to Las Olas Boulevard and Sunrise Boulevard, which include two blind corners as part of a confluence with the Middle River.~~

Code Compliance Officer Edward Eason reported the following activity from May 2026:

- Complaint of a barge docked behind residentially-zoned property; this case is scheduled for a Special Magistrate hearing
- Complaint of a boat encroaching over a property line; inspection confirmed this claim and the owner has complied, removing the boat from the property

It was noted that the Coast Guard has identified several issues related to uninspected towing vessels and uninspected vessels in general. Data is being gathered on this issue and the Board members were encouraged to provide any information they may have to the Coast Guard.

Mr. Mitchell requested clarification of City Ordinances which address the storage of small boats on residential properties. Captain Robertson replied that small boats may be stored on an individual's property atop improved ground cover; they may not be kept unattached on grass or in swales.

VIII. Dock Waiver – 301 Hendricks Isle / Stanley M. Stein aka Stanley Michael Stein, Trustee of the Stanley Michael Stein Trust No. 1

Andy Paul-Hus, representing the Applicant, stated that the request is for a 2 ft. waiver on a boat lift, which would intrude 27 ft. rather than 25 ft. into the canal on which the property is located. He showed photos and a survey of the property. The boat lift has been on the property for 10 years and is being moved due to construction. The canal is 120 ft. wide at the subject location.

Extraordinary circumstances include the environmental benefits of storing a boat on a boat lift, such as allowing more sunlight to reach the bottom of the canal. The boat is also safer out of the water, particularly in the event of a storm.

It was noted that the reasons provided for the boat lift may not rise to the level of extraordinary circumstances for all Board members. Mr. Paul-Hus advised that the surrounding community required the Applicant to install the boat lift 10 years ago and has also required the enhancements which necessitated moving the lift.

Mr. Cuba advised that notice of tonight's hearing were mailed to all property owners within 300 ft. of the subject property. No objections to the Application were received.

At this time Ex-Chair Witten opened the public hearing. With no individuals wishing to speak at this time, the Ex-Chair closed the public hearing.

Motion made by Dr. Ribotsky, seconded by Mr. Dunbar, to approve. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 10-1 (Mr. Mitchell dissenting).

IX. Old / New Business

Scuttlebutt, Loose Ends, Progress on Initiatives, Communications to Commission

~~Mr. Witten advised that he would like to see the Board continue to encourage speed enforcement on the City's waterways, recalling that FWC has indicated a vessel traffic study may be needed in some locations, particularly where blind corners exist. He was also a proponent of restrictions on jet ski rentals.~~

~~Mr. Cuba presented Ex-Chair Witten with a gift in appreciation of his time as Chair of the MAB.~~

~~Chair-elect Morley stated that he would like the Board to work toward a communication to the City Commission regarding the North Fork of the New River at their next scheduled meeting. He was also interested in preparing a communication regarding speed restrictions at the confluence of the Middle River and Intracoastal Waterway. He planned to work with Mr. Cuba and Commissioner Dr. Beasley-Pittman to ensure the Board has all the information they need on the North Fork in particular.~~

~~Chair-elect Morley briefly reviewed Florida's Sunshine Law, which prohibits Board members from communicating with one another outside a public meeting. Any communications must be transmitted through Mr. Cuba's office. Stakeholders from the public may also reach out to Mr. Cuba's office.~~

~~Mr. Cuba advised that the next scheduled Board meeting will be on Wednesday, July 1, 2026.~~

~~Ms. Ware asked if it would be possible for the Board to take action that would facilitate a meeting between waterway enforcement agencies so they can discuss broader monitoring of the City's waterways. Sergeant O'Neal advised that the issue is primarily one of staffing, as he does not have the vessels or staffing to provide a night shift. He recalled that the Board has consistently championed the Marine Unit's need for more personnel and hours to facilitate better coverage.~~

~~Sergeant O'Neal continued that other enforcement agencies, including BSO and the Coast Guard, provide some night patrols. The Marine Unit is currently not a call-out unit, although he has personally responded to incidents several times. He continues to push for call-out status for this Unit; however, this will cost the City more money. He encouraged the Board members to speak with their City Commissioners or the City Manager and advocate for more resources so the Marine Unit can have a bigger footprint on the water.~~

~~Dr. Ribotsky recalled that the Board has previously addressed the issue of barges on the New River, and stated that he has written a draft letter expressing concerns with the size and needs of Florida Power and Light (FPL) barges on the waterway. He suggested that Attorney Stone review and send the draft letter to the appropriate~~

~~parties. Attorney Stone recommended that this topic be addressed as a communication to the City Commission, explaining that while the Board members may individually seek more information on this topic, he and City Staff may only act on behalf of the City.~~

~~Chair-elect Morley added that the Board may not individually or collectively assign an issue to the City Attorney's Office, but can recommend that the City Commission request more information from FPL. The Commission may also direct the City Attorney's Office to draft a letter to the utility requesting additional information. Mr. Swindell advised that he will follow up on identifying a contact person with FPL.~~

~~Mr. Dunbar asked if maintaining or increasing public access to the City's waterways and beaches falls within the Board's scope. Mr. Cuba confirmed this, noting that the City undertakes ongoing efforts to improve public access. While access from state facilities, such as Birch State Park, are outside the Board's purview, he advised that he will look into providing contact information to the Board so they can reach out to the appropriate individuals.~~

~~Dr. Ribotsky requested an update on bridge repairs at Las Olas Boulevard and Sunrise Avenue, pointing out that local notice to mariners is not always up-to-date regarding closures and restrictions.~~

X. — Adjournment

~~There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:47 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.]~~