



City of
Panama City Beach

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MINUTES of the **July 11, 2024** Special Meeting / Beach Safety Workshop of the City Council of the City of Panama City Beach, Florida, and when permitted or required by the subject matter, the Panama City Beach Community Redevelopment Agency.

Mayor Stuart Tettemer called the July 11 2024 special meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

COUNCILMAN PAUL CASTO
COUNCILMEMBER MARY COBURN
COUNCILMAN ETHAN REGISTER
VICE MAYOR MICHAEL JARMAN
MAYOR STUART TETTEMER

A quorum was present with all five members of City Council. Others present were City Manager Drew Whitman, Assistant City Manager Holly White, City Attorney Cole Davis, City Clerk Lynne Fasone, Directors, staff, and members of the public and press.

PRESENTATION - BEACH FLAG SYSTEM BY CHIEF RAY MORGAN

Chief Ray Morgan thanked Council for the opportunity to present and discuss beach safety this evening. Chief Morgan turned the podium over to Director Daryl Paul. Director Paul presented the **attached** Beach Flag System PowerPoint. Mayor Tettemer thanked Director Paul.

Mayor Tettemer inquired as to how often the flags were change throughout the day. Director Paul reported as the rips and conditions develop. Mayor Tettemer inquired if Director Paul thought the City should ever fly a green flag. Director Paul reported the City needed to be consistent.

Councilman Register if AlertBay had a geofence and if alters were received even if a person was not signed up. Manager Whitman reported yes and clarified that TDC sends out the alters. Councilman Register inquired as to how may flags the City is responsible for changing. Director Paul reported the City of PCB has 28 flags and we are responsible for changing 26. Councilman Register inquired as to how long it takes to change/update the flags. Director Paul reported they needed about 45 minutes to change/update the flags. Councilman Register thanked Chief Morgan, Director Paul and the Beach Safety Department for their tireless work.

Councilmember Coburn inquired if there was a way to mark the rip currents. Director Paul reported yes, the lifeguards at the guarded beaches do mark the beaches when a rip is present, however, each flag costs about \$100 and often turn into souvenirs at the unguarded beaches.

Vice Mayor Jarman inquired if more rips were present during any particular time of year. Director Paul stated no, rips occur anytime of the year and can linger for days. Director Paul further explained that it is particularly hazardous when the beach looks calm, and the day is nice. A brief discussion regarding north winds, currents, and coastal sea breeze took place.

Councilman Casto asked for clarification, were the guarded beaches located at the City Pier, Rick Seltzer Park and the private resort. Director Paul concurred and further explained that Rick Seltzer Park was a County park/guarded beach. Councilman Casto inquired if rovers were used to cover the rest of the beaches. Director Paul explained that they do not consider beaches to be guarded when covered by a rover. Councilman Casto inquired as to how many lifeguards were on staff. Director Paul reported 9 full-time and 6 seasonal. Councilman Casto inquired if Director Paul thought that there were enough lifeguards on staff to do the job effectively. Manager Whitman stated no.

Councilman Casto inquired if the City had done, or had a professional, do a plan as to what was needed. Councilman Casto added that the TDC should be given a copy if so. A brief discussion regarding data showing 90% of the drownings were unfortunately tourists, not locals.

Director Paul discussed prevention, proactive education, and making contact with over 1 million beachgoers in 2023. Discussion regarding not recreating the wheel and the various existing beach safety plans out there that may work for the City took place. Director Paul discussed one lifeguard per every 1/8th mile of beach may be difficult to maintain on our shoreline. Councilman Casto recommended the City get a plan to the TDC. A brief discussion regarding the difference between a lifeguarded beach versus a roving beach took place.

Mayor Tetteimer inquired if there were hot spots on the beach that would make good lifeguarded beaches. Director Paul stated yes that he had a heat map showing the locations, which amounted to basically everywhere.

Discussion regarding the flag system being based on rip currents per the United States Lifesaving Association (USLA). Director Paul reported the City's flag system mirrors the USLA because the City is accredited through that agency. Director Paul stressed that the information presented to visitors and beachgoers needed to be consistent. Director Paul discussed observing beachgoers coming onto the beach with eyes looking down because they are carrying supplies and watching where they were walking. Director Paul added that it appeared as though beachgoers tended to miss flags and signs because of looking down.

Councilmember Coburn inquired if there were any best practices that came to mind that the City could adopt. Director Paul discussed being an accredited agency by USLA and what that agency encourages. Councilmember Coburn recommended Council/staff think outside of the box. A brief discussion regarding the meaning of "undertow," wave heights and jetties took place.

Vice Mayor Jarman inquired if from Beach Rescue's metrics there were less rescues at guarded beaches. Director Paul stated yes.

Mayor Tetteimer announced that Council was on schedule, on time, and as time permitted, he would allow a few public comments. Mayor Tetteimer added that the public was also welcome to comment during Council's next meeting.

DISCUSSION / ACTION ITEM, BEACH SAFETY

Mayor Tetteimer called for comments from the public.

1. Mr. Hill – Mr. Hill noted here was here on behalf of the Rotary Club. Mr. Hill commented that Rotary stands by ready to partner with the City. Mr. Hill discussed the benefits of public rescue tubes, similar to the tubes being used in Hawaii and Navarre, Florida. Mr. Hill commented further that he had talked with a number of attorneys and risk was minimal to the City. Mr. Hill recommended the City change its law to follow the “Good Samaritan Law” in Hawaii.

A brief discussion regarding the City’s possible liability took place. Attorney Davis reported that the legal team would do further research.

2. Mr. White – Mr. White commented that he had researched rip currents all over the world and since the dredging and beach renourishment he felt that rips appeared to be happening more often on the beach. Mr. White recommended putting a flag system out in the water. Mr. White further discussed his flag system with LED lights and a touch button that connects to emergency responders.

Mayor Tetteimer closed the public comment period. Mayor Tetteimer called for comments from Council.

Mayor Tetteimer noted that he would like to see more lifeguarded beaches and asked staff to work with the TDC to find out how the City can make that happen with the TDC’s additional funding. Mayor Tetteimer note he would also like to look at funding more private/public partnership.

Councilmember Coburn concurred with Mayor Tetteimer. Councilmember Coburn recommended looking at the capital costs for setting up lifeguards at resorts, look at the different beach access and choose which ones should be guarded by lifeguard and still have rovers.

Councilman Register noted he was in favor of those ideas as well. Councilman Register recommended taking preventative actions such as meeting with beach vendors and Dan Rowe at the TDC to start a beach ambassador program. Councilman Register further discussed how a beach ambassador program might work and how the program may be able to be funded using TDC marketing funds.

Councilman Casto noted that he loved Councilman Register’s idea and would support that program using new marketing money. Councilman Casto also noted that he like the Rotary’s idea of the rescue tubes. Councilman Casto recommended looking into requiring, on the single red flag days, swimmers be required to have some type of floatation device to enter the gulf. Councilman Casto thanked the TDC for stepping up and provided the City with additional funding.

Vice Mayor Jarman noted all of the Councilmember’s ideas were good ideas. Vice Mayor Jarman recommended getting with the TDC on the rescue tubes, also looking at AI software that would complement the City’s Beach Rescue program. Vice Mayor Jarman noted that he also liked the beach ambassador program.

Mayor Tetteimer summarized Council’s direction as: 1) Investigating a subsidized program, including capital cost; 2) Councilman Register’s idea of a beach ambassador program, including funding and if anything needed to be done with respect to a city ordinance; 3) Options with respect to the rescue tubes and partnering with the Rotary; 4) Investigating Councilman Casto’s idea of flotation devices being required on single red flags days; and 5) Vice Mayor Jarman’s idea of AI software. Mayor Tetteimer inquired if Council was in favor of going forward with all five of these options. Councilmember Coburn added getting more information on Mr. White’s idea with respect to an LED flag system. Councilmembers concurred.

Mayor Tettemer noted that Council would recess for about 5 minutes and those wishing to speak further on beach safety could do so at the 5:00 p.m. meeting.

With nothing further, Mayor Tettemer adjourned the Workshop by unanimous consent at 4:54 p.m.

READ AND APPROVED this 25th day of July, 2024.



Stuart Tettemer, Mayor
City of Panama City Beach, Florida

ATTEST:



Lynne Fasone, MMC, City Clerk

* ACTION ITEMS NOTED WITH AN ASTERISK ARE TAKEN BOTH BY THE CITY COUNCIL AND THE PANAMA CITY BEACH REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY JOINTLY AND CONCURRENTLY. IN THE EVENT OF A CONFLICT BETWEEN THE FOREGOING MINUTES AND A VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT OF THESE MINUTES, THE FOREGOING MINUTES SHALL CONTROL.