

Tybee Island Beach Task Force Minutes

September 20, 2007

Members Present: Berta Adams, Cecil DeLorme, Harvey Ferrelle, Amy Lanier, Henry Levy, Mary McCracken, Walter Parker, Freda Rutherford, William Sprague, John Wylly, and Lou Off

Ex-Officos Present: Hampton Spradley, ACOE; Jason Buelterman, Mayor; Paul Wolff, City Council; Diane Schleicher, City Manager

Members Absent: Helen Downing, Wick Searcy (E), and Mark Smith (E)

Visitors: Stan Kinmonth, ACOE; Kevin Haas, GA Tech Consultant; Wanda Doyle, City Council; Jimmy Burke

Latest from Washington is that they are still working on WRDA and they are expecting the President to veto it. The House passed 394 to 25 and the Senate passed 91 to 4, but they are very different and it needs to go to the Joint Committee.

In the Energy and Water committee, 8 out of 12 appropriation bills have not been signed by the Senate yet. Congress is looking at a continuing resolution to keep the government open and they do not know how long they will be working under that. The Energy Water Bill has controversial provisions which include inventory of off shore gas and oil resources in the gulf. There are major differences between the House and Senate on nuclear energy programs along with a other things.

NOAA states that the artic ice is melting faster than expected. This will have a profound effect on animals that use the sea such as crabs, clams, walruses, and bears which will not do well. Salmon and Pollock will extent their range. There will be a change in the eco-system.

August 28th Meeting

Hampton, COE, ran the meeting and he summarized it as a meeting of COE, Tybee and representatives from Representative Jack Kingston's office and the Georgia Senator's aides. Various options were discussed for re-nourishment of the beach from the 100% non-federal funding to approved federal shore protection project with the current cost share of 60/40 (60% federal, 40% non-federal). Different scenarios and options available were discussed. The COE discussed some things that the Representatives could do to help keep the studies going. The COE reaffirmed how much money was needed in order to do the next re-nourishment if they were going to do the federal shore protection project.

Berta stated at the end it was expected that Tybee would not get a federally funded re-nourishment any time in the next couple of years. The chances of us doing it locally and being paid back by the federal government will not happen in the next 5 years either. We are left with funding it ourselves with the idea that this will be a one time excursion of local dollars to do a re-nourishment with the focus on getting the second phase of the Channel Impact study completed so that we could establish ourselves in the federal list of authorized projects.

Bill Sprague stated that since we had the COE Channel Impact study we should consider a court case which might be what is needed to push everyone along.

Lou was impressed by the people we had there. Col Kertis was very positive at helping Tybee. Brad Gane, DNR discussed various items with the COE.

Berta reiterated two points.

- 1) Going back to the previous meeting, Berta was very impressed with Colonel Kertis. She felt that he was going to be hands on and had an interest in trying to do what he could within the parameters of what he is allowed to do.
- 2) We need to stay focused on the immediate re-nourishment. We need to have the funding in place by next fall. We can deal with everything else as a side issue – federal funding, suing etc. We need to

work on getting the \$2.93 million that has been confirmed legislatively, but the Governor has not acted on yet.

Walter backed Berta, but still felt that we should press as hard as we can to get the federal dollars because of our contract.

Lou stated that we are doing all we can. Lou has a letter going to Paul Woodley, Assistant Secretary of the Army. Jason has letters going to both senators and Jack Kingston concerning the results of the Channel Impact study. Bill Sprague has tried to contact Jim Lentz. Anyone that knows someone in government needs to be pushing for what we need to do. Unfortunately on a federal level, the coast is being ignored.

Minutes

Bill Sprague made a motion to accept the July and August Minutes. Amy seconded the motion. Minutes were approved.

Corps Actions and Status Report

Tybee Coastal Management (CZM) – see attached Corps Actions and Status Report for September

Channel Impact Feasibility Study - Hamp passed out the official transmittal from the Engineering Research and Development Center. The part everyone is interested in is on page 2 which states “estimated 70 to 80 percent of the reduction in sand volume on the Tybee shelf and shoreline is due to the project (federal navigational channel).” Hamp stated that all the modeling and analysis needs to be completed. An independent technical review has been requested within the COE and must be completed and comments resolved before all the back up data is released outside of the COE. This should take about 2 weeks. The entire manuscript should be ready to distribute around October 9th - no changes in the basic summary has been found to date. The COE would like to make sure the back up data and report is technically correct before a release occurs.

Bill Spargue questioned, “What causes the loss of the other 20 to 30 percent?” Hamp believed that it would be natural erosion that is expected in any coastal environment.

Henry Levy felt that either 70 to 80 percent is a low figure or the other 20 to 30 percent is caused by the dams the COE placed in the upper Savannah River and stopped the drift of sand from coming down the river. He blames the federal government 100% for the beach erosion. A suit needs to be filed against the government and the Corps for the erosion of the beaches on Tybee. They would be re-nourished naturally were it not for the dams and the channel.

Freda asked if we could presume that the green area which she called Estill Point is the sand from the front beach. There is a build up of sand there. Hamp was not sure. He would not offer any more detailed interpretation of what ERDC has done. Freda was concerned about the shrimper channel and the accumulation of sand gathering there.

Lou stated that the summary is a step in the right direction. Hamp reminded everyone that this is Phase I which is the initial scientific analysis of the impact. Phase II will look at mitigation alternatives as to how to help mitigate for those impacts. Henry asked if we have to pay for that study. Hamp stated that it would be a 50/50 cost share. Henry asked could we use past studies. This would be a different study. Henry questioned why would we pay for this study if it is not going to help re-nourish the beach? Lou stated that it would be for future re-nourishments.

Berta requested a long table for the next meeting because it is hard to be part of the conversation if you are not around the table.

Berta asked that since Phase I showed a 70 – 80 percent loss ratio why wouldn't our obligation for Phase II be cost shared at 70/30 or 80/20 instead of 50/50. Lou stated that the rules and regulations are all studies are cost shared at 50/50. Mr. Woodley said that once the study is done that Tybee would be reimbursed on the new basis. This was placed in a letter that Dan Parrot received.

Hamp wanted to let the members know that to date there was no federal money for Phase II. Lou stated that we have money from GPA to get that started. Berta stated there needs to be federal money to match that.

Tybee Island Shore Protection Project – The LRR (Limited Re-evaluation Report) was approved last year. The COE is ready to go with a beach re-nourishment, however, \$6 million is needed from the federal government to do this. The COE has gained authority to go head with the PCA package (Project Cooperation Agreement). This is a legal document that needs to be signed by the COE and Tybee which lays out all responsibilities. Before a packet is sent for approval it must have all the environment clearances, the COE is going to try to use the environmental work that is being done by our consultant, Erik Olsen, such as vibracore samples and lab analysis, etc. Hamp wanted us to beware that without special legislation any work performed prior to signing of the agreement is not eligible for reimbursement or cost share.

Mark Padgett is working closely with Erik Olsen. They are moving ahead and are looking at the next environmental window to do a re-nourishment which is Nov. 2008 – Feb. 2009.

Paul Wolff questioned if the COE was using Erik Olsen's data, would that not count for some of our cost share. Lou stated that it would decrease their cost. Paul felt the COE should compensate us. Lou stated that they could not until the PCA is written and agreed. The only benefit to us is that it will reduce their cost in doing the project. Paul asked what our chances are in getting some legislation. Lou stated that we could try. Berta felt they should concentrate on the \$2 million dollars. Lou said we are looking at a cost of \$10 – 15 thousand at the most for this. Paul thought that it was more and trying to spend the time for this legislation was not worth it.

Hamp stated that we are going down parallel paths in trying to get ourselves positioned in case additional funds show up so that the COE could do a federal shore protection re-nourishment. If those funds do not show up, Tybee is in position for a 100% non-federal re-nourishment. Berta stated that the good thing is that we are doing all the engineering and the permitting and getting everything set for whatever happens.

Tybee PIR Report for TS Andrea – See Corps Actions and Status September Report. Hamp stated that TS Andrea was not a cat 3 hurricane, but they were looking at other ways for it to be considered. Whether the fact that TS Andrea pounded the coast for several days would be supported at higher levels remains to be determined, but Hamp said not to count on it. Paul asked should we not be more concerned with quantifying the sand based on the beach profile rather than the intensity of the storm. Hamp stated that they had done that. Lou stated that we are getting a lot of valuable information that Erik is using. Hamp stated that there are several hurdles to get over and one is damage to the project.

FY-08 Budget

Berta asked if Congress does another continuing resolution what would that mean. Hamp stated that they usually give some guidance with the continuing resolution. If the project was funded last year and expects to be funded this year, they could authorize to spend at rate done the previous year. This would not pertain to us since there were no monies allocated for the previous year.

Jasper County Terminal Development, Brunswick Harbor Deepening, Savannah Channel Maintenance, Savannah Harbor Expansion – See Corps Actions and Status September Report

Diane asked Hamp to include the North Beach Seawall back into his report. This is still an ongoing issue.

Lou stated that he was at an SEG meeting on Tuesday a week ago and made the statement that Tybee Island is not please with what we are getting out of it because the new report basically said the deepening of the channel makes negligible effect on Tybee. He stated that this was a cop out because he had the preliminary information that the channel is, has been and will continue causing the erosion on Tybee. He pleaded for them to do the right thing for Tybee as they are doing with the fisheries and the marsh grass, etc. The Savannah city engineer and Bob Scandlen stated the same about the oxygen in the water. John Robinette of the federal fisheries stated that the deepened channel is not only affecting Tybee, but the end of Wausau Island.

Kevin Haas - Report

3 Projects on Tybee –

Beach Profiling – Measured what happened after Andrea. The beach lost a lot of sand, but over the summer some of it came back, which is a natural process. Kevin stated that 20 – 30 percent came back. The rate of recovery does not match the rate of lost.

Wake Analysis – The wake varied from 1 cm to 5 cm, there would be no erosion caused by this. Even if it does get larger the frequency would be so small that ship wake would not cause erosion. Normal waves under storm conditions cause more erosion than the ship wake.

Sedimentology – the Northern part of the Tybee near shore contains a lot of silt clays. Significant sand off shore is in the southern part of the island – close to where they are looking at the borrow area. They found a decent description of sand. Anywhere else sand is very fine. Lou asked Kevin if he would agree that the finer the grain the quicker it would move off the beach. Kevin did agree.

Tybee Re-nourishment Project: Update

Progress Report from Erik Olsen: Vibracoring – coring for borrow site has not begun because of weather and vessel break downs. Best guess is two weeks from now to begin. They are prepped and awaiting vessel availability.

Permit Coordination – They are well coordinated with the Savannah District Regulatory branch with respect to their understanding of what they deem they need to see. Most of it is standard except the COE insists on testing the borrowed area for heavy metals. Erik has never performed such test in his 35 years of coastal engineering.

Environmental – They have authorized the consultant to begin the EA work on the basis where they expect the new borrow site to be so that it is not held up. They have received an okay from the Savannah District as to their approach.

Cultural Resources – Their Marine Archeological consultant has coordinated with the Savannah District as required. They will not authorize their work until they know the exact coordinates of the purposed borrow area. Their work is very detailed verses general and must reflect the project area exactly.

Permitting – Their drawings are being formulated based on what they know at the present. They will be refined as they go along.

Lou stated that at the past meeting a list of tasks that Erik is doing A – K can be followed. Each item permitting, environmental, cultural and engineering drawings relate to one of those tasks, the cost, and where he is on each task.

Berta wants to have a locally funded beach re-nourishment. The information from the channel impact study is good, but this is long term and it will help when we go to the Governor and get our \$2.93 million and also to push the opportunity for future funding. We need to make sure the money that has already been promised gets to us. The GPA has had a very hard heart with us since the beginning. They are afraid of admitting the channel affects because they are then obligated and there will be an expectation. They would like to stall that the best they can. Tybee needs to find a way to influence them to change their minds and the only people that have influence over them are the people higher up in the governmental ranking such as the Governor, Lt. Governor, and the Speaker. This might not help federally, but this maybe our strategy when we go to the state. We are going to have to convince the upper level of the state government, if GPA doesn't help us, we may be stopping commerce and we may be suing. We don't want to be at war with each other, but it may come to that. We are waiting on \$2.93 million. We want them to be a part of the remedy.

Lou stated that both DNR and Casey Cagle are looking strongly at GPA help for funding. Lou did not know how the 9/27 meeting was going to be structured, but we should as citizens as well as task force members be there to let them know that we are being hurt by actions that are directly benefiting the State and the Federal government.

Freda asked when the Harbor Deepening Project planning will be complete and going for approval. Hamp stated they are looking at Feb. 2009 to start the project. Freda stated that sometime soon the mitigation plan is going to have to come forward and she asked if stake holders would need to endorse it.

Lou answered that two hours of the last SEG meeting was spent on the meaning of mitigation – what is it, who does it, why is it done, how will it be done. This is being taken up by a SEG committee.

Freda asked where we end up. She feels the mitigation plan should include Tybee and if we could determine what that is then GPA would pay for a share of the re-nourishment.

Lou stated that we have several directions: we have Erik Johnson's meeting, we have SEG and the ship channel deepening, we have the channel impact study. The state should be taking the lead to sue the federal government if necessary.

Bill Sprague watched historic Savannah for years. When someone wanted to do something they didn't like they would bring a law suit which brought everyone to the table. In early 2009, they want to deepen the channel. We really don't want a law suit, but if Tybee is not included then we should do that.

Lou stated that this scenario needs to be brought to the meeting on 9/27.

Mary asked if we should have Erik Olsen come to this meeting and present them his view on what should be done as our engineer. Lou stated that this would not help.

The SEG had a \$4 million report that was thrown in the trash can because the COE would not accept it. Now ERDC has done the first study which has been accepted and they piggy-backed off that study to do the study they just did for us.

Walter said the mitigation is going to be, as far as Tybee is concerned, just that element from 42 ft to 46 ft. He asked what time the meeting was on Thursday.

Lou stated this was Eric Johnson's meeting and it was going to be from 9 am to 2 pm. Jason should have an agenda. Regina Thomas is supposed to be there along with another senator.

Henry stated that there is one other solution – a toll road to Tybee. This is a master plan subject. Walter stated that the city should have a file of what needs to be done to obtain a toll road.

Jimmy Burke asked if we could get the county involved. Lou stated that Pat Farrell will be at the meeting. Jimmy is going to get Pete Liakakis to attend also.

Harvey asked if we could get anyone from the GPA. Lou felt that they would have someone here, but reiterated that this is not our meeting.

Lou will have a report from Erik Olsen at each meeting. The COE has been told to cooperate from the Colonel and they are.

Diane stated that she has contractors looking at the sea wall for removal. She is trying to get an idea of the magnitude of the problem. Lou stated this needs to be done prior to re-nourishment if possible.

Walter stated that we should hold GPA accountable. Precedence was set in 1994, they decided to put the dredge material on Tybee and it did not prove to be the proper material for Tybee. The COE made a mistake in their core sample. The Port Authority and the state allocated \$4.5 million to dredge sand for the south end of the island where the erosion was the worst. Berta stated that this was funded by the state and the Port

Authority. Tom Coleman was very powerful in state government and had connections with the Port Authority and Charles Griffin. It was the combination of these two that gave us this opportunity. Walter stated that the South Tip groins were funded by the Governor's Discretionary Fund.

Henry Levy felt that we should invite Steven Green, Board Chairman of the GPA, and show him where the erosion is occurring and what it is doing and the danger factor. Lou stated that Jason has had on going meetings with him. Steven Green has now taken for Matt Mattingly. Bill Sprague set up a meeting with Matt and Lou before leaving, but nothing was accomplished.

No other business was discussed.

Meeting Adjourned.