

MINUTES OF THE COLLIER COUNTY
COASTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
WATER QUALITY SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Naples, Florida, January 10, 2022

LET IT BE REMEMBERED, the Collier County Coastal Advisory Committee Water Quality Subcommittee, in and for the County of Collier, having conducted business herein, met on this date at 1 P.M. in REGULAR SESSION at the GMD Horseshoe Square South Conference Room, 2685 Horseshoe Drive S., Unit 103, Naples, Florida, with the following members present:

CHAIRMAN: Bob Roth
VICE CHAIRMAN: Bob Raymond
Ray Christman

ALSO PRESENT: Danette Kinaszczuk, Pollution Control (via phone)
Rhonda Watkins, Principal Environmental Specialist (via phone)
Farron Bevard, Operations Analyst, Coastal Zone Management

Any persons in need of the verbatim record of the meeting may request a copy of the audio recording from the Coastal Management Department.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Roth called the meeting to order at 1 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

None.

III. Roll Call

Roll call was taken, and a quorum of two was established. (Mr. Christman arrived a few minutes late).

IV. Changes and Approval of Agenda

None

V. Public Comments

None

VI. Approval of CAC Minutes

None

VII. Staff Reports

None

VIII. Old Business

Update on the May 12, 2021, Water Quality Report No. 1 [Chairman Roth]

The subcommittee is tasked with coming up with Report No. 2, additional ideas to provide to the BCC for consideration and approval involving water quality that no other department or agency on the state or county level is studying.

Last year, the subcommittee came up Report No. 1, three water-quality recommendations for the County to pursue.

- Promote compliance with the County Fertilizer Ordinance.
- Conduct training.
- Investigate the cost of installing advanced wastewater treatment.

That was converted into an executive summary dated May 25th, 2021, which the County Manager's office intern turned into a memo for the BCC. It says it's pending. If they've taken any action, the subcommittee needs an update. The report went through the Budget Office, County Attorney's Office and County Manager's Office.

1. Promoting Compliance with the County Fertilizer Ordinance: Chairman Roth didn't believe the fertilizer ordinance was being enforced.

Ms. Kinaszczuk said it was and it wasn't. If they see a violation that's not a second or third offense, the County educates the violator. As far as being proactive, the County currently doesn't have the staff to go out and find violators, but could be proactive when more personnel are hired.

2. Training: The education portion involves a class at Rookery Bay. The County also is looking at educating reclaimed water users on why they don't need fertilizer if they use reclaimed water.

Ms. Kinaszczuk said the County provides \$25,000 in funding for the Rookery Bay class and helps teach it. They teach people who aren't licensed workers how to fertilize correctly.

Chairman Roth noted that reclaimed water already has phosphorus and nitrogen to sustain grass. On Marco Island, where irrigation is mandatory, he's working with a group to get the City to outlaw fertilizers.

[Ray Christman joined the meeting at 1:09 p.m.]

3. Investigating the cost of installing AWT: The sewer plants designed under the state-issued reuse permit issue don't require nutrient removal and most residents don't realize that. About 90% of the plants statewide are permitted for reuse water and don't have a traditional discharge permit to release into waterways.

Chairman Roth asked if the County had decided to hire an engineering consultant to investigate its wastewater plants.

Ms. Kinaszczuk said anything that's going to be built new is going to have advanced wastewater treatment. As the County replaces portions of the North Plant that are no longer viable, they will be replaced with AWT, but the County won't take plants down and rebuild because it's not feasible. The County also is looking at replacing portions of the Golden Gate City facility. Moving forward that's the plan. A study wouldn't help because it would be too expensive to rebuild.

Chairman Roth asked how the County manages its reuse water. On Marco Island, although it's reuse water, he believed the City is not using it for irrigation, but to get rid of 3 million gallons a day, rain or shine, 365 days a year. The City irrigates even while it's raining, which is not smart. Under the guise of a reuse permit, the City is using it as a discharge permit, which is not what it's intended for. He asked now the County gets rid of its wastewater.

Ms. Kinaszczuk said she was the reclaimed water manager for four years and five people a week called to ask for reclaimed water. Although it wasn't used every day in the wet season, it was used every day during the dry season and what's called the shoulder-season, spring and fall. When it wasn't used for that, it would be injected into a well. No one was using reclaimed water to get rid of it.

Chairman Roth noted that Marco Island has two deep wells, yet the City doesn't get rid of reclaimed water there. Instead, it keeps selling it to customers, rain or shine.

Mr. Raymond asked how the County could implement the fertilizer ordinance.

Chairman Roth said fertilizers were outlawed in Westchester County, which is in the New York City watershed area. Residents could not buy it at Home Depot or Lowe's or anywhere there. Would Collier County consider a ban? Many residents think they need to use fertilizers, and landscapers make a lot of money selling fertilizers to homeowners.

Ms. Kinaszczuk said that when the City of Naples tried to ban fertilizers, City officials received a letter from the state Department of Agriculture saying it could not regulate that. County employees went to retailers that sell fertilizer, such as Home Depot and Lowe's, which wouldn't allow County employees to install signs to educate customers about the Collier County Fertilizer Ordinance and how much fertilizer is needed. She called it an uphill battle and said the County needs to start with the State.

Mr. Christman asked what the current County ordinance or policy is regarding fertilizer use. He noted that

the new City ordinance includes a summer ban on fertilizer use of any kind and a year-round ban on phosphorous.

Ms. Kinaszczuk said the County Fertilizer Ordinance, 2019-18, is similar to the Naples ordinance, with the exception of the wet-season ban. Science shows that if you're going to put fertilizer down, it needs to be done during the wet season, when the grass is actually hungry and absorbing nutrients, instead of in the dry season, when it won't. The County has a year-round phosphorous ban, but not an overall wet-season ban (May 30-Oct. 1).

Chairman Roth said the Marco Island has the same ban, but it's not enforced or inspected, and no irrigation during summer months. His landscaper says the problem is that once Oct. 2 comes around, the day after the ban ends, everyone fertilizes, and by Oct. 15, you can see the reaction in the canal. He said the grass may have been slightly yellow, but grass on Marco Island is insanely green and residents want that, so it's a real dilemma. He agreed with the County that it should be allowed year-round to even it out there's no problem putting it down in the summer.

Ms. Kinaszczuk suggested looking into the University of Florida's "[Florida-Friendly Landscaping](#)," which has nine principles.

- Right plant, right place
- Water efficiently
- Fertilize appropriately
- Mulch
- Attract wildlife
- Manage yard pests responsibly
- Recycle yard waste
- Reduce stormwater runoff
- Protect the waterfront

She said "right plant, right place" is hard to do because some plants do well in some areas and don't thrive in others due to sun exposure.

Chairman Roth suggested that new building permits prohibit grass in the rear yard when it fronts a canal, and alternatives, such as perennial peanut, which is a good ground cover, doesn't have to be mowed, would be good for swales, and has its own fertilizer.

He suggested a good place to start for municipalities, cities and County would be tear-downs and new permits, to change the vegetative cover requirements and limit them. He noted that Marco Island has a landscape ordinance that lists what trees can be used and which are prohibited. He said a non-vegetative swale could be an alternative, but that's not allowed on Marco Island.

Mr. Miller suggested that Florida Friendly Landscaping principles be mandated or encouraged in some way.

Chairman Roth noted that Marco Island's ordinance requires that a landscape plan be submitted as part of the building permit application, but there is no requirement that it be prepared by a licensed landscape architect. (Up North, that's required.) He noted that the ordinance is requiring builders to spend more money, which they balked at.

He suggested educating the public on Florida-Friendly Landscaping and adding it to the three requirements the subcommittee already listed. The County could take out an ad or public service announcement or request that an article to be written in the Marco Eagle or Coastal Breeze. He's only seen flyers inserted into utility bills.

IX. New Business

Follow-Up Report on Additional Water Quality Recommendations

Chairman Roth said the subcommittee needs come up with a report to forward to the CAC, which could endorse it and send it to the County Manager's Office for BCC approval. He noted that Andy Miller suggested a feel-good public education and involvement project. Starving manatees are more in the news now than red tide, so he suggested focusing on seagrass, a program the County could promote. He noted that on the East Coast, volunteers are using sea grass cuttings and weaving them through burlap to create water habitats that also would help manatees. He suggested looking into funding and hiring an environmental consultant.

Mr. Raymond said it would certainly get a lot of public attention.

Mr. Christman said the death of manatees is more an East Coast issue and suggested asking a consultant to determine if it's an issue here. He noted it was occurring mostly in the Indian River.

He suggested keeping manatees on the list of recommendations, but noted that the Conservancy of Southwest Florida lost its water quality expert recently. The Collier County Waterkeeper could be brought into this discussion and join a CAC Water Quality Subcommittee meeting to provide input.

Virtually all Collier County's major bodies of water are impaired. None are healthy. He noted that the County is considered a national jewel, yet it has poor quality water. He also suggested public education and getting people involved, possibly with manatees and long- and short-term major water issues.

Ms. Kinaszczuk said the County feels his frustration about living in Collier County and not having good water quality. However, she cautioned him about using Waterkeeper and others to take water samples. She said most people don't know how to sample or do it professionally, which causes a lot of problems for the County. They spend too much time arguing over data because volunteers don't do it properly. They must meet criteria, such as getting certified, and ensuring they meet all SOP protocols.

For example, she noted that the County was trying to hire an environmental consultant who said the firm had done water quality studies for 20 years. The first thing the County asked to see was its water quality manual, which showed the guidelines the firm follows were incorrect. The County then conducted an audit on the firm and it failed. They've been doing it incorrectly for 20 years. Problems included putting samples on the ground and not using gloves.

She suggested the subcommittee consider other issues, such as climate change and carbon sequestration (capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide) and said any seagrass restoration program would be beneficial.

Mr. Christman thanked her for the information, but clarified that he wasn't considering asking Collier County Waterkeeper to conduct water samples. He just wanted to invite the group to the CAC Water Quality subcommittee to exchange ideas on major County water quality issues on a policy level, not from a technical standpoint.

He said the City of Naples has been trying to be more proactive about cleaning and restoring

its lakes and has gotten into similar arguments over water sampling and data. However, he said, if you don't measure, test and sample, you're never going to know if you're making progress.

Chairman Roth said the County has a Rookery Bay program to train landscapers about fertilizers. Why can't the County offer a program to train volunteers on how to take water samples? He said he trains people in Cape Cod, on Pleasant Bay. The County would just have to purchase equipment for about 30 crews to go out and sample water. He said it's not rocket science. It involves a cooler with frozen ice blocks, obtaining basic parameters and handing in samples within a specified time frame. A manifest goes to the lab with the samples. He'd be first in line for such a program.

He suggested that could be a good feel-good project. The County can investigate the feasibility of a training program to gather volunteers to gather physical parameters of water quality and people could be hired to deal with the volunteers.

Ms. Kinaszczuk said that sounds like Florida Lake Watch by UF's IFIS. County staff is involved in that program, which raises awareness, but doesn't test for specific nutrients.

She said that's something the County could get behind. There's room for two or three more groups. When you get into marine sampling, it may not be rocket science, but it is science and it's not something you want the average citizen to do.

Mr. Christman noted that people love to volunteer for Naples' pelican protection program, so water quality issues could resonate with residents. He suggested creating a small pilot program and going from there.

Chairman Roth said he'd second that as a subcommittee recommendation: a training program for water-sampling volunteers.

Mr. Christman suggested the subcommittee also might want to think about its stormwater code. He said the City recently revamped its stormwater management code to strengthen it and enhance it. With any new construction, the amount of water that must be retained on site was doubled from a half-inch to one inch.

There's also a requirement that homeowners must pay for periodic inspections, which has been more controversial. The City has found there aren't enough quality firms and they're charging more than they promised. He understood the City is small compared with the County and didn't know the County's stormwater ordinances or onsite requirements.

Chairman Roth said he supports such a program.

Mr. Christman said if he were coming up with a list of recommendations, he'd add stormwater management recommendations to the list.

Mr. Raymond said the subcommittee doesn't know if the County does this already. They need to research that first.

Chairman Roth said they need to have a subcommittee meeting with Collier County WaterKeeper first before they can submit a list of recommendations to the CAC.

[Mr. Christman left at 2:27 p.m. to attend another meeting.]

Chairman Roth said the County should develop a public service announcement, with a catchy theme such as Collier Blue, or put an ad in the newspaper to say it's everyone's responsibility, not just the government's.

Summary of additional recommendations for Report No. 2:

- Boost public awareness about fertilizers and water-quality issues through public service announcements or newspaper ads and articles.
- Look into a training program for water-quality sampling volunteers.
- Recommend that the County hire a consultant to develop a County plan and strategy to help the declining manatee population.
- Feasibility Study: Hire a consultant to determine the feasibility of developing a manatee seagrass restoration project in Caxambas Park and areas around Everglades City.

Ms. Kinaszczuk said she could provide the subcommittee with water quality data. She said the county's water-quality reports are online, but she'd send them to Andy Miller to distribute to the subcommittee.

X. Announcements

None

XI. Committee Member Discussion

XII. Next Meeting Date/Location

Monday, February 7, 2022, 1 p.m.
GMD Horseshoe Square South Conference Room

There being no further business for the good of the County, the meeting was adjourned by order of the chair at 2:35 p.m.

**Collier County Coastal Advisory Committee
Water Quality Subcommittee**

Chairman, Bob Roth

These minutes were approved by the Subcommittee/Chairman on _____, as presented (choose one) _____, or as amended _____.