

North Beach Community Association
Minutes Membership Meeting
Oct 19, 2023 - Las Brisas condos

Board members present: Ron Graban, Dolores Vela, Michael Kennedy, Carrie Meyer, Tracy Jackson, Bob Catalano, Lynn Frazier. (Not present - Manny Portillo)
Advisory Committee present: Pete Meyer, Denise Scott, Michele Spinelli

6:05 PM – NBCA President Ron Graban opens the meeting, introduces the Board – Ron: We’ve changed the momentum on North Beach. City staff members are creatively looking at all the options and doing something.

Ron: Fill Dirt. The city updated its existing ordinance so that now property owners in a V Zone can now add nonstructural fill dirt to their land, providing certain requirements are met. The city moved from a previous policy of “no fill is allowed, period” to the new policy that Council passed this month that *does* allow nonstructural dirt to be added in a V Zone. City staff present tonight brought copies of the new ordinance with (most of) the policy changes **highlighted in color**.

Ron: Tonight’s Agenda Packet also includes a list of amendments to the new dirt ordinance that NBCA’s Board would like the city to insert. Mainly we would like to see the FEMA wording used in the ordinance, as opposed to any wording that goes above and beyond what FEMA requires. Also, (9) needs to be **color coded**, as it changed the word “**or**” to “**for**,” which completely changed the meaning of the ordinance. So that change was really important and needs to be **color coded** in the final document, like the other changes to the ordinance are printed, to highlight it.

Ron: Tonight’s meeting is a meeting about **Drainage**. The Board met on Oct 17 to review the new drainage plan and then put together a series of questions and recommendations. We think this list will answer a lot of questions our members may have tonight. So we will go through those questions from the Board, then we’ll get to other questions if time permits.

Ron introduces **Lynn Frazier**. Lynn talks about flooding and solutions.

Ron introduces **Assistant City Manager Heather Hulbert** who introduced and promoted Proposition A.

Heather: Prop A will be on the ballot in Nov. It’s about a reauthorization of the existing sales tax to broaden the use for seawall maintenance, regional parks, industrial streets, airport, American Bank Center, and will pay for construction of a new privately owned hotel next to the convention center. Currently the existing tax (that will soon expire) produces \$18 million annually.

Break for a meal, then Ron introduces city officials present: At Large City Councilman **Mike Pusley**, At-Large City Councilman **Jim Klein**, District 1 City Councilman **Everett Roy**, Assistant City Manager **Peter Zanoni**.

City Manager Peter Zanoni talks about historical flooding issues, how they have worked on the Linear Canal with park-like amenities with a canal that meanders and includes vegetation, shade, sidewalks and gathering spaces. Phase 1 encompasses from the north end Eco Park to Surfside Park. Phase 2 will come once the new bridge is complete and the old bridge is torn down.

This is a tremendous process. We have \$14 million ready for North Beach in the budget, ready for NB. \$5 million came from the federal CARES Act (ARPA funding). It's nice to have design but you need money for construction. This should cover Phase 1.

In the design world, when you make changes the earlier you can make it the better. We're at the 30 percent mark, so we thought: Let's get out to NB and see what you think. We don't normally do that. We're here tonight to get your input.

North Beach is the best it's ever looked in the last 5 years. We have a TIRZ, there are only a few in the city, so part of the taxes you pay here stay here. We have Lynn Frazier who finished a multifamily complex with a lighthouse that is complete. The TIRZ helped fund a new RV Park at the north end, and helped the Aquarium's new expansion. We have money set aside for the Eco Park (design). The \$1.2 billion new Harbor Bridge will improve this area (a TxDOT project).

Tremendous things are happening. This Linear Canal is important. Thank you for being with us tonight.

Neiman Young, Assistant City Manager: I'm in charge of Public Works and Engineering. Both have worked closely with Scott Harris at LAN who is the drainage plan contractor. City staff working on it are Gabriel Hinojosa (Storm Water) and Ratna Pottumuth (Engineering Services). ACM Heather Hulbert is here with Parks & Rec Director Robert Dodd and assistant Kevin Johnson. Once the canal is built, Parks will be maintaining it, running events, etc. and will make sure that the amenity meets its recreational potential and that the aesthetics are correct.

Neiman: Fill dirt from Bridge Project is what instigated the ordinance change, as there was no previous process in place. It will help connect the Public Works Dept with property owners who want to add nonstructural fill dirt to their properties.

Scott Harris, engineer with LAN – He's been working on a NB Drainage solution since 2020. The city contracted with him in April 2023 and LAN has already turned over a 30% design.

Scott: Another firm (MIG) did the conceptual design in 2022, outlining 9 different priorities. Phase 1 is what we're working on now. We are touching on 2-3 of those 9 priorities. In 2022, the Council chose the Linear Park as "Concept 2" being the preferred choice of moving forward with drainage. We are at the very beginning.

Scott: New Canal. Water goes in and out. This first section will measure 4,300 linear feet, from Surfside Park to Timon Marsh wetlands. It's not like a flowing river. Anytime it rains or we have a high tide, the canal will fill up. The roadside ditches will channelize that rainfall into that canal. It will be off the roads and properties and instead be in ditches and in the canal. We will make some underground stormwater system improvements. The one along the beach has had many problems, so we feel that there are limited opportunities to connect the existing underground

system into what we're doing. It's better to abandon that in place. Highest tide is normally 3.5 feet and happens once a year.

Bob Jones: How does this fit in with elevation for North Beach?

Scott: Elevation is included on the Master Grading Plan (part of the 30% plan that LAN submitted to the city). It communicates ultimate elevations on NB as if NB were fully developed right now. We have environmental consultants to talk about water quality.

Anne Foote: asks about her property elevation and how to find out what the elevation would be.

Woman asks about mosquitoes breeding in stagnant water. Someone brings up pumps.

Scott: Phase 1 does not include circulation pumps. I work within the city's budget but that could be worked into the plan.

We aren't going to line the canal with concrete. It will have a natural bottom. We want to ensure adequate water quality.

Phase 2 will be down to the south end. There are different ways to connect it to the bay.

Barbara Welder asks for a timeline for Phase 1 and when input time will be extended to.

Scott: We're hoping to get water off the streets and properties.

David Cowling: Asks about proposed Detention Ponds shown in front of the condos on the 30% plan. Most detention ponds are designed to dry out and be empty. The land in front of the condos is so low that you'll hit water at only 1 foot down. It's brackish.

Scott: Sidewalks/trails in the linear parkway. Extra space will be park space. There will be a vehicle bridge crossing at Beach Ave. Almost at-grade.

There will be a pedestrian/bike crossing between Surfside Park and Kiwanis Park.

Gulfstream Ave will have a pedestrian crossing and bike crossing (not vehicular).

CJ (?) asks a question about erosion control in the canal.

Scott: We're not expecting much erosion, as water doesn't move quickly in the canal. Crossings will have erosion control blankets, blocks, etc.

Caroline Bracken asks about the small number of crossings. Is that enough considering the new traffic coming off the bridge?

Carrie Meyer: Gulfstream Ave is an important vehicular road for local traffic to get off the beach without having to use Beach Ave, which will be really busy with new bridge traffic since all traffic will be coming there.

Everett Roy: What if we had 6 inches of rain at once?

Scott: The roadside ditches will back up a little but it will channel the water into the canal, which is connected to the Timon Marsh, which is connected to the Rincon canal thru culverts.

Barbara Johnson: How deep will the canal be?

Scott: Canal will be 7-8 feet deep from the top of the land (3 feet deep above sea level). Shows a “Conspan Bridge,” which is the concept for the bridges at Beach Ave and Gulfstream.

Scott: We have to take into consideration future street projects for Gulfstream and Beach Ave, the Eco Park project. We have to look at them NOW even though they aren’t “drainage” projects.

Scott: Timeline – I’m in “listening mode” right now. Our plan is to complete the design by early spring, bid out in spring, start construction in summer. Utilities are a big part of that. I’m developing construction plans. I have permitting and environmental professionals on my staff. This could be covered by 2 or 3 nationwide permits that it would fall under. Individual permits with the Corps of Engineers take 1-2 years. Touch the bay and you’re looking at an “Individual permit” ... we have a retired Corps employee on our staff who is familiar with permitting.

Carrie reads off a list of **NCBA’s Board’s Recommendations** about the plan, including:

- Construct Coastal Barrier Dune instead of Detention Ponds in front of condos
- Consolidate improvements to the area near the beach as opposed to Seagull for Ph 1
- No on-beach parking. Instead, improve street parking on beach access roads
- Abandon existing stormwater system (it’s too low)
- Making the canal deeper will ensure it remains a water feature, even at low tide.