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The Sanibel Island Fishing Club (SIFC) talked about the storm-damaged Sanibel Fishing Pier at its meeting on Feb. 11 at The Community House on Sanibel, and the community came out in droves to learn about the restoration of the storm-damaged Sanibel Fishing Pier.

Located on the east end, the Pier has been closed since 2022 due to damage from Hurricane Ian.

At a recent Sanibel City Council meeting, City Manager Dana Souza reported that staff received initial estimates of \$651,190 to repair or \$1,232,966 to replace the Pier. It was not insured, so the City would have to fund it. Staff did submit the project to FEMA for possible reimbursement.

Souza continued that staff were approached by Sanibel resident and SIFC Vice President Bob Stern, on behalf of a group of islanders, who proposed the idea of them raising private funds to support the Pier's restoration. The city would cover a portion of the project and the fundraising campaign would cover the remaining cost.

If any FEMA funds are received, they will go into a maintenance fund for the Pier's upkeep. The council voted unanimously 5-0 in support of the public-private partnership to repair the Pier. Stern explained that he and the others were concerned that the Pier would be torn down and the island would lose the landmark forever. "I'm an angler, I have a boat. I live on the water. I'm fortunate. There are a lot of people who don't have a boat and don't have a lot of places to fish," he said. "If the community loses this asset, it will never be rebuilt — because of regulation issues, because of all kinds of reasons."

At the club meeting, Stern talked about what has been done to date to help save the Pier and why. Owners of businesses, like Whitney's Bait & Tackle and The Bait Box, who rely on the pier as part of their business also shared their stories. Attendees similarly heard from some contractors on the potential project and cost. "The whole idea is to engage with the community," he said. "It's really starting the process."

Stern noted that some island organizations, such as the SanCap Chamber and Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation, have expressed interest in getting involved with the effort. "We're making this a project for the community," he said. The group has opened a "Save the Pier" account at Bank of the Islands for donations and a link is provided below.

"This is one of their resources, this is a Sanibel resource," Stern said. "We need to do everything we can not to lose it."

In the meantime, here is where you can donate to the fundraising to rebuild and repair the fishing Pier. All of the donations go to the fund. Thank you for your support, let's make it happen!

<https://charitablefoundationoftheislands-bloom.kindful.com/?campaign=1349384>