



Bay Park Improvement Board (BPIB) Meeting  
March 25, 2025 – 3:30 P.M.

City of Sarasota – City Commission  
Chambers  
1565 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Sarasota, FL 34236

**BPIB MEMBERS:**

- Chair, Sarasota Board of County Commissioner (BCC) Mark Smith
- Vice Chair, City of Sarasota Commissioner Debbie Trice
- BPIB Member, City of Sarasota Mayor Liz Alpert
- BPIB Member, Sarasota BCC Ron Cutsinger
- BPIB Community Member Jon Thaxton

**GUESTS:**

- A.G. Lafley, Founding Chief Executive Officer, The Bay Park Conservancy, Inc. (The BPC)
- Diana Shaheen, Director of Park Guest Experience, The BPC
- Jennifer Compton, Chair, The BPC Board
- Philip DiMaria, Planning Project Manager, Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.
- Kelly Strickland, Director of Financial Administration, City of Sarasota
- Adam Gelter, Implementation Manager, The BPC, via Zoom
- Steve Germaine, Chief Financial Officer, The BPC, via Zoom

Prior to the meeting, Diana Shaheen distributed to the Commission a flyer entitled “the Bay Celebrate Good to Be Green Months at The Bay!”

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Smith at 3:28 P.M.

**2. ROLL CALL:** No one was absent.

**3. PLEDGE OF CONDUCT:** Pledge of Public Conduct read by Chair Smith

**4. CITIZENS' INPUT:** Citizens' Input received.

**5. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:**

A motion was made by Vice Chair Trice, seconded by BPIB Member Cutsinger, to approve the minutes of the October 03, 2024, Bay Park Improvement Meeting, which carried by a 5-0 vote.

**6. UPDATE ON PHASE 2:**

Mr. Lafley provided a brief introduction.

Ms. Shaheen referred to a PowerPoint presentation displayed on the Chambers monitors entitled “the Bay One Park for All Bay Park Improvement Board 25 March 2025” and provided a brief update about The Bay Park post Hurricane Milton as follows:

- The day following Hurricane Milton, approximately 12 tons of debris were removed, which allowed The Bay Park (Park) to be open for everyone
- 2nd Anniversary celebrations were scheduled, however after the storm, a survey was offered in the newsletter to the community asking, “What is best to do?” with three options: 1) No programming and allow the Park to be a respite, 2) Minimal everyday programming to allow people some activity, or 3) Resume anniversary programming to give people a bit of “normalcy”
- 90% of people supported The BPC resuming the 2nd Anniversary programming to provide a bit of “normalcy” for the community; therefore, The Bay Staff mustered all of their energy and relaunched the programming
  - Assembled a Relief, Recovery, & Resilience Station, thanks to about 8 to 12 incredible nonprofits, who came to events to offer services to people in the community, as well as people in the community who wanted to support the nonprofits (three days after Hurricane Milton)
  - October 18, 2024 (Nine days after Hurricane Milton) Average White Band performed on their Retirement Tour, opened by the Sisters of Soul from the Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe Concert; 3,500 people in attendance
  - October 19, 2024, 4,000 people attended The Breakers Concert
  - October 26, 2024 (16 days post Hurricane Milton) 4,250 attend Boo! at The Bay
- Hurricane Milton forced The BPC to pause and consider pivoting, and what was learned is that everything in the Park needs to be more resilient; the resilient shoreline is a key part of the process
  - Despite being ready and open, the Park suffered approximately \$1,000,000 in damage throughout; the Sarasota Garden Club Lawns including a butterfly garden were completely washed out by the salt of Hurricane Helene and the storm surge and winds of Hurricane Milton; a tree fell into the Sarasota Garden Club’s roof; boats washed into the resilient shoreline/sandy area in Phase 1
  - Hurricane Milton reinforced two important roles of The Bay: 1) Protect Sarasota Bay from the City (Improve Water Quality), 2) Protect the City from The Bay (Resilience)
  - Provided a brief overview of the Stormwater Master Plan for the entire 53 acres; the goal is to treat every drop of Stormwater since the Park is the last line of defense for polluted urban stormwater (from approximately 600 acres before entering Sarasota Bay); every year 300 million gallons of polluted stormwater come from the City and go into Sarasota Bay; The Bay Park Phase 1 treats 70 million of those gallons currently
  - Referred to slides displayed on the Chambers monitors entitled “Resilience One Site: A Tale of Two Outcomes,” which showed comparisons of Phase 1 designed for resilience and has a resilient shoreline versus the man-made shoreline, post the Hurricanes
  - Provided a brief overview of building a resilient shoreline; the area just north of the “purple pier,” known locally as The Point, which had two large green chairs, all of the rip rap came up onto The Point, everything was washed out, which taught The BPC the need for revetment, and the need to increase the size of the rip rap to avoid being catapulted up onto the land; a rain garden will be added to the resilient shoreline which will allow incoming stormwater runoff to be cleansed prior to entering Sarasota Bay (The Bay) as well as storm surge; The BPC learned what materials not to use and will no longer have shade structures on the overlooks
  - Referred to a slide displayed on the Chambers monitors entitled “Elevation Matters”; and provided a brief overview of the goal to build away from the water and build at a higher elevation
  - Resilient shoreline construction completion in 2026
  - Adding a resilient shoreline to the northside of Centennial Park, therefore, there will be a continuous resilient shoreline from north of the Van Wezel Way all the way up to Centennial Park

- Provided a brief overview of the Park results and data, and referred to a slide displayed on the Chambers monitors entitled “Park Results”
- The 53-acre site today has a broad range of users and uses, and referred to a slide displayed on the Chambers monitors entitled “Park Results” and “Current Bay Park Users & Uses = ~700K Users/Year”
- On March 01, 2025, Good to Green Months Kickoff by
  - Partnering with the County for BayFest; more than 700 people attended, and many nonprofits had incredible hands-on experiences for attendees
  - Partnered with Central Records Division at the City for the Shred Stock Event
  - Upcoming City of Sarasota Tree Giveaway Program
  - Upcoming Arbor Day at The Bay: Learn From an Arborist

Mr. Lafley stated that in regard to resilience, The BPC is still working through the learning curve and is trying to coordinate the activity, and a brief overview was provided as follows:

- If trying to make a primarily native, natural green and blue oasis more resilient, then must use native and natural solutions, such as retreat, create more elevation, use only native trees and plantings which can survive saltwater and storm surge, and create rain gardens
- The BPC has dredged the bayou, Tuttle’s Puddle (Fountain Garden Pond), and the boat basin, and cleaned a lot of polluted sediment
- Must figure out how to harden historical buildings
- With the mix of uses and mix of opportunities, the site has progressed from isolated activities to attracting people who are finding other interesting things to do on the site

Mr. Lafley provided a brief historical overview of the timeline of the Park transformation process, and the six Guiding Principles, and the extension of the Guiding Principles, and referred to various slides on the Chambers monitors.

Mr. Lafley continued and referred to a slide displayed on the Chambers monitors entitled “Transforming a Parking Lot into a Park and stated that four of the buildings (U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Gulfcoast Wonder & Imagination Zone (G.WIZ), Blue Pagoda, and Chidsey Library) were abandoned when the project commenced, and 70% of the site was a surface parking lot, which is the biggest polluter on the site; anything done to take care of this portion of business will be good for resilience and water quality.

Mr. Lafley continued further, provided a brief overview of, and referred to a slide displayed on the Chambers monitors entitled “The Bay Park Master Plan” as follows:

- 53 acres of Precious City-Owned Bayfront Land dedicated for public use
- 8-10 years, ~\$200 million, 4 or more phases
- 4 Buildings on National Register of Historic Places

Mr. Lafley provided a brief update of Phase 2 and referred to various slides as follows:

- Phase 2 Design is on track; a number of scope adjustments have been made; the budget is always being reprioritized, and every dollar is treated like our own
- Over 50 million has been raised by private sources in over six years; 87% of Phase 1 was funded with private money
- The Master Plan will never be completed and will always be adjusted
- The projects include Update Master Plan; Canal District; Cultural District; Resilient Shoreline; and Sunset Pier
- Increased importance: Resilience. Guest Experience. Mix of Uses
- Sunset Pier- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) sent a proffered permit, and requested to convert the Sunset Pier into exclusively a fishing pier
  - The USACE requested The BPC to comply with the latest and only unique requirements for constructing a pier which must be constructed in the footprint between the seagrass and coral and avoid all the natural resources

- The capital cost has increased to approximately \$35 million and the operating cost are significant due to monthly reporting
- The permit has been conditionally signed to move ahead with the Sunset Pier anytime in the next 5 years which can be extended
- The BPC recommendation is to not spend another dollar on the Sunset Pier
- Sarasota Performing Arts Center (SPAC) is an ongoing process, and The BPC continues to be collaborative and connected with the SPAC team; there is a level of uncertainty while determining where is the best place to locate a performing arts center (PAC), what the PAC might consist of in terms of number of buildings and size of buildings; the recommendation is going forward to keep all of the SPAC options open
- Awaiting Purple Ribbon Committee (PRC) recommendations to determine the future of the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall (VWPAH)
- Phase 2 will provide more resilience, better water quality, and more uses for more people to use
- Provided a brief overview of Phase 2 Canal District
  - Cleaning up the water and repairing the infrastructure, which has not been touched in a long time; extracted approximately 3,000 plus cubic yards of material (including arsenic, nitrogen, phosphate)
  - Dredging is complete, and the seawall rehabilitation is underway; upon completion, day docks and boat slips will be separately constructed and assembled, which will be installed on the south side, and enable the community who live elsewhere on The Bay or on one of the barrier islands to connect to the Park via power boat; Completion Fall 2025
  - In Phase 3, the same process will be completed on the north side
- Provided a brief overview of Phase 2 Cultural District
  - The Park will have a front door which will be to the east, along Tamiami Trail, and by the end of September 2025 the hope is there will be a tree line along Tamiami Trail and in the parking lot with the promenade that runs north to south and a new Town Square
  - Buildings on the National Register of Historic Preservation; the buildings are being repurposed and reused, which preserves the buildings; the Garden Club will be used for the Park's programming activity and event space, and still service the Garden Club, which currently is the most popular rental space; rental spaces are well below the market rate
  - Chidsey Building will become the operations center and office for The BPC; open in May 2025
  - More work to be done in the Blue Pagoda; however, the front area will be the Welcome Center, and there will be a reception and rental area available in the back
  - City and The BPC are coordinating to hand over the Municipal Auditorium in October 2025; the City is working on replacing the roof, and The BPC is working to do what is necessary inside and around the building
  - The Bayfront Community Center will be upgraded in Summer 2025 and Fall 2025
  - Sarasota Garden Club's windows and floors were replaced, which were donated by PGT Custom Windows and Doors; Cool Today has discounted and given full HVAC systems; post Hurricane Milton the roof will be repaired this week; totally redoing the gardens in the next couple of months
  - Chidsey Building is being repaired, and The BPC collaborated with the State's Historical Preservation Office and City of Sarasota Senior Planner Clifford Smith; the renovation is approximately \$3 million
  - Town Square will be a larger gathering place, green space and shade, pedestrian-friendly, plaza for public and private use, completion projected in 2026
- Provided a brief overview of Phase 2 By-Project & Total
  - March 2025 Master Plan Update which is currently ongoing; additional work to be determined pending SPAC/VWPAH decisions
  - Canal District, the recommendation is to only move forward with the infrastructure (seawall/day dock construction underway), and not move forward with the temporary pop up food and beverage village; however, recommending to move forward with the first of the 3 waterfront restaurants; the concept estimate is approximately \$5.8 million and will be a resilient restaurant

- more resilient park/shoreline: the scope has increased by moving east into the parking lot to achieve more elevation and moving north up to Hog Creek; the budget has increased from the proposed approximately \$15 million to \$17.7 million
- The Cultural District is above the original budget from the projected \$19 million to \$19.6 million
- Sunset Pier further design has stopped (approximately \$1.2 million thus far), and the remaining projected budget of \$13.8 million not spent, is proposed for a waterfront restaurant in the Canal District and the rehabilitation, renovation, and repurposing of the five historical buildings for approximately \$15 million total
- Phase 2 total budget remains approximately \$65 million as previously proposed

Mr. Lafley concluded, provided a brief summary of Phase 2, referred to slides displayed on the Chambers monitors entitled "Phase 2 Summary," and stated that Phase 2 will stay on schedule, end on budget, the \$48 million funded 50/50 by the City and County will not be exceeded, and should be able to deliver on the Bond Schedule Requirements, 85% of the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) paid for construction, by May 11, 2026.

## 7. PREVIEW OF PHASE 3:

Mr. Lafley provided a brief overview of Phase 3 and Phase 4 and referred to slides displayed on the Chambers monitors entitled "Phase 3 Part A," "Phase 3 Part B", and "Phase 4" as follows:

### Phase 3 Part A:

- Centennial Park/Boater Area (\$30 million)
  - Boater Amenities (add boat ramp & day docks to north side, convenience store, new restrooms, optimize parking)
  - Bayfront Restaurant #2
  - Pedestrian Bridge (over Canal)

### Phase 3 Part B:

- Resilient On-Site Parking (\$55 million)
  - Parking Under Park (\$25-\$35 million)
  - Park Over Parking (\$20-\$25 million)

### Phase 4:

- Complete Approved Master Plan (\$35 million)
- Remainder of Park Green Space
- Outdoor Amphitheatre (location to be determined)
- Bayfront Restaurant #3
- Park Maintenance Building
- Pedestrian Bridge (over N. Tamiami Trail) to the Rosemary District
- The belief is this can be done for the approximate total of \$200 million in capital costs

Question posed by Vice Chair Trice asking the anticipated timetable for the proposed pedestrian bridge was addressed by Mr. Lafley who stated that understanding the location of the proposed SPAC is necessary to move forward; however, the belief is the pedestrian bridge will be located at or around 9th Street.

Question posed by Vice Chair Trice asking what the plan is for the Hazzard Fountain (Fountain) at the Municipal Auditorium was addressed by Mr. Lafley, who stated that the Fountain will be preserved; however, the cost of totally renovating the Fountain is approximately \$700,000 and the original purchase cost was \$8,000; the Fountain will remain and be converted to a decorative planter with flowers, et cetera, and Ms. Shaheen stated that there will be nice pavers coming from the front entrance of the Municipal Auditorium and reconnecting around the Fountain.

BPIB Community Member Thaxton thanked The BPC for the great work and posed a question asking if modifying and shortening the southern Sunset Pier (Pier) has been thought about, and was addressed by Mr. Lafley, who stated that there were two objectives: 1) To allow people to get out over the water, and 2) To maximize the views from the site; the desire is to determine what can be done with purple pier first since the cost will be more attractive; if a check was received for \$35 million or even half, there would be a different conversation regarding this Pier; shortening the Pier is possible, however, the desire is to not spend anymore design time until Phase 2 is completed.

Question posed by BPIB Community Member Thaxton asking if the waterfront Restaurant #1 is south of the Canal was addressed by Mr. Lafley, who stated yes, near the rusty anchor.

Question posed by BPIB Community Member Thaxton asking with all of the Phases completed and a new SPAC, are we comfortable with saying to the boating community there will be at minimum as many dedicated boat ramp parking areas as existing today was addressed by Mr. Lafley who stated that the belief is we must have as many dedicated boat ramp parking areas as currently existing.

BPIB Community Member Cutsinger commended The BPC for the great presentation, spoke in favor of the waterfront Restaurant #1 moving forward, and requested Mr. Lafley to expand on the plans regarding the restaurant, which was addressed, and a conceptual sketch Site Plan was displayed on the Chambers monitors. Mr. Lafley provided a brief overview of the proposed design and stated that the objective is an accessible, affordable, excellent, waterfront dining experience, resembling Sarasota Modern Architectural Design (glass, flat roof, light coming through), and will not build more than 5,000 square feet under the roof, and BPIB Community Member Cutsinger spoke in favor of the restaurant breaking ground as soon as possible.

Chair Smith stated that the County is constructing a restaurant at Snook Haven in Venice, Florida and to decrease costs, in the Request for Proposal, the Restaurateur was asked to participate in the capital funding, which was approximately \$500,000, and Mr. Lafley provided input.

Question posed by Chair Smith asking if the proposed Pedestrian Bridge over the canal is permitted was addressed by Mr. Lafley, who stated no, not currently, and the Pedestrian Bridge must go back before the USACE.

Chair Smith commended The BPC, and BPIB Community Member Cutsinger commended The BPC for their follow up to the Hurricanes and meeting the needs of the community.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None

## **9. NEXT MEETING**

October 2025

## **10. MEETING ADJOURNS**

The Bay Park Improvement Board (BPIB) adjourned at 4:43 P.M.