

**MINUTES
HARBOUR HEIGHTS WATERWAY
MUNICIPAL SERVICE BENEFIT UNIT (MSBU)**

**ADVISORY BOARD REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2025**

**2:01 p.m. – 3:22 p.m.
Punta Gorda Library
401 Shreve St, Punta Gorda, Florida**

Members Present: David Stone, Vice Chair
Patrick Bautz
Tom Mettner
Lee Phillips

Members Absent: None

County Staff: Erica LeMaster, Community Liaison
Matthew Logan, Projects Manager
Michael Benjamin, Projects Manager

Guests: Sign in sheet attached

Call to Order / Roll Call:

The meeting was called to order at 2:01 p.m. A roll call was taken, and a quorum was established.

Changes to the Agenda / Motion to Approve Changes:

None

Citizen Input on Agenda Items (3 Minute Limit):

Significant time was spent discussing ongoing shoaling from Deep Creek, with citizens and board members noting:

- Persistent silt inflow from multiple Deep Creek drainage discharge points.
- Large portions of DeSoto Canal filled with sediment transported downstream.
- Historic issues from the school property collapse and silt traveling through the watershed.
- Need for deeper review by County Engineering and determination of responsibility.

Citizens raised concerns regarding:

- Erosion from vacant lots and non-sea walled properties.
- Illegal mangrove removal.
- Construction sites operating without proper silt fencing.
- Lack of enforcement by permitting and code enforcement staff.

Approval of the Minutes:

The July 17th, 2025, minutes were unanimously approved as written.

Unfinished Business:

- a. Dredge Project: Matt Logan introduced himself, noting he previously served as dredging project manager. Michael Benjamin is now transitioning into the full-time position formerly held by Dwayne. Staff emphasized they are reviewing inherited notes but need direct board direction to move forward. System-wide, Harbor Heights shows ~23,000 cubic yards of accumulated shoaling—classified as substantial and high-cost. Estimated cost to dredge to –

5 ft MLW is over \$2 million. A prior proposal recommended a -4 ft MLW spot-dredge, estimated at ~\$1.5 million, later increased due to rising prices. Following public objections to the assessment increase, the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) shelved the project for a year, pushing reconsideration into mid-2027. Discussion ensued regarding the lack of clarity on the County Commissioners promised "study." Repeated postponement will likely result in increasing costs. The need to utilize previously completed engineering work rather than restarting the process. Mr. Logan explained FEMA funding for Hurricane Ian debris removal is near authorization. Additional FEMA claims for Helene and Milton are being pursued (~4,000 cubic yards attributable to both storms). However, FEMA's processes are becoming increasingly restrictive, resulting in longer approval timelines and uncertainty regarding the value of annual pre-storm surveys. Mr. Phillips made a motion to Use the existing 2025-budgeted funds to procure an engineer for design, permitting, and construction-phase services, and to develop the required engineering assessment report needed for FEMA documentation seconded by Mr. Stone and passed unanimously. Rationale was given that engineering work will remain valid even if dredging is postponed; only a new survey would be required for a future project.

- b. Update: Navigational Trimming – DeSoto Waterway: The group voice concerns regarding Annual trimming costs historically reached ~\$30,000 while affecting as few as five properties, raising concerns about inefficiency. Staff Clarified that Navigational trimming is intended solely to preserve line-of-sight for safe boat passage, not aesthetic clearing. The County cannot enter private property without permission, nor compel private owners to trim vegetation. When trimming exceeds \$10,000, the County must competitively bid the project. Most problem areas are undeveloped lots, not maintained by homeowners.

New Business:

- a. Financial Reports: Year-end FY25 financials are pending Comptroller close-out and will be distributed once available. The Budget packet included the FY26 adopted work program summary—this reflects administrative and project management costs, not full MSBU budget details.

Citizen Input on MSBU Items (3 Minute Limit):

- Citizens questioned fairness of repeatedly trimming the same problem lots and suggested shifting responsibility to property owners.
- Citizens requested Clear trimming standards (e.g., 12.5 ft encroachment rule on a 50-ft canal). Cutting vegetation further back to extend time between cycles. Better contractor selection with broader bid pools to reduce cost. Additional trimming locations.
- Watershed-wide runoff impacting Harbor Heights residents disproportionately.
- Legality and fairness of charging canal-front owners for sediment originating upstream.
- Need for modernized MSBU policy (existing framework dates back decades).
- Desire for greater oversight of code enforcement, construction permitting, and erosion control.
- Need for system-wide stormwater solutions before dredging is approved.

Advisory Board Open Discussion:

- Long-standing communication gaps between County and community.
- Harbor Heights receiving limited CIP attention despite documented need.
- Concern that Commissioners rejected the board-approved assessment plan without offering alternatives.
- Interest in meeting with the Commissioner directly to demand clarity on the "study" and dredging timeline.
- Recommendation to explore whether the County could develop its own in-house dredging capability to reduce costs and reintroduce competition.

Schedule Meetings / Items for Next Agenda:

Future meetings are tentatively scheduled at 2:00 p.m. as follows:

- Thursday December 4, 2025

The meeting adjourned at 3:22 p.m.

Submitted by Erica Hayes
Public Works Department

TM, EF, PB

Chair Signature

12-4-2025

Date

**AGENDA
HARBOUR HEIGHTS WATERWAY
MUNICIPAL SERVICE BENEFIT UNIT (MSBU)**

**ADVISORY BOARD REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2025**

**2:00 p.m., Punta Gorda Library
401 Shreve Street, Punta Gorda, Florida**

BOARD MEMBERS: David Stone, Vice-Chair
Eric Frohn
Tom Mettner
Lee Phillips

COUNTY STAFF: Erica Hayes, Community Liaison

PURPOSE: Regular Meeting

1. Call to Order / Roll Call
2. Changes to the Agenda / Motion to Approve Changes
3. Citizen Input on Agenda Items (3-Minute Limit)
4. Approval of Minutes: July 17, 2025
5. Unfinished Business
 - a. Dredge Project
 - b. Update: Navigational Trimming – DeSoto, Balboa, San Salvador
6. New Business
 - a. Financial Reports
7. Citizen Input on MSBU items (3-Minute Limit)
8. Advisory Board Open Discussion
9. Meeting Schedule / Items for Next Agenda
10. Motion to Adjourn

Harbour Heights Waterway MSBU

2 Year Budget FY2026 & FY2027

Estimated ERU's and Cost per ERU

Vacant and Occupied	FY2026	FY2027
<i>Estimated ERU's</i>	386.300	386.300
<i>Cost per ERU</i>	\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00
Current FY25 Rate	\$ 300.00	
Current Maximum Rate	\$ 400.00	

Beginning Balance

Revenues

	Adopted Budget FY2026	Approved Budget FY2027
Assessments & Earnings		
<i>Assessments</i>	115,890	115,890
<i>Interest</i>	1,906	1,953
<i>Less 5% Reserve - FS 129.01(2)b</i>	(5,795)	(5,795)
Grant & Subsidy Revenue		
Loans & Borrowing		
<i>Debt Proceeds</i>	-	-
Total Revenue	\$ 112,001	\$ 112,048

Expenditures

Contract Services		
<i>Other Contractual Svcs</i>	-	-
<i>Drainage</i>	-	-
Contract Services; other		
<i>Survey</i>	30,000	30,000
<i>Navigational Trimming</i>	50,000	50,000

	Adopted Budget FY2026	Approved Budget FY2027
Public Works Services		
<i>Equip Repl Charges-PubWrks</i>	416	416
<i>Operating Exp-PubWrks</i>	14,929	14,929
Internal Charges		
<i>Central/Indirect Srvs</i>	1,048	1,100
Purchased Services		
<i>Postage</i>	-	-
<i>Printing & Binding</i>	-	-
<i>Advertising-Legal</i>	-	-
<i>Collection Fee-Tax Collector</i>	2,318	2,318
Materials and Supplies		
Capital Outlay		
Debt Services		
<i>Principal</i>	-	-
<i>Interest</i>	-	-
Total Expenditures	98,711	98,763
Reserves (Ending Fund Balance)	\$ 557,841	\$ 571,126
<i>Reserve %</i>	85.0%	85.3%

Version Date 9/23/2025

Budget Report

Activity Description: All

Harbour Heights Waterway Unit

Budget Year: 2026

Activity Description	Budget Details						
	Work Quantity	Unit of Measure	Labor Cost	Materials Cost	Equipment Cost	Contractor Cost	Total
MSBU Administrative Work	100	HOURS	\$7,897.00		\$416.00		\$8,313.00
Project Management	75	LABOR	\$7,031.75				\$7,031.75
Harbour Heights Waterway Unit Total			\$14,928.75		\$416.00		\$15,344.75

Budget Report

Activity Description: All

Harbour Heights Waterway Unit

Budget Year: 2027

Activity Description	Budget Details						
	Work Quantity	Unit of Measure	Labor Cost	Materials Cost	Equipment Cost	Contractor Cost	Total
MSBU Administrative Work	100	HOURS	\$7,897.00		\$416.00		\$8,313.00
Project Management	75	LABOR	\$7,031.75				\$7,031.75
Harbour Heights Waterway Unit Total			\$14,928.75		\$416.00		\$15,344.75