

## **DCPOC GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES**

**Call to Order:** 6:02 p.m on August 20, 2026

**Presiding:** Kathy Garshaw, President

Board Members Present

- Kathy Garshaw, President
- Michael LoBianco, Treasurer
- Ashley James, Recording Secretary

Guest Speakers

- Mayor Scott Tate, City of St. Pete Beach
  - City Public Services representatives
  - WSP project representatives
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### **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

President Kathy Garshaw called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and welcomed residents, board members, and guests. Members were reminded to ensure DCPOC has their current email address, as email is the organization's primary means of communicating neighborhood updates.

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### **Mayor Scott Tate – City Update**

Mayor Scott Tate provided an update on current City of St. Pete Beach priorities, with an emphasis on the FY2027 budget, infrastructure investment, property taxes, utility fees, transportation, and future development.

### **FY2027 Budget and Enterprise Funds**

The City is currently developing its FY2027 budget and conducting public budget meetings throughout the four city districts.

Mayor Tate explained that the City's enterprise funds—including wastewater, stormwater and reclaimed water—have historically not generated sufficient revenue to fully support their operations and long-term capital needs. As a result, the City's General Fund has subsidized these services.

The City recently completed a review of its enterprise funds and approved fee adjustments intended to make these funds self-sustaining. The adjustments will be phased in over approximately three years. This should allow General Fund/property-tax revenue to be redirected toward traditional municipal priorities such as roads, parks, beaches and other infrastructure.

The City is also addressing inequities in wastewater charges among residential, commercial and multi-unit properties so that fees more accurately reflect system capacity and usage.

### **Millage Rate and Community Budget Input**

The City Commission is considering whether to maintain the current millage rate or increase it to accelerate capital improvements. An increase under consideration could generate up to approximately \$3 million in additional annual revenue.

The City is conducting district budget workshops and an online survey to obtain resident feedback regarding:

- Whether the millage rate should remain unchanged or increase.
- The appropriate amount of any increase.
- Which infrastructure and capital projects should receive priority funding.

The City Commission expects to consider community feedback before finalizing the budget and millage rate in September.

### **Freebee Transportation Service**

Mayor Tate discussed the financial sustainability of the Freebee transportation program. The City currently spends approximately \$550,000 annually on the service.

Residents ride free after registering, while non-residents currently pay \$3 per ride. Ridership reportedly declined after the visitor fee was implemented.

The City is evaluating whether the current service represents an appropriate use of public funds and is reviewing proposals for future transportation services. A recommendation is expected to be presented to the City Commission in the coming weeks.

Residents expressed support for considering the broader benefits of the service, including traffic reduction and pedestrian safety.

### **County Funding and Services**

Residents raised concerns regarding the portion of property-tax revenue retained by St. Pete Beach compared with revenue distributed to Pinellas County and other taxing authorities.

Mayor Tate discussed opportunities to pursue additional county and state grant funding, including tourist-development funding for qualifying capital projects.

### **Don CeSar Noise Concern**

A resident raised concerns regarding noise from rooftop mechanical/HVAC equipment at The Don CeSar following post-storm repairs.

Mayor Tate stated that he was not previously aware of the issue and agreed to look into the concern, including discussing it with hotel management and reviewing applicable noise requirements.

### **Hotel Development and Infrastructure Capacity**

Residents asked about future hotel development and the capacity of the City's wastewater infrastructure.

Mayor Tate stated that development remains governed by the City's Comprehensive Plan and applicable infrastructure requirements. New development is subject to impact fees and utility charges based upon system capacity.

The City will continue evaluating infrastructure capacity as development occurs.

### **Potential Homestead Property-Tax Changes**

Mayor Tate discussed proposed state-level changes to homestead property taxation and the potential impact on future City revenues. Should changes be approved by voters, the City would need to address the resulting revenue reduction beginning with future budgets.

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### **Capital Improvement and Infrastructure Update**

City Public Services staff provided an extensive update regarding infrastructure projects affecting the Don CeSar neighborhood and surrounding areas.

#### **Don CeSar/Boca Ciega Area Resiliency Project**

The City has moved from the previous planning study into the design phase of a comprehensive resiliency project covering areas including:

- Don CeSar neighborhood
- Belle Vista
- Lido
- Boca Ciega area

The project evaluates approximately 13 drainage basins and will consider comprehensive stormwater and resiliency solutions rather than addressing individual streets in isolation.

A project kickoff meeting was held July 30. Additional public workshops are anticipated in October and again in February/March.

Environmental and check-valve investigations are underway, followed by geotechnical work and detailed surveying.

Residents were strongly encouraged to participate in the workshops and provide photographs and location-specific information regarding flooding.

### **Wastewater Force Main 17**

The underwater wastewater force main serving the area has reached the end of its useful life and is currently in design.

Design is expected to be completed during the current fiscal year, with construction budgeted for FY2027.

### **Stormwater Cleaning and Inspection**

The City is undertaking a comprehensive cleaning and camera inspection of the stormwater system following significant sand and debris intrusion during recent storms.

At the time of the meeting:

- Approximately 78% of stormwater pipe cleaning was complete.
- Approximately 52% of camera inspections were complete.

The City's goal is to inspect the entire system rather than only the minimum percentage required annually.

### **Don CeSar Check-Valve/Baffle Structure Project**

At five street-end locations, existing check valves will be relocated closer to the roadway and placed within structures that are easier for City crews to inspect and maintain.

The construction notice to proceed was issued June 23, with an anticipated eight-month construction period.

The project is funded through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, with the City expecting reimbursement of eligible project costs.

City staff emphasized that these improvements are considered near-term measures while the larger neighborhood resiliency project develops more comprehensive solutions.

### **Don Vista/Suntan Art Center**

Repairs include the roof, elevator, HVAC systems and building interior.

The elevator work has been completed, and remaining HVAC and interior work is expected to be completed by the end of September.

### **Lift Station Rehabilitation**

The City is rehabilitating wastewater lift stations damaged during recent storms.

The Lazarillo Park lift station is among the neighborhood facilities included in the program.

The replacement of pumps at Lift Station 3 in Lazarillo Park has been completed.

### **Wastewater System Cleaning and Inspection**

Citywide wastewater pipe cleaning and camera inspections are approximately 98% complete.

Several remaining sections are located within the Don CeSar neighborhood where wastewater lines run through rear-yard easements.

City staff and contractors may contact individual homeowners to obtain access. Residents will receive notice when access to private property is required.

### **Roadway Rehabilitation**

The City continues its roadway rehabilitation program.

The El Centro project will incorporate permeable asphalt intended to help reduce roadway ponding. Work will proceed following completion of related hotel work.

Residents may also see crews addressing individual utility-related roadway patches throughout the neighborhood.

### **36th Avenue Seawall Project**

The 36th Avenue seawall replacement and associated stormwater/roadway improvements have experienced delays related to Duke Energy utility relocation.

Duke Energy is completing restoration work, after which the City's contractor is expected to proceed.

Residents with concerns regarding restoration of landscaping or property affected by Duke Energy work were asked to document the location and provide photographs to the City.

### **Emergency Stormwater Pumps**

Emergency pumps will remain in place throughout hurricane season.

The pumps are intended to assist during heavy rainfall but are less effective when significant rainfall coincides with high tide.

### **Boat Ramp Project**

The neighborhood boat ramp project is temporarily on hold while the broader WSP resiliency project is underway to avoid conflicting designs.

The City's current direction remains to retain the boat ramp at its existing location. Grant opportunities may be pursued for future improvements.

### **Demolition Sites and Sewer Connections**

City staff identified concerns regarding sewer laterals at certain demolition sites that may not have been properly capped and marked.

Public Services and the Building Department inspected demolition sites throughout the City and are following up on identified locations. A summary is expected to be made publicly available.

### **Backflow Prevention**

Residents asked the City to consider broader solutions for sanitary-sewer backflow prevention rather than requiring individual homeowners to independently install costly backflow devices.

City staff agreed that this issue warrants further evaluation, including potential Citywide solutions or incentive programs.

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### **WSP Neighborhood Resiliency Project**

A WSP representative and neighborhood resident provided additional information regarding the resiliency design process.

Detailed surveying, geotechnical analysis and field investigations are being conducted to establish accurate roadway, drainage, storm-sewer and finished-floor elevations.

Conceptual alternatives are expected to be presented at a public workshop in October.

The project will evaluate solutions comprehensively, recognizing that changes such as roadway elevation can redirect water and affect neighboring properties.

Residents were encouraged to use the project's online reporting tool to:

- Identify specific flooding locations.
- Upload photographs.
- Document high-tide and rainfall-related flooding.
- Provide information that can assist engineers in developing and prioritizing solutions.

Community participation and documentation were emphasized as particularly important when pursuing future state, federal and regional funding.

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### **DCPOC Financial Update**

The organization's finances were reported to be healthy and stable.

The Board intends to remain financially conservative because additional legal expenses may be incurred during the coming fiscal year.

Members were thanked for voluntary dues and donations, which help fund neighborhood programs, social activities and community initiatives.

Residents were reminded that payment of dues is required for voting-member status.

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## **Legal Update**

DCPOC previously received a favorable outcome in litigation involving the Zamora.

The Zamora has filed an appeal, and DCPOC is now responding through the appellate process.

Because additional legal expenses may arise, the Board is maintaining appropriate financial reserves.

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## **Governance Documents**

Residents, particularly new neighborhood members, were reminded that DCPOC governance documents and community rules are available through the organization's website.

The rules are intended to support responsible stewardship and shared use of the neighborhood's beach parcels.

Property owners who rent their homes were encouraged to ensure that tenants are also aware of applicable community rules.

The Board will ensure residents can obtain access to prior meeting minutes upon request.

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## **Beach, Dune and Access Discussion**

Residents discussed changes in beach width, vegetation, dune development and pedestrian access following recent storms.

The discussion recognized the importance of balancing:

- Dune restoration and environmental protection.
- Beach access and recreational space.
- Natural changes to the barrier-island shoreline.

The Board will continue monitoring beach and dune conditions and discussing potential improvements with residents and appropriate agencies.

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### **Gate Security and Trail Camera**

The Board reported continued vandalism to the gate located on the south side of the Don CeSar area.

New hinges have been installed and a trail camera has been placed at the location as a deterrent and to document future incidents.

The camera is intended solely to address vandalism and security concerns. A designated board member is currently managing the system.

Residents were encouraged to promptly report vandalism or other incidents so they can be addressed in a timely manner.

The Board also reported ongoing coordination with the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office regarding emergency access, easements and neighborhood security.

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### **Community Priorities and Future Initiatives**

Members discussed priorities for the coming year, including:

- Continued advocacy for solutions to neighborhood flooding.
- Participation in the City's resiliency planning process.
- Park cleanup and community service opportunities.
- Dune restoration and preservation.
- Additional neighborhood social events.
- Potential installation of a neighborhood information/signage feature at Lazarillo Park.
- Exploration of historical designation and enhanced historical signage recognizing the neighborhood's history.
- Traffic and pedestrian-safety concerns near the Bayway entrance to the neighborhood.
- Continued coordination with City, County and State representatives regarding infrastructure funding.

The Board encouraged residents to remain actively involved and provide input regarding priorities for the neighborhood.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Kathy Garchow at **7:42 p.m.**