

<> Reach 8 breakwater partnership between Palm Beach, county OK'd by Town Council

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The town has decided to partner with Palm Beach County to strengthen shore protection along the eroded Reach 8 shoreline.

The Town Council unanimously approved on Tuesday an agreement with the county that enables the two to work together toward construction of offshore breakwaters to protect Reach 8.

The county plans to install breakwaters along the South Palm Beach shoreline as early as 2010.

Public Works Director Paul Brazil said that, by partnering with the county, the town hopes to secure a state environmental permit that would enable it to extend the breakwaters north to protect Reach 8.

By working with the county instead of going it alone, the town would pay about 38 percent of the costs for design work and an environmental impact study, he said. The town's share would be around \$400,000.

If the environmental permit is awarded and the town decides to build the breakwaters off Reach 8, the construction cost would be about \$6 million, Brazil said.

If a breakwater is constructed, some sand would be placed on the Reach 8 shoreline as part of the work, Brazil said.

Breakwaters have been shown to be highly effective toward protecting shorelines and for sand retention, he said.

The town has not budgeted for the \$6 million, but the council is establishing a taxing district through which it could assess property tax bills to pay the cost.

The town's efforts to obtain a state environmental permit to rebuild Reach 8 has been thwarted by an environmental challenge and an administrative law judge's ruling in March that the project would be environmentally harmful.

In other business Tuesday, the council:

* Tentatively adopted last year's property tax rate of \$3.25 per \$1,000 of taxable value, for the next budget year. Council members Gail Coniglio and Richard Kleid were opposed to the decision, which won't be final until approved at public hearings in September.

Tuesday's vote reversed a June 16 council decision to raise the property tax rate so property tax revenue would remain the same as last year, at about \$42.5 million, despite a decline in taxable property values.

* Unanimously approved an ordinance prohibiting lobbying of the town by town officials and employees for two years after they leave their jobs or office.

* Approved an ordinance calling for automatic removal of town board members upon their third professional conflict of interest within a year. Kleid and Coniglio dissented in the 3-2 decision.

* Awarded, on Public Works Director Paul Brazil's recommendation, a \$69,000 contract to Applied Technology & Management for assistance obtaining FEMA reimbursement for the cost of restoring sand that washed away during Tropical Storm Fay in 2008.

FEMA would pay 75 percent of the \$4.6 million cost.

* Designated Island Cats as the official feral cat care organization in town after hearing a report from Island Cats on its three-month trial period in that capacity.

* Gave the City of West Palm Beach permission to use Bradley Park during the summer of 2011 to stage relocation of a water main connecting to the town below the Lake Worth Lagoon.

Though installed only six years ago, the water main must be moved to make way for the new Flagler Memorial Bridge, which the DOT plans to begin building in 2011.

The new bridge will be built south of the existing one, where the water main is now. The water main will be moved to north of the bridge.

The plan will minimize inconveniences to town residents by limiting construction in the town to the summer, Town Manager Peter Elwell said. The most disruptive portion of the project, in which the pipe is laid out before being pulled through the underwater tunnel, will occur in West Palm Beach, he said.

Council president David Rosow said construction will occur simultaneously on the new bridge, the underwater water main and possibly on a new Publix supermarket on nearby Sunset Avenue.

"That whole area could look like a war zone," he said.

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