

**MANATEE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
JOINT MEETING WITH LONGBOAT KEY  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, FIFTH FLOOR, MANATEE ROOM  
1112 Manatee Avenue West  
Bradenton, Florida  
April 30, 2024**

Meeting video link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCULgjuGhS-qV966RU2Z7AtA>

Present were:

Mike Rahn, Chairman  
Amanda Ballard, First Vice-Chairman  
Ray Turner, Second Vice-Chairman  
Jason Bearden  
George Kruse  
Kevin Van Ostenbridge


District 1 seat is vacant.

Present were Longboat Key Commissioners:


Ken Schneier, Mayor  
Mike Haycock, Vice-Mayor  
Gary Coffin  
B.J. Bishop  
Penny Gold, entered during the meeting  
Sarah Karon  
Debra Williams

Also present were:


Charlie Bishop, County Administrator  
Christopher De Carlo, Interim County Attorney  
Maggie Mooney Longboat Key City Attorney  
Howard Tipton, Longboat Key Town Manager  
Robin Toth, Deputy Clerk, Clerk of the Circuit Court

 County Commission Chairman Rahn called the Joint Meeting to order at 1:33 p.m.

### **INVOCATION**

 The Invocation was led by Commissioner Bearden.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

 The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Bearden.


### **INTRODUCTIONS**

 Officials in attendance introduced themselves.


### **AGENDA**

BC20240430DOC001

#### **1. BROADWAY STREET ROUNDABOUT REDSIGN**


 Charlie Bishop, County Administrator, recognized the strong relationship Manatee County has with the Town of Longboat Key (LBK).


 Howard Tipton, LBK Town Manager, thanked the County for being a great partner.

 Commissioner Van Ostenbridge stated several years ago, the Town of Longboat Key had considered annexing into Sarasota County, as they felt they were contributing substantially to

the tax rolls and not receiving services or being recognized. This was a fair analysis. It was decided the Board would sit down with the LBK Commission to discuss challenges, opportunities and matters of mutual interest.


(Enter Longboat Key Commissioner Penny Gold)

 Isaac Brownman, LBK Public Works Director, used a slide presentation to give an update on the Gulf of Mexico Drive (SR 789)/Broadway Street Roundabout Redesign. Complete streets elements include seven-foot-wide buffered bike lanes, 12-foot, multi-use trail on the east side, landscape median treatments and elevation/resiliency improvements. The County is helping fund original design up to \$150,000, work with Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to earmark \$1.685 million from a Manatee County land purchase from FDOT, willingness to administer the construction project as a Local Agency Program (LAP) certified project administrator, and provide additional funding to support construction.

 Discussion ensued on project start date, estimated construction timeline, traffic impacts during construction, and impact of Coquina Bridge between the roundabout and the bridge.

BC20240430DOC002


2. **WHITNEY PLAZA LEARNING CENTER**


 Cary Knight, Manatee County Property Management Director, showed slides on the project timeline of the Longboat Key North Learning Center at Whitney Plaza. Staff received construction drawings and construction Guaranteed Maximum Price will be presented to the County Commission on June 11.

The Center will have multi-purpose capability and moveable walls to divide the space into two rooms. There is space interior to the area being renovated that could be added to the learning center if it comes on the market.


BC20240430DOC003


3. **EXPANSION OF THE GULF ISLANDS FERRY SERVICE (WATER TAXI) TO BROADWAY STREET**

 Elliott Falcione, Convention and Visitors Bureau Director, provided an update on the expansion of the water taxi to Broadway Street. The ferry service started January 12 and will continue to run every Wednesday-Sunday through the month of May. The ferry service transports 300-350 passengers/day, has served nearly 9,000 passengers and has taken 4,500 vehicles off the road. The two pontoon ferries lost 25 days due to inclement weather. The Tourist Development Council supports a recommendation to add a third, enclosed, 90-passenger ferry to run from the mainland to the Island. Dialogue is underway with the City of Bradenton Beach to relocate the two ferries to the Island for the hopper service. The third ferry will take approximately one year to build.

 Staff is working with Charlie Hunsicker, Natural Resources Director, to add south Coquina Beach Boat Ramp as an extension to the existing pier by the end of the year. Mr. Falcione also spoke with City of Palmetto about bringing the ferry to the west side of the Convention Center, and construction of a new pier may be required.

Discussion occurred that a survey will be circulated to residents and visitors over the summer, research indicates 40 percent of ridership do not live in Florida but are mid-westerners, 60 percent are Florida residents, 40 percent are Manatee County ticket purchasers, tickets can be purchased on [www.GulfIslandFerry.com](http://www.GulfIslandFerry.com), the myStop mobile App monitors ferry stops. Once a ticket is purchased, a Ferry Perks Pass is offered for discounts to restaurants and area attractions, Sarasota County, City of Sarasota, and LBK officials were invited to participate in a one-hour day trip experience on May 13.


 A volunteer program is being started to share stories and reminders to visit island areas of interest. Discussions were held with LBK officials on a ferry stop in Longboat Key and earmarked the possibility of the Pier at Mar Vista. The third ferry may be used as a workforce express.

 The Town is in favor of solutions to reduce traffic congestion, parking is needed on the mainland and not the Islands, walking is encouraged, Coast Guard prohibits bikes on the ferries, the third ferry is being designed to fit in existing docks, estimated cost to build a dock if and when a suitable spot on LBK is found, Federal and State grant funding is being sought, looking to stretch dollars to purchase more vessels, there is no cost to LBK, the ferry must be ridership free for Island workers, primary goal is Island workforce transportation, how the ferry is messaged to Island businesses, ensure easy connectivity, the ferry website is currently under design, and manage expectations. BC20240430DOC004

4. **NORTH LONGBOAT KEY AND BRADENTON BEACH TRAFFIC**

Isaac Brownman, LBK Public Works Director, stated data shows beach traffic is getting progressively worse. It is an ideal time to bring all parties to the table to look at solutions to reduce traffic congestion. FDOT conducted a barrier island traffic study referencing flexible lanes on all future bridge replacements, and FDOT appears to be going that direction with every bridge they are talking about replacing; two to the north end and one to the south.


The MPO's congestion management plan update shows the Gulf Drive segment, from Longboat Pass Bridge to Cortez Road to the mainland, is one of the most unreliable segments in the County. FDOT is investing significant dollars to upgrade Cortez Bridge to add capacity and replace Longboat Pass Bridge to reduce the number of openings and closings. The Islands are preparing to embark on a Gulf Drive PD&E Study of the Bridge Street roundabout and Gulf Drive at Cortez Road end-point intersection in conjunction with the Cortez Bridge.

 The Coquina Beach parking lot is large with three access points. The center access points have a gate that can be shut, isolating each parking area, preventing vehicles in long-standing queues from hopping into the southern-most access point as a shortcut. LBK will be holding discussions with Bradenton Beach, FDOT, and the County.

Charlie Bishop, County Administrator, stated the gates by the Marine Rescue and north Coquina boat ramp are open and should be closed.


It was noted the bicycle lanes from Cortez Road through the circle and south of the circle, are gone until road construction is complete, and it is very unsafe. BC20240430DOC005

5. **GREER ISLAND POLICE FUNDING (LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES)**

 Howard Tipton, LBK Town Manager, stated the Interlocal Agreement (3/12/24) between the County and Town of Longboat Key provides law enforcement services to Greer Island for funding of \$60,000/year. The Town has requested a \$20,000 increase (\$80,000 total funding), due to an increase in police salaries and additional security at high traffic times.

Mr. Bishop stated this request is scheduled for the May 14 Board agenda. BC20240430DOC006

6. **ISLAND-WIDE TRANSIT**

 Mr. Tipton stated when this topic was previously discussed, there was still no agreement between Manatee County and Sarasota County for a one Island transit solution, and residents and workers had to change transit buses mid-point to get to their destination. Manatee

County agreed to allow Sarasota County to provide the service route, and it would be on a reimbursement basis based on the number of trips by Manatee County residents.

He distributed a summary sheet of ridership since January 29, and continued growth has been realized. The route runs from Coquina Beach to Lido Beach and has been very well received by the residents and Island workers. BC20240430DOC007

7. **JEWFISH KEY CONTRACTION (DE-ANNEXATION) PETITION**


 Mr. Tipton stated the purpose of this presentation is for placement on the County’s radar.

The Town received a voluntary petition from Jewfish Key Preservation Association for contraction. Jewfish Key Island is located 670 feet off the north end of the village to the east and has been a part of LBK since 1955. The Association submitted the request to examine the Town’s levels of municipal service. The Town has land use controls that are more restrictive in Manatee County, specifically, a long-standing grandfathered-in regulation that restricts duration of short-term rentals of residential properties for less than 30 days. This restriction applies throughout the Town’s municipal boundaries including Jewfish Key.

The process for municipal boundary changes through annexation are set forth in Florida Statute. The petition triggered a Florida Statute process the Town is undertaking as a feasibility study, which must be done in six months. It is anticipated the feasibility study will be presented to the Town Commission at a public meeting on June 3, 2024.

Following consideration of the feasibility study, the Town Commission may either reject the petition for contraction, or initiate the steps to direct that the contraction ordinance be brought forward as set forth in Statute.


There is no role for Manatee County and no action is required. There is a possibility the County may have a very unusual enclave or County services within the Town of Longboat Key. More information is to follow.

 Discussion ensued the name Jewfish Preservation Association is misleading and what is trying to be achieved, the request poses unique challenges to West Manatee Fire District, because there is no fire hydrant or utilities to serve Jewfish Key, it is the only part of LBK without water and sewer service, concern of what Jewfish Key may become with loose land use restrictions, any increased density would raise concern, Jewfish Key has five homes and buildable lots, unsure if the County would be willing/able to run sewer and septic to Jewfish Key, and hopes that LBK retains Jewfish Key. BC20240430DOC008

**COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

 Mr. Tipton again thanked Manatee County for partnering with the LBK Commission.


**Manatee County’s First Response Systems Drone Pilot Program**


 Commissioner Van Ostenbridge stated information about the County’s drone deployment pilot program was sent to Mr. Tipton to share with the Town Commission. The drone will be based in Lakewood Ranch. He is pushing for two, additional drones to be located on the barrier Islands primarily because of response time, with placement of a hangar on the roof of the Public Safety building at the south end of Coquina, and another on the north end of the Island. Coverage for Anna Maria Island would also be worked on to potentially place a hangar on the roof of the fire station by Holmes Beach City Hall, or on the roof of a future parking garage. West Manatee Fire District is fully supportive.

The drone aircrafts are not manned or physically piloted; they are operated entirely by mobile dispatch and are equipped to deliver life-saving products (Narcan, tourniquets and automatic external defibrillators) until EMS first responders arrive to the scene of the emergency. Technology is being tweaked for the drone to be able to go out into the gulf or bay and drop the products into a boat.


(Further Commissioner Comments later in the meeting)

**COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR COMMENT**

 Mr. Bishop stated planting is underway at the two medians at Coquina leading into Longboat Key.


 Mr. Bishop stated there is a small area between Manatee Avenue and Palma Sola Causeway that belonged to the City of Bradenton, but is now under County control. A full-time County employee has been designated to maintain the Palma Sola Causeway.

**COMMISSIONER COMMENTS** (cont'd)

 Chairman Rahn stated the Town's main sewer line running under Sarasota Bay needs to be replaced. On behalf of the Board, he indicated support of LBK's funding request to the State for the new force main.

Commissioner Van Ostenbridge responded to question stating Manatee County EMS has a physical presence stationed at the fire house near Holmes Beach City hall and at the public safety station at Coquina Beach.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS**

 Maureen Merrigan, LBK resident, commented about the Broadway Street roundabout design, Whitney Plaza Learning Center, the workforce ferry, solutions to reduce traffic volume, and asked the County to manage the multiple exits from Coquina Beach parking lot.

There being no further citizen comments, Chairman Rahn closed public comments.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business, Chairman Rahn adjourned the Joint Meeting at 3:07 p.m.

Minutes Approved: May 28, 2024