



## **Hello again from the St. Joseph Peninsula Beach Advisory Committee (SJPBAC)!**

We'd like to thank all of you who participated in the first town hall meeting last month. We feel it was extremely successful and hope you'll agree! By your attendance and participation, you gave us the opportunity to present a great deal of information to a large number of interested, active, and well-informed residents.

At the meeting and since, as we had hoped, there has been much dialogue and discussion of the issues by property owners and voters. Many of the questions raised in these discussions have been referred back to us for further research, clarification, and response. Below are some new FAQ questions and answers that we wanted to make available to you now. Of course we hope you will let us know of any additional questions you may have so they can be addressed at the next Town Hall meeting and/or on the website. Finally, please mark your calendars to attend the Town Hall meeting **June 17<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 a.m. Eastern Time, at the St. Josephs Bay Country Club. The facility will be open to the public for this event.** As a special reminder to those of you who will be voting on the referendum, you will be receiving your ballots on or about this date, and we want to do everything we can to give you the information you need to be prepared to cast your vote.

**Who are the members that make up the SJPBAC? Is there a good representation of everyone involved and affected by the project – resident, nonresident, and all three MSTU classes?**

The members of the committee represent as broad of a cross-section of stakeholders as possible. The initial committee was largely formed by examining a diverse sampling of representatives available from those volunteering to serve on the committee at a start-up meeting in July of 2005. This original workgroup was expanded in November of 2005 to its current makeup when several members of the Gulf County Board of County Commissioners (GCBOCC) selected individuals to serve on the committee. Their goal was to expand the diversity of the group even further and bring additional viewpoints and perspectives to the committee.

There are two groups of members on the committee: voting and nonvoting. The voting members of the committee who have attended one or more meetings since September 2005 consist of:

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Nonresident gulf-front owners: | 1 |
| Resident gulf-front owners:    | 1 |
| Nonresident interior owners:   | 1 |
| Resident interior owners:      | 2 |
| Bayside nonresident owners:    | 0 |
| Bayside resident owners:       | 6 |

Gulf County resident with property in the project area but not a resident of the project area (also a business owner): 1

Gulf County resident without property in the project area (also a businessman): 1

Total members attending and voting in at least one meeting: 13

Members not attending any meetings since September 2005: 2  
(one nonresident gulf interior and Chamber of Commerce representative)

Nonvoting members include the Gulf County Tourist Development Council executive director and several property and business owners from Cape San Blas. Nonvoting members volunteer their time to assist with tasks of various subcommittees such as mailers, reports to the GCBOCC, studies, etc. All work of subcommittees is approved by majority vote of the voting members of the SJPBAC. To review attendance and a breakdown of votes on various issues and policies, please visit the website at [www.savethecape.com](http://www.savethecape.com) and click on the "Latest News" tab on the left. There you will find a complete listing of all committee meeting minutes.

### **Why has the SJPBAC used estimates for project costs and not provided a fixed cost?**

The project costs have been reviewed extensively by our coastal engineer, Michael Dombrowski of MRD Associates. Michael's experience in the area of beach restoration spans 20 years, so his estimates are more than conjecture or guesstimation. Additionally, although the vote on the referendum will be held before the project is put out for bid, please keep in mind these important points:

1. The State of Florida will **NOT** permit **ANY** beach restoration project until the local entity (city or county) has proof of its financial plan to fund its share of the cost in place, which ultimately means that the vote must come prior to a bid because **no** dredging company will entertain a project for bid **until** that project is close to receiving permit approval by the State of Florida.

2. The recent appropriations award from the State of Florida of **\$3 million in additional no-match funding** will have a positive impact on the local share of the cost as currently projected. **This should reduce the MSTU rates that were provided in the recent mailing.**

3. The **maximum bond is set at \$12 million**, which is still well above any conservative calculations of the project cost. The referendum vote amount of \$12 million maximum **cannot be changed** by anybody – the SJPBAC and GCBOCC included.

4. The MSTU for the seven years is **only to repay the initial bond, as spelled out in the ordinance language.** The voting members of the SJPBAC recommended the MSTU language to be specifically for the initial bond, with an automatic sunset, or ending date. By structuring the restoration bond and MSTU tax in this fashion, **only the initial project** can be funded. Whatever happens with beach restoration costs in the years prior to our first scheduled nourishment won't affect the bond repayment cost or MSTU tax needed to cover it.

5. In other renourishment projects, subsequent maintenance nourishments are less costly than the original restoration because less sand is required to renourish the beach. FEMA also funds 75% of the cost of an unscheduled nourishment of an engineered beach in the event of a named-storm disaster. Such unscheduled nourishment would also qualify for state matching funds so that our local share of this storm-driven nourishment would be reduced even more.

### **Why is the SJPBAC projecting that MSTU rate in subsequent years will be less than in the first year?**

1. Each MSTU classification has been assigned a **fixed percentage** of the overall cost of the project after the TDC Bed Tax has been applied: gulf front, 70%; gulf interior, 25%; bayside, 5%.

2. The total amount required to service the bond debt is also a **fixed amount**, which will be finalized in the spring of '07 when a bid is accepted by a dredging company and the bond actually issued. **Again, this amount cannot be higher than the \$12 million voted on in the referendum.**

3. As properties are improved, their assessed value will increase. For example, an undeveloped lot on the bayside with a taxable value of \$450,000 would pay a smaller **proportionate share** of the 5% bayside cost share than if that lot then had a house placed on it and were assessed at, say, \$750,000.

4. "New" properties come on board when larger parcels are subdivided into smaller parcels. For example, the Ovation subdivision was once one taxable parcel. After being sold and subdivided, it now represents 120 taxable parcels. The sum of the assessed value of the 120 parcels is much higher than the assessed value of the original larger parcel. Again, these additional parcels will redistribute the amount each property will pay to cover the bond debt service within their particular classification.

In recent years, Gulf County has reduced millage rates due to increased assessment values. However, if assessed property values decrease due to reduced values or loss of gulf-front parcels, this could result in increased millage rates for the rest of the county.

## Closing Statement

As a committee, the SJPBAC has explored all ideas and approaches to funding the local share of the restoration project. The MSTU tax and the bond you will be voting to pledge that tax's revenue stream to repay is the only plan the committee has recommended for beach restoration. There is no "Plan B" that the committee is aware of on the part of the State of Florida or Gulf County. If we, as a community, do not choose to take the next step and move forward with our restoration project, **the \$3 million in non-match special funding appropriated by the State of Florida will be lost.** The feasibility study, sand search, and project design documents are only considered valid as long as erosion doesn't dramatically affect the shoreline and as long as the proposed design remains feasible to construct. The costs for the studies for this project were substantially funded by the State of Florida from a special allocation. The amount paid by the State is in the neighborhood of \$600,000 to date for these studies and if the project fails, a beach restoration effort in the future could require redoing all these studies. The cost for those studies for this project were substantially funded by the State of Florida from a special allocation. The amount paid by the State is in the neighborhood of \$600,000 to date for these studies.