

**Big Sand Lake Advisory Board  
Regular Meeting  
September 8, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.  
3165 McCrory Place, Suite 200  
Orlando, FL 32803  
Orange Blossom Conference Room and Webex**

---

**Board Members Present:** John Jennings (Chair)\*, Christopher Scott\*, Phil Morrill\*, and Rick Barry\*

**Board Members Absent:** Alan Charron and Victor Jaworski

**Staff Present:** Nidia Volpe and Liz Johnson\* Orange County Environmental Protection Division (EPD)

**Guests Present:** Tim Hay, Kurt Kotzin\*, Mary and Steve Goonen\*, and Lawrence Lauer\*

\*denotes attended via Webex

---

**I. Call to Order:**

With a quorum present, the meeting of the Big Sand Lake Advisory Board (Advisory Board) was called to order by John Jennings at 5:36 P.M.

**II. Approval of the July 21, 2020 Meeting Minutes:**

**Upon a motion by John Jennings, seconded by Rick Barry, and carried with all present members voting AYE by voice vote; with Alan Charron and Victor Jaworski absent; the Advisory Board approved the July 21, 2020 Meeting Minutes as presented.**

**III. Public Comment:**

Tim Hay, Sand Lake Point Homeowner's Association (HOA) President, expressed that he strongly encourages the Advisory Board to vote in favor of a comprehensive water quality study. The report could be used as a benchmark for the water quality of the lake, especially with all of the development in the area. He stated that he emailed Nidia Volpe aerial photos of an algae bloom in Lake Minneola. He does not want the same thing to happen in Big Sand Lake. Mr. Hay also discussed the lake levels and that he hopes that some of the resident's questions can be answered in the Special Meeting. He stated that Public Works should be able to model what the lake levels would be after the 1-4 Beyond the Ultimate outfall lowering project has been completed. He indicated that the HOA for Sand Lake Point is anticipating a major expense to renovate the boat ramp and dock and would like to know what the lake levels are expected to be.

Mary Goonen, resident of Big Sand Lake, requested a status update for the drainwells located near the Bay Vista boat ramp. Ms. Goonen wanted to emphasize the importance of checking the drainwells to make sure they are clear of vegetation and working effectively. Ms. Goonen is concerned with the lake levels. She requested that the Advisory Board facilitate better communication with the residents. She stated that she is sometimes confused about when the meetings have taken place and knows that there have been changes due to COVID-19. She stated that in the past, EPD emailed updates of meetings. She suggested that the Advisory Board post on local HOA pages or electronically send a newsletter.

Kurt Kotzin, Venezia HOA President, stated that there has been a lack of communication between the Big Sand Lake residents and Orange County related to the lake elevations. He suggested using the phone app called Nextdoor to improve resident communication. Mr. Kotzin is concerned that the residents will not see any relief of the elevated lake levels until 2022 or maybe later following completion of the outfall lowering project. Mr. Kotzin stated that many people will have \$50,000- \$60,000 bills to rebuild their docks. Mr. Kotzin believes that the Advisory Board needs to take a positive, public position with the Commissioner to get the lake lowered to the elevation criteria that was established by the County to build a dock. Mr. Kotzin mentioned that the high water levels could cause navigation hazards for people who are not familiar with the lake. Mr. Kotzin believes that the lake elevations provided by Public Works are not accurate and he is requested for Public Works to confirm that the benchmark they are using is valid.

John Jennings asked for Liz Johnson to comment on the floating docks on Big Sand Lake. Ms. Johnson commented that for approximately 5 years, when EPD receives an application to build a dock, EPD has provided a letter to the owner and copies the contractor recommending that a floating dock be installed. However, EPD cannot require that a floating dock be installed.

John Jennings stated that the Advisory Board has twice spent funds in the past 25 years to pump the lake. Both times the pumping event have not made significant changes to the lake elevation. In his opinion, when the outfall is lowered, it will be a gradual flow out of the lake. Mr. Jennings commented that all of the swales are underwater. He also commented that having a high lake elevation may compromise the water quality in areas where there are septic tanks. Mr. Jennings asked Ms. Volpe if South Florida Water Management District would approve a permit to pump the lake. Ms. Volpe indicated that this question may have been asked in the past and she will research the question and get back to him.

Phil Morrill inquired about the current lake elevation. Ms. Volpe replied that the most recent lake elevation was measured on July 23, 2020 at 93.75'.

Steve Goonen, resident of Big Sand Lake, made a comment that his dock is surveyed at 95.00' feet and it is four inches under water and it has been under water for about three weeks. Mr. Goonen expressed that a year ago the water level was up another ten inches from where it is now. Mr. Goonen stated that he has lost a lot of property and he has incurred damages that will cost a lot to restore once the water recedes.

## **EPD Report:**

### **1) Budget Update**

Ms. Volpe reported that as of September 3, 2020 there was a balance of \$2,275,257.75 in the Big Sand Lake Municipal Service Taxing Unit (MSTU) fund. Total annual revenue to date is \$206,805.53 and there is currently \$2,066,775.00 held in reserves.

### **2) Aquatic Plant Management Update**

Ms. Volpe summarized the aquatic plant survey performed on August 18 and 19, 2020. The north lobe was surveyed on August 18, 2020 and the south lobe was surveyed on August 19, 2020. No significant hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*) or water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) was observed during the aquatic plant survey. Ms. Volpe mentioned that Alan Charron stated in the July 21, 2020 Advisory Board meeting that he observed hydrilla at his dock. Ms. Volpe asked the survey team to carefully survey the area near Mr. Charron's property. The survey team reported that they carefully observed around the property listed in the aerial photograph (Alan Charron's property) and the adjacent property. At most the survey crew only saw one or two hydrilla sprigs under the dock and this amount is not considered enough to treat. Other plants in the area included: bacopa (*Bacopa spp.*), eelgrass (*Vallisneria Americana*), pondweed (*Potamogeton illinoensis*) and bladderwort (*Utricularia spp.*). The survey crew stated that they spoke to a man at the property and pointed out the various plants to him.

### **3) Water Quality Update**

Ms. Volpe presented graphs for total nitrogen and total phosphorus in the north and south lobes. The most recent water quality data available was collected on July 30, 2020. The trend for total nitrogen in the north appears fairly stable over time. However, the trend appears to be increasing slightly. The trend for total nitrogen in the south lobe appears to be stable over time. The trend for phosphorus is appears to be decreasing over time in both lobes.

A Lake Vegetation Index (LVI) was performed for Big Sand Lake on August 4, 2020. The LVI assesses how closely the plant community of a lake resembles a native undisturbed community. Species lists were developed for four of twelve sections of the lake, and the following information was derived from those lists: percent native species, percent Category 1 invasive exotic species as identified by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council, percent sensitive species, and the coefficient of conservatism (C of C; a measure of how tolerant a species is of disturbance) of the dominant species. Chapter 62-303.330 and 62-303.430, F.A.C., provide that a LVI score of 43 or greater meets the expectation of a healthy, well balanced community, and scores below 43 are considered impaired. The total score for the

lake was 63. In general, a score of 63 is a very good score for a lake in Central Florida (or any high developed) area.

#### **4) Current Projects**

##### **Planting Project at the Dr. P. Phillips Community Park:**

A motion was approved during the July 21, 2020 Advisory Board meeting to proceed with a planting project at the Dr. P. Phillips Community Park. Ms. Volpe visited this area of Big Sand Lake on September 1, 2020. The shoreline is well vegetated. Ms. Volpe requested assistance with what the Advisory Board's goal was for performing a planting project at this location. Mr. Jennings suggested that the goal should be to remove invasive plants and plant with natives. Bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) trees were previously planted on the lake. Mr. Jennings suggested that other varieties of trees be planted during this event. Mr. Jennings also requested that the irrigation system previously installed as part of a previous planting event at the Dr. P. Phillips Park be assessed and become operational if it is not working. Ms. Volpe indicated that she will obtain a quote from EPD's subcontractor and ask to include several years of maintenance as part of the quote. Ms. Volpe will then request authorization from Parks and Recreation to proceed.

##### **Brazilian pepper tree and Melaleuca removal project:**

Ms. Volpe mentioned that the Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolia*) and Melaleuca (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*) tree removal project is currently on hold until the permit from the Sand Lake Sand property is submitted and approved. Ms. Volpe commented that she visited Big Sand Lake on September 1, 2020 and she counted what appeared to be five Brazilian pepper trees in the channel between Big Sand and Little Sand Lakes. Ms. Volpe will be returning to this area to better assess the amount of trees to be removed.

#### **5) Data Buoy Update**

Ms. Volpe reported that a Purchase Order has been approved to have a consultant repair the data buoy. Orange County is actively working on scheduling a date to go out and assess the buoy. Once the unit is operational, the County should be provided the costs per year for maintenance.

#### **6) Future Projects**

##### **Hydrologic/Nutrient Assessment:**

The Advisory Board approved the expenditure of up to \$150,000 for the preparation of a Hydrologic and Nutrient Budget Assessment for Big Sand Lake during the July 21, 2020 meeting. EPD is currently in the process of approving new Term Contractors for the Water Quality Services Contract. The current contract has two term contractors, but the new contract should have more contractors. Ms. Volpe is waiting for the new contract to be finalized to obtain a proposal for a Scope of

Services. Ms. Volpe would like to have a contractor work on this project who is familiar with Big Sand Lake and has worked on the lake before.

**Street Sweeping:**

In the July 21, 2020 Advisory Board meeting Commissioner Betsy VanderLey suggested that street sweeping be implemented for the Big Sand Lake MSTU. Ms. Volpe informed the Advisory Board that many of the other MSTU/BUs implement street sweeping. Street sweeping minimizes dirt, leaves, and other debris from flowing into the lake. Ms. Volpe stated that she could provide quantitative information and get a cost estimate if this is something that the Advisory Board would like to pursue. Mr. Morrill asked if the County already performs street sweeping. Ms. Johnson responded that Public Works sweeps every six weeks and only sweeps curbed streets. Some MSTU/BUs fund supplement street sweeping. Street sweeping is an effective and efficient best management practice.

**Upon a Motion by Christopher Scott, seconded by John Jennings and carried with all present members voting AYE by voice vote; with Alan Charron and Victor Jaworski absent; the Advisory Board approved a motion for Nidia Volpe to obtain information about street sweeping within the Big Sand Lake MSTU. The motion does not include expenditure of funds at this time.**

**IV. Water Level Update**

Prior to the water level update discussion, the motion below was approved by the Advisory Board:

**Upon a Motion by John Jennings, seconded by Christopher Scott and carried with all present members voting AYE by voice vote; with Alan Charron and Victor Jaworski absent; the Advisory Board approved a motion to request if a permit could be obtained from the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to pump Big Sand Lake for the purpose of improving the water quality. The Advisory Board requested that the permit be obtained prior to the September 30, 2020 Special Meeting. An amount of up to \$500,000 was allocated for a pumping project.**

Mr. Scott expressed that the motion should address pumping for the improvement of the water quality, such as for compromised septic tank drain fields and swales that are not operating properly, instead of for the purpose of protecting docks. Ms. Volpe commented that, in her opinion, there is not enough information to make this request from the SFWMD.

Ms. Volpe inquired as to why proposals provided by Geosyntec, which included alternatives to better control stages in the lake, were not previously approved. Preparation of an analysis would have included the requirements needed to request a permit from Public Works and the SFWMD. Ms. Johnson commented that she was part of the conversations when the proposals were presented over multiple months to the Advisory Board. In the beginning, there were seven alternatives to be considered. The Advisory Board decided to narrow it down to one or two options. A part of the analysis would have included Geosyntec

meeting with the SFWMD to determine the permit parameters. Unfortunately, the proposals were not supported by the Advisory Board. Regarding contacting the SFWMD and requesting if a permit would be approved, the SFWMD will need details regarding the pumping event that are unknown at this time. Ms. Johnson did not consider a two week time frame as a plausible timeframe to get an answer. Mr. Jennings stated that he would reach out to Bill Graf with the SFWMD and inquire if the Big Sand Lake MSTU would be able to get a permit from the SFWMD for pumping.

Ms. Volpe reported that the most recent lake elevation was measured on July 23, 2020 at 93.75' NAVD 88. Since January 2020 the lake elevation gradually decreased to an elevation of 91.47' in May of 2020. However, the lake level has increased each month since May.

Orange County has rescheduled the meeting to discuss the lake levels, originally scheduled for March of 2020. All of the participants in the MSTU should have received a postcard in the mail with the meeting details. The meeting is scheduled for September 30, 2020 at 5:30pm. There will be a room available at the EPD office if someone would like to participate in person. Otherwise, the meeting will be held virtually. Participants that are anticipated to attend are: EPD, Orange County Public Works, SFWMD, Valencia Water Control District, FDOT, and Geosyntec. Ms. Volpe is planning to give a presentation and then allot each entity an opportunity to briefly speak. The meeting will be opened to a Discussion and Questions and Answers section.

Ms. Volpe visited the lake on September 1, 2020 to count the number of docks that are submerged; 55% of the docks were completely or partially submerged and 45% of the docks were not submerged.

## **V. Development Liaison Report**

Ms. Volpe reported that Alan Charron contacted her regarding a property on the northeast portion of the lake located at 8202 Turkey Lake Road. He was concerned about fill from the property running off during a rain event and discharging into the lake. Ms. Volpe notified the Advisory Board that an employee for the EPD Environmental Permitting and Compliance section has inspected the property and has met with the owner. The inspector advised the owner to move the fill material outside of the wetland and buffer. The inspector will be performing a follow up inspection.

Ms. Volpe reported that Mr. Charron inquired about the O-Town West property, located south of Big Sand Lake. Ms. Volpe mentioned that the development is proposed to add up to 1,800 residential dwelling units and up to 415,142 square feet for commercial uses. The project would be required to be a participant into the MSTU. Currently, there is only one small portion of land near the Dr. P. Phillips Park inside the MSTU boundary. Motorized watercraft would not be permitted onto Big Sand Lake from this development. Mr. Kotzin mentioned that stormwater from the O-Town development would flow first into Lake Willis and then to Big Sand Lake. Ms. Volpe confirmed from a previous Public Works email that this is correct.

Mr. Morrill, the Development liaison, indicated that there have not been any new permits approved for Big Sand Lake since the last meeting.

## **VI. Officer Elections**

Ms. Volpe acknowledged the passing of Advisory Board member, Ed Grunloh. She thanked him for his dedication and service to the Advisory Board. Ms. Volpe has a sympathy card that she will send to the Advisory Board for their signatures. She can send the card to his family after the signatures are obtained.

Due to the vacancy of the Vice-Chair position, an officer election was held.

**Upon a Motion by John Jennings, seconded by Christopher Scott and carried with all present members voting AYE by voice vote; with Alan Charron and Victor Jaworski absent; the Advisory Board approved Rick Barry as Vice-Chair.**

## **VII. Member Reports:**

- John Jennings: No report.
- Alan Charron: Absent.
- Victor Jaworski: Absent.
- Phil Morrill: Mr. Morrill reported that he has observed several inconsistencies in the Orange County Water Atlas related to Big Sand Lake. In particular, the 100-year FEMA flood level (on Water Atlas it is 101.4' and Ms. Volpe reported a value of 100.5') and the Water Atlas has no data available for LVI. Mr. Morrill expressed his continued dissatisfaction with the inoperable data buoy. Ms. Volpe commented that EPD performs quarterly water quality sampling at the lake. However, there is a lag time from the time the samples are collected to when the information is uploaded to the Water Atlas. Ms. Volpe will notify the Water Atlas contact of the inconsistencies and report the response.
- Christopher Scott: Dr. Scott inquired if there were any development updates for the Boo Boo Lake development. Mr. Morrill reported that there have not been any requests for changes to the current permit.
- Rick Barry: No report.

## **X. Non-Agenda Items**

Ms. Volpe reiterated that she intends to find an alternate location for future in-person meetings. However, meeting are not currently being scheduled for locations other than the EPD office. Mr. Kotzin suggested the Rosen Community Center. Ms. Volpe inquired if



this location is considered public. Mr. Jennings mentioned that meetings had been held there previously. Ms. Volpe will research alternative locations for the next in-person meeting.

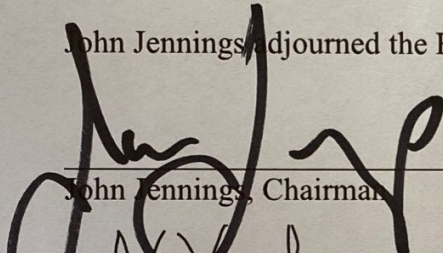
**XI. Meeting Schedule:**

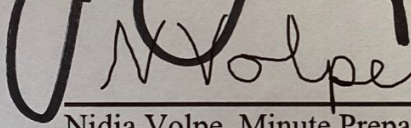
The next regularly scheduled meeting is: November 10, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. The Special Meeting for the Advisory Board to discuss the lake levels is scheduled for September 30, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

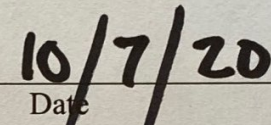
**XII. Meeting Adjournment:**

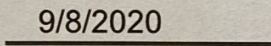
**Upon a motion by John Jennings, seconded by Phil Morrill, and carried with all present members voting AYE by voice vote; with Alan Charron and Victor Jaworski absent; the Advisory Board approved to adjourn the meeting.**

John Jennings adjourned the Big Sand Lake Advisory Board meeting at 7:17 p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John Jennings, Chairman

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Nidia Volpe, Minute Preparer

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date