

Brevard County Board of County Commissioners

*Commission Chambers, Building C
2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way
Viera, FL 32940*



Minutes

Monday, January 12, 2026

5:00 PM

Save Our Indian River Lagoon Workshop #2

City of Palm Bay Council Chamber

A. CALL TO ORDER 5:00 PM

Present: Commissioner District 1 Katie Delaney , Commissioner District 3 Kim Adkinson, Commissioner District 4 Rob Feltner, and Commissioner District 5 Thad Altman
Absent: Commissioner District 2 Tom Goodson

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Altman led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

C.1. Presentation - Natural Resources Management Department - Virginia Barker

Virginia Barker, Natural Resources Management Director, stated she has been tasked with explaining what the Save Our Indian River Lagoon (SOIRL) Program is doing, the progress it has made, and the Lagoon's response so far; she will start with the ballot language from 2016; what the voters approved was to restore the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) through projects and programs designed to improve water quality, fish, wildlife, and marine habitat, remove muck, and reduce pollution requiring deposit of all revenue to a SOIRL trust fund solely for such projects with citizen committee oversight and annual independent audits; she will focus her presentation on the projects and programs designed to do these things for the Lagoon; the second speaker, Vinnie Taranto, is going to talk about the role of the Citizen Oversight Committee (COC) that also reviews the annual independent audits; and the other four speakers are going to give a broader context around community interest and perspective. She went on to say broadly, the SOIRL Program is structured around four Rs, reducing the amount of excess pollution going into the Lagoon, removing the amount of pollution that has already entered the Lagoon from decades of excess pollution, restoring the natural filter feeders that help rebalance things, after-shocks are constantly out there doing their work, and then responding to new information, new opportunities, and amending the project plan annually based on that new information; the program was tasked with winning a race to save the Lagoon, but the little life raft, talking about the slide on the screen, is sinking, so when one is in this kind of situation, he or she cannot keep paddling as that is not going to win the race, there has got to changes made; one of the first things that has to be done is to stop too much water from swamping the boat or stop the excess pollution from going into the Lagoon; one also has to frantically bail excess water, excess pollution out of the boat; ideally, one would be able to restore those filter feeders that function like a little bilge pump, maintaining balance in the boat, a dry bottom; and then, every now and then take a look around for new problems, new opportunities, maybe adjust some of the duct tape and respond accordingly. Displaying a pie chart, she continued by saying this pie chart shows that over half of the money goes to reducing the amount of pollution going into the Lagoon; a little over one-third of the money is going to projects that remove pollution that is already accumulated in the Lagoon; a small sliver, two percent, is going to restoring those filter feeders that provide the bilge pump; two percent to that annual process of reviewing opportunities and successes and adjusting the plan accordingly; on the right side of the slide is a summary of what has been spent, almost \$100 million, of the SOIRL tax dollars; and they have also secured over \$100 million in grants and spent about \$64 million of that \$111 million in grants. She stated right now they are managing over \$3 million in projects that are either in design, in permitting, in bidding, and construction, so there is a lot of work underway; when combining the spent and in progress that adds up to \$430 million of SOIRL funds of the \$496 million that had been collected; by the time the tax expires in December 2026, they expect to collect \$586 million; the delta between the \$431 million that is spent or underway and the \$586 that is expected to be collected, those dollars are all allocated to specific projects in the plan; and those projects just have not started yet. She explained the graph on the left, the green

represents how much tax has been collected so far of the 10-year program; they are at about 85 percent collected; the pie chart on the right shows that for every dollar paid in half-cent sales tax by residents at the register, they are getting a lot more dollars going towards projects; because this is a sales tax, it is paid not just by the residents but also by the tourists that are visiting here, shopping and spending money in the community; every dollar that the residents pay, they are gaining about another \$0.26 from tourists; they are so far gaining on average \$0.24 from grants; then there are these fantastic community partners, both municipalities and nonprofits, all sorts of different organizations that are working with SOIRL; and this money helps them get these projects across the finish line. She stated on the left is a map of the 119 projects that have been completed so far and where they are located; one can see they are distributed from the very north end of the County to the very south end of the County, they are on the mainland, they are on Merritt Island, and they are on the barrier island; the list on the right shows those fantastic partners and how many projects each of them have worked with SOIRL to complete; on the bottom right one can see they have worked with over 2,200 individual homeowners to improve their septic or sewage situation; how SOIRL picks the projects and who gets how much money, the first thing is one has to understand the sources of pollution going into the Lagoon; each of the bars represents a major source of pollution to the Lagoon, the biggest bar is that black bar almost in the middle and it is from muck decaying in the Lagoon releasing nutrients into the water column above and feeding algae blooms smothering the bottom, using up oxygen that the fish need to breathe, and it is the biggest source of pollution in the Lagoon right now; if SOIRL focused all the money on that and still continue to put too much into the Lagoon, it would never fix the problem; they have to also address some of the other sources; these little green bars represent how the funds are distributed; one can see they are roughly proportional to the source of pollution; however, the orange is the septic systems and one can see a disproportionate share of the funds are going to address septic because there is a lot of interest, and grant funding available, so they just need to do it. She mentioned there are over 400 projects in the Lagoon plan; this phonebook size thing is 350 pages and she is not going to walk everyone through the 400 projects this evening; those projects do fall into these 14 project types, so each of the rectangles on this document, and there are copies outside on the tables, provides a summary of what these 14 major project types are, how much funding is allocated to those project types, how many projects of that type have been completed, the load reduction benefit, how many projects are underway, how many are left to go, and a lot of people say they are not seeing anything; these projects, for the most part, are almost invisible because they are largely underground or under water whether it is a stormwater baffle box, a septic upgrade, a sewer line installation, or digging muck off the bottom of the Lagoon, they are not very visible to those people driving by or walking by, but they are happening; she will now walk through a few examples, not all 14 types, but the ones that they receive the most questions about; and she will start with one of the toughest ones, preventing sewage overflows. She stated these graphs represent the data from four different sewer lift stations; the sewage comes out of the house, goes into the sewer line and flows to the nearest lift station, then pumps at that lift station push that sewage the rest of the way to the wastewater treatment plant, and what the graphs show, because the lines are trending up to the right, is the more it rains, that is rainfall across the bottom axis, the longer those pumps have to run to push all that volume to the wastewater treatment plants; that means rainwater is getting into the system and it is that excess rainwater that exceeds the capacity of the sewage system to hold everything and that is what leads to overflows; this problem was not part of the original 2016 plan, but in 2017 there was Hurricanes Irma and Matthew; there were overflows, people were furious wondering why this was happening, and the County's utilities had just invested over \$140 million in lining the pipes, replacing sewer pipes to try to prevent this problem; nonetheless, there were still overflows during those hurricanes; and SOIRL had asked utilities why this was still happening when it just did all these major repairs and upgrades, and they were told that utilities only has the responsibility to maintain what is in the right-of-way, what is in public ownership, people own the pipes from

their homes, across the yard to where it ties into the public system. She mentioned those pipes are as old as the houses and all that development that went in with the space race, all older development and pipes, some is cardboard some is clay, it is old, tired, smashed, filled with tree roots, and is leaking out some of the time and leaking in some of the time, and a major contributor to these overflows; Utility Services said that they could do smoke test and try to find those leaks, so they smoke tested over 50,000 homes and found over 1,200 leaks; they have repaired almost all of those leaks; there are a few holdouts that they are doing Code Enforcement proceedings on; one can see the orange lines show the post repairs and the run times are basically constant; no matter how much it rains, those run times stay the same; that shows they have significantly reduced the rainfall infiltration system; and the bottom right graph is a different situation and she will show the red line is actually higher with the same slope so what happened there was at same time they were smoke testing and doing those repairs, they had lots of development going on like this senior living facility was constructed so there was more sewage every single day going to the lift station and having to be pumped to the wastewater treatment plant. She continued by saying in the headlines and the media people hear a lot about failing septic systems, but it is not just failing septic systems that are the problem, when one flushes the toilet in the house, the stuff goes to the tank, the solids settle to the bottom, the liquid goes out of the tank over to the drain field, seeps through the perforated pipe, through the sand to make room for the next flush; everything that is in that liquid is going down through the sand into the groundwater and moving laterally to the Lagoon; whether it is waste, chemicals, cleaning chemicals, pharmaceuticals, or whatever it is that is leaving the house it is getting into the groundwater and moving towards the Lagoon creating pollution; the map on the left shows they went through an exercise of estimating the load of pollution impact of every individual septic system in the County, over 62,000 of them in the Lagoon watershed; they were color-coded with the hot colors being the ones that are polluting the most and they look for clusters of those hot colors; seeing those big yellow clusters in the middle of the slide identified about 100 clusters, then it was calculated to what it cost to connect that neighborhood to sewer, what the load of pollution reduction benefit be, and they would be able to come up with a cost per pound of each of those clusters of septic systems; then they were sorted by cost per pound and for each region of the Lagoon they came up with the highest priorities; and those were the ones that are funded in the plan. She went on to say, they have installed groundwater monitoring wells as they wanted to be able to document whether these projects were working and the sources of pollution; they have installed some wells in natural areas, the EELs conservation lands and one can see the green bar which represents the concentration of nitrogen pollution in natural areas; then they put in wells in about a dozen wells in septic communities; one can see very polluted groundwater; they have also installed a dozen or so wells in sewer communities; and one can see that they are much cleaner than the septic communities, but they are still polluted; why they are still polluted when they are not getting sewage dumping from the drain field and the septic tank is because it is the fertilizer, pet wastes, car wash water, and all the other things that people are doing at their homes that are adding pollution to the groundwater; when people are converted from septic to sewer, there is more waste going to the wastewater treatment plant; the wastewater treatment plant treats that for pathogens and other contaminants; and then the clean water that comes out the back end of the wastewater treatment plant to conserve water, a lot of that is sent back out to be used as reclaimed water for irrigation, so when the County installed wells at people's yards that were on sewer, but were getting reclaimed water, one can see that it was just as polluted if not more polluted than the septic communities. She added septic produced enough waste for one sewer to get reclaimed water, so there is still a net benefit, but they can do better than the purple bar, so they put money in the plan to upgrade the wastewater treatment plants to improve wastewater plants. She stated the first one that was completed was Titusville and this is what the water quality looks like in those Titusville yards after the upgrade; one can see it is equivalent to the sewer service area; they can absolutely do better; once they had the data they added more funding to upgrading wastewater treatment plants; they went from two projects in

the plan to 10; also, based on the difference between the red bar and the blue bar move more funding to septic to sewer projects since that is a highly successful way of reducing pollution; the same theory that is used for identifying the best wastewater projects are also used for identifying the best stormwater projects; there are over 1,700 outfalls to the IRL carrying draining stormwater and flood waters to the IRL; each of those outfalls drains a specific land area and one can look at that land area and look at the development in that land area, is it septic or sewer, what is that development, how much impervious area, is it old development that did not have to have any stormwater treatment when it happened, is it new development that does have stormwater treatment, and based on that they can estimate the amount of pollution from each of those areas; and they prioritize the ones that are most polluted, and that is how the funding is allocated in the plan. She continued by saying for muck removal there is all this excess pollution that has been going into the Lagoon for six or seven decades now and it accumulates in the deep pockets of the Lagoon; that means that they can find it easily, go in and vacuum it up; when that is done, it improves the water quality above, and not just above the muck but also up to a four-mile radius; as one can see in the Water Management's data, improved water quality up to four miles away, and not just next week or next year, that benefit is being seen three to five years out after the project has been completed; and this is graph for the Eau Gallie River muck dredging, one of the first projects completed. She mentioned one can see what the level of blooms were, they were being fed by nutrients being released from the muck as it decays, whether it was before in the brown or after in the blue; next, for the little filter feeding bilge pump, that gets two percent of the money; most of these projects are built by Brevard Zoo and they contract with the University of Central Florida to provide independent monitoring of the success or the performance of these projects; they initially used the State criteria for how to design these and based on State-wide statistics, they did not work very well here, so they got to the old-timers that used to be oyster-men, and clam farmers in the Lagoon, and talked to them about how to redesign these projects; and they have to go through individual permitting now, it is a bit of a beast, but now they have 100 percent success in the last year or two with these projects. She explained this graph shows the sum of nitrogen reduction from all of the projects completed so far; one can see that each year they have been able to reduce more of the pollution; the first five or so years, the bars are very short, it took years to get these projects designed, engineered, permitted, bid, and constructed; one does not actually see the nitrogen reduction in the Lagoon until the project is done; for the last four or five years, one can see that they have made major strides in reducing that pollutant load; and it was four and one-half years of just running but not seeing progress and then the last four or five years beginning to see those results. She mentioned on the left of the slide is a map of harmful algae blooms that one can see from space; this is satellite imagery from satellites flying over several days per week and one can actually see from the color of the water where blooms are, how extensive they are, and how intensive they are; they went back all the way to the beginning of the program in 2016 and mapped the bloom levels in different portions of the Lagoon; that graph shows each region of the Lagoon, the blooms got worse from 2016 blooms with the fish kills to the 2018 brown tide to that peak in the middle which is the 2020 blooms that happened between Thanksgiving and Christmas which resulted in large fish kills; and then things calmed down and that calm period correlates with when they really got the wheel going fast delivering project results. She went on to say they are finishing projects, reducing pollution, and reducing harmful algae blooms, but does that mean that the Lagoon is healthier; this shows another line of evidence, seagrass data collected by the Water Management District; the green bars represent the area of seagrass mapped from aerial photography from airplanes; they interpret what is the area of seagrass and it shows it peaked in 2007, 2009, and then it declined after that all the way to 2021, following that 2020 bloom; the green, they only do that every other year, it is expensive, and it takes a long time to process that data; the black line and dots are based on surveyed transect lines that the Water Management District's staff swim every single year; they crunch those numbers very quickly to report how things are going; she is going to zoom in from the peak in 2007/2009 to the decline seen in the 2011 super bloom, the

2016 fish kill, and 2018-2020 the bottom levels out in 2021, and since then, during this calm bloom period when the projects are getting going, they are seeing the transect length is increasing and the longer the transect length probably the more seagrass there is; and in fact, those transect lengths in 2024 and 2025 are longer than they were back in 2016. She went on to say the blooms were increasing, the seagrass was continuing to decline, when the blooms decreased, the seagrass began to recover; there is a long way to go, but progress is being made; where that seagrass is recovering is largely in the very shallow water, less than two feet; this matters because seagrass is like the underwater rainforest; there can either be an underwater rainforest or an underwater desert; the more seagrass, the more fish, up to 40,000 fish per acre; seagrass also provides food, habitat, and oxygen; the Lagoon is this ideal environment for seagrass, it is shallow, protective, expansive, and it is that huge expanse of seagrass that makes the abundance, the diversity, that makes this place so special and was once a sport fishing capital of the world; and that is what they are trying to recover. She noted she will close with the projects are working, but restoration takes time, and hope is on the horizon.

C.2. Presentation - Save Our Indian River Lagoon (SOIRL) Citizen Oversight Committee - Vinnie Taranto

Vinnie Taranto stated Ms. Barker mentioned the Ordinance from back on August 23, 2016, that was approved by the Commissioners; he had the greatest honor to serve the entire County by being a member of the Citizen Oversight Committee (COC); he was one of the original members, served eight years, and was the immediate past chair; this slide is what was in the Ordinance and was the actual ballot language; when people went to the polls to vote yes or no, this is exactly what it said; circled here it says citizen committee oversight; the residents who voted for the sales tax knew they were going to get oversight from a citizen committee; to dig deeper in the Ordinance one will see this is the Ordinance language, and Section 17, there are two things he wants people to remember in this presentation, the first, it stated the oversight committee will recommend updates of the project plan every year, annual project plan updates, recommendations; and the second thing he wants people to remember is it says provide public oversight and a transparent process. He added annual updates and a transparent public process to make the project more efficient. He noted Morris Richardson, County Attorney, often talk about Ordinances being made up of letters which then together form words, which then form sentences, paragraphs, and so on, and they end with an intent; what he is going to talk about today is the implementation and the brilliance of that implementation; he once heard the COC described as the best thing since sliced bread, he likes bread it is good, so go ahead as a scientific process and evaluate that; what is the structure of the COC, first off it is even areas of expertise; his area of expertise was technology; there is one voting member and one alternate member; that is seven areas of expertise with two members, that is 14; half are appointed by the Space Coast League of Cities, those are the municipality leadership; and the other half are appointed by the Board of County Commissioners, two-year terms with a possible reappointment up to eight years. He went on to say remember the two things he wants people to remember about the Ordinance, the changing part, this was not original; the original Ordinance did not have a term limit but as somebody who has served eight years and who now watches the meetings, he is glad to hand that baton off; the second thing is there are two emeritus nonvoting members that have that institutional knowledge of what was done two years ago and what was done six years ago; this is something new that is now part of the Committee; the COC meets the third Friday of every month in Viera at 8:30 a.m. and it is also broadcasted live on Space Coast Government Television (SCGTV), Brevard County's website, the Facebook page, and the YouTube page; he counted and there are 14,445 minutes of meetings on YouTube; and 84 meetings, that is a lot of meetings. He inquired if people remember the first thing he asked them to remember on the Ordinance, public and transparent process, and he noted it is all there; he mentioned what the COC does every month is they take the latest

science through expert presentation, and here is a list of presentations through just the first four years, compiled by Dr. John Windsor, every month they receive a list of expert presentations and also hear about new technologies, as Ms. Barker mentioned, like satellites so they can see where the blooms are and are able to track them; this is his favorite, this is a wind model; the Lagoon is 72 miles long, and if one thinks about other impaired bodies of water, Chesapeake Bay, their tidal flow, tide comes in and tide goes out; the IRL is so long that they are wind driven and this is a model that a doctor had put together and it had all these crazy colors and lines going all over showing how the water moved throughout the year; and that is part of the new technology to better understand the Lagoon and how to fix it, that is the latest science. He stated the next thing is SOIRL and the Natural Resources Management staff come in as advisors and give the COC project progress and funding information; they have a monthly revenue chart showing how much has been collected; there are also quarterly project reimbursements; one of the things real quick on that monthly project chart that Ms. Barker mentioned, every dollar is allocated, even the dollars that have not been collected, the dollars they are projecting to collect, because they want the train moving fast and they do not want it to stop; they actually have all of those projected dollars set to projects; and the quarterly project reimbursements, they look at the projects where they are and the ones going out, and the quarterly grant acquisitions, they have been able to take the half cent sales tax and apply for State grants with a 50/50 match. He added they look at how the grant progress is going and the quarterly project progress to see how the projects are moving, and lastly, the yearly audit. He went on to say the audit looks at the entire project from beginning to end; they look at the entire process to make sure that it is being done and as efficient as possible; the last component is to take citizen input through public comment and also the fact that they are citizens, so the bylaws state public comment to be heard on a proposition before the COC; when he was chair, he took public comment on the approval of the meeting minutes, approval on the Agenda; he wants to hear from the community; he is there trying to represent them and so he is asking for the input; there is public comment on all propositions; and they also have a general public comment session. He noted for those on the COC, the last meeting went four hours and 45 minutes; that is a good meeting; he is going to represent the public and needs to hear from the public; then the citizens part, it is citizens talking to citizens; this patch was from a gentleman who was very passionate about the Lagoon; he spent 100 hours with him outside of the meetings; he talks to many people in the community and wants to share with the information that he has and he wants them to tell him what he is doing wrong; they want to make the projects better, so he always carries this, it is in his car right now; and it is a reminder of who he is doing this for and who he is representing. He continued by saying they take all of that information, tie it up in a nice bow, and they come up with a yearly project plan update; every year they ask if there are any new projects, new project types, or new ideas, and request they be sent to them to see if they are more efficient; they will swap out projects; they come up with an update and provide it to the Board of County Commissioners and they decide; the COC is an advisory committee, an oversight committee; the COC gives advice and then the Board decides what it would like to do; and one will see that arrow between the yearly project plan and the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) it is a double arrow and it goes both ways for a very good reason. He continued by saying in 2019 through public comment and science reimbursements were reallocated towards septic; looking at the plan on the left, it was the original plan and gray was the muck dredging and 66 percent of the dollars; in 2019, they sent the plan to the BOCC and it was said why they do not look at reallocating some more to septic and so they took it back and they did; the one on the right is the plan after and the one that was approved; there is a lighter gray and that is 13 percent for interstitial water treatment, treating the water going back into the Lagoon so even if one adds up that 13 and 30 for muck, it is still left with 66 percent; new project examples that Ms. Barker mentioned, the lateral smoke testing, they were able to come up with these ideas in technology and science and provide them; the last thing, the project plan which provides long-term funding, does change, it is brilliant; and like he said earlier, the COC is the best thing since sliced bread and the reason he heard it was because he

said it and it is true. He noted it is not because he stated it is because of the people, and those on the slide are the people that he had the honor of serving with who have represented the people, and spent those 14,000 hours; these are the Committee members; and there can be misinformation online, so reach out and talk to these people, they are citizens too.

C.3. Presentation - National Estuary Program, Dr. Duane De Freese

Dr. Duane De Freese stated he is honored to be there and his history with Commissioner Altman goes back to the very beginning of the EELs program when Commissioner Altman was a County Commissioner; he has been in Brevard County as a resident for 47 years, 10 years as the National Estuary Program (NEP) Director; he has two highlights in his career and that was the first, the EELs program for Brevard County; the second is actually being able to work with this team; he gets to see NEPs all over the nation, in fact there are 28 who are dedicated by Congress in Section 320 of the Clean Water Act; there is a new one coming on board as soon as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administers it up in the panhandle, Pensacola; when he gets a chance to talk to all 28 of those NEPs, they are all basically directed by Congress, inside the Clean Water Act to actually work as non-regulatory science-based community-driven programs; and they are all different, but none like Brevard County's and none have County partnerships like this NEP has with the County and the other four counties along the Lagoon. He went on to say looking at the slide, to the right, there are a couple things he wants to mention, what makes them nationally significant is not just the biological diversity that Ms. Barker mentioned, but it is also the human and public built assets; just in Brevard County, two national wildlife refuges, a national seashore, and Kennedy Space Center which for seven decades had been the launching space of America and what is coming is making history again; there is also Port Canaveral the largest most active cruise terminal in the world; and all of that comes together in an interesting connection to a Lagoon that is narrow, shallow, wind-driven and not tidily-flushed as mentioned by Mr. Taranto; one thing he had not mentioned at the Titusville meeting that is really important, the County is compartmentalized by causeways and bridges; what used to be a wind-driven system of 156 miles, they are now really having to manage this system causeway to causeway; what is happening in Titusville, \$1 billion could be put there and solve every problem, but probably is not going to affect Indian River County or even southern Brevard; and that makes it both a challenge and a different perspective on how to manage Tampa Bay, Sarasota Bay, or Chesapeake Bay. He continued to say in 2015, after 25 years of being administered in the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), six counties came together in a county collective and they were under the gun at that time; there was a massive harmful algae bloom in 2010 and 2011; there were discharges from Lake Okeechobee and the counties really felt that they needed more representation; the five counties came together with two water management districts; Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) said to reorganize under an Interlocal Agreement that created the IRL Council, an Independent District of Florida, the only authority they have as a collective governance model, is to administer and be the fiscal agent for the National Estuary Program; they do not have regulatory authority and do not engage in regulatory authority; at the last meeting in Titusville, someone had asked why he was not in the meetings for zoning, and he advised they do not do that; and they are working at a much higher level and they leave the local governance and the regulatory side to the water management districts, the counties, and the cities. He mentioned the other point that happened is that they went from largely Federal funding, which is an appropriation each year, to having this support from the five counties in the interlocal and the two water management districts, and the base funding is quite limited, but they leverage it out in a big way; the other mandate in Congress is to assemble stakeholders and not a small assembly; this is a network or collaborative governance model and they now have over 100 scientists, citizens, industry leaders, community leaders, resource managers, and they work collectively and coordinate and communicate with the Save Our Indian River Lagoon (SOIRL) program; his staff is either in the

room for every one of those Citizen Oversight Committee (COC) meetings, which Ms. Barker has presented at many times, and gets a little bit of jealousy with the other counties, because they do not have this program, this level of investment, and they see how much work is being done; also all of the meetings are in the public sector; they do that all in a single week; and their policy board is much like the Board of County Commissioners, the final decision is really from the policy board, which right now is represented by Commissioner Adkinson, and previously Commissioner Feltner, and they really work closely with the Board to make sure they are in alignment. He stated they had realized early on that this was not about how much science or technical knowledge, that if they did not work together in a super region that they were not going to be able to move this forward because one county cannot do this alone; the partnerships of the Federal government and Federal funding, State funding, and working together among the counties gives a fairly significant clout on the political spectrum; they too have a 10-year Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan and Ms. Barker has walked everyone through this long process of concept to delivery; he wanted to mention how important it is to have a priority list of projects; in the middle, he explained, one can see the most recent plan for SOIRL; on the lower right of the screen is a plan for stormwater projects that was just done in 2024 by the water management district; and it is those lists that allow them to go to Washington, Tallahassee, and even some private sector partners and say that they have a project that needs funding, and that is a powerful place to be. He continued by saying this is what it has looked like over the last 10 years; to highlight, they have funded with IRL Council funds, 248 projects at \$24.9 million and that is like half of what the County has to work with on an annual basis; they fill the gaps and right now the small grants program is active so if anyone is listening and they have a small grant between \$500 and \$5,000, they can really make a difference, where the County is doing these large infrastructure projects, they can fill the gaps in science, technology, some of the really high-risk stuff and also leverage their position for Federal funding; this slide is the distribution, as everybody wants to know how much their County got over the 10 years; it is a fairly even distribution; he tells this to all the counties to look at Brevard County, if one does not ask it does not get; and every year people are in Tallahassee, in Washington, and leveraging the power of the SOIRL program because they come to the table with money on the table and projects lined up with priorities. He commented the Federal government has been really important to them for the last eight to 10 years; the infrastructure investment and jobs act brought \$909,800 directly to the IRL over the last five years; to give an idea, half of those dollars were used to create seagrass nurseries which are helping to support the work that is being done; there is a \$9.4 million National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) grant and the EPA funding has allowed them to do some things that they had wanted to do but could never afford it with their annual dollars; and of course next week, the State of Florida starts session and some know who has been up there beginning to talk about budgets, the Governor has \$100 million in his budget for a combination of the IRL Protection Program and Biscayne Bay, which he hopes gets support this year so there will be another year of significant funding from the State for infrastructure projects. He stated they are also able to cobble the EPA money and the Federal dollars from NOAA to complete a pretty comprehensive economic analysis of the Indian River Lagoon and one will notice the numbers are large, \$28.3 billion in spending output; that is the direct, indirect, and induced value that the Lagoon brings to the table; 128,000 jobs, the number that he was interested in as a scientist is what are the ecosystem services; he thinks Commissioner Delaney was talking about flooding the last time; when one looks at a wetland, it has birds, fish, and all sorts of critters; that is a value; when that wetland is storing the stormwater so an area does not flood, now that is a co-benefit; and when looking at all of those co-benefits across the real estate, the boating and fishing that is looking at a \$10 billion value ad. He continued by saying NOAA says it is giving \$9.4 million, looking back to 2016 in the NOAA proposal there were 15 different sites, 10 different sub-awardees, multiple subcontractors and contractors with these sub-awardees; there is a 2,000-acre restoration at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge where the dyke top was completely taken down by SJRWMD and that project came in at half

the budgeted cost because of new technology; that is doubling the value; looking at some of the bar graphs, that particular project is generating a benefit cost ratio of over \$50 for every dollar spent; he would caution that one looks at the difference of each of these and thinking about why one is more or less, a lot of it has to do with how much it cost; seagrass restoration is pretty costly; the bigger the project, that benefit cost ratio goes down; clams are relatively inexpensive, but big delivery; the average of all of those projects was 24X; what is interesting to him is back in 2016, the Board of County Commissioners had a contractor look at the first SOIRL project and he want back to look at the very first report, and the projection for return on investment on the County project plan was 22:1; at the same time, they were doing a large regional effort with the regional planning councils and also what is now a Florida Commerce and they came in at 33:1; and when looking at today and looking at 10 years ago, return on investment has been relatively stable even though everything has gone up in value and cost. He mentioned he will leave with the thought that they are building not just a public workforce when they do this restoration, but a private sector workforce; he does not know how many contractors that Ms. Barker has deeply embedded within all of those projects, but the NOAA project alone has 16 private sector companies who are employed as part of that \$9.4 million, along with academic institutions, nonprofits; the bottom line is that Brevard County is a remarkable place, probably one of the only places in the world that have the assets that are here; there are lots of challenges as it is growing quickly, but this takes time; it took 60 to 70 years to hit that tipping point and it is on year nine moving into year 10 on the SOIRL program; it is in the beginning of restoration of the Lagoon and not at the end; the ability to restore quickly, effectively, and efficiently is really going to be the telltale on where it is 10 years from now; they are anchoring and leading this effort at the local level, and they will need that leadership again for the next 10 years; and it takes resolve. He added it is not easy, it is like a combination of science and farming; at times one looks out the window and hope not to have a tornado; they have got to be not risk-adverse, but risk tolerant that some of this work is not going to deliver exactly what people thought, but there is evidence with seagrasses and water quality that they are making progress; and he thanked everyone.

*The Board recessed at 5:53 p.m. and reconvened at 6:03 p.m.

C.4. Presentation - Business Community - Laurilee Thompson

Laurilee Thompson stated this picture looks different from the first time National Aeronautical and Space Administration (NASA) revealed a view of Florida's night sky from space; there are a lot more lights in the landscape now; that tiny black gap along the coastline, the one with the yellow arrow, that very special area is the northern Indian River Lagoon (IRL), except for the extreme northeast corner of the State, this is the only place where one can stand on the west shore of an eastern Florida Estuary and look towards a barrier island and not see the lights from houses, hotels, and condos; before spaceships and cruise ships made their way to the community, citrus and fishing were Brevard County's biggest industries; net fishing was a profitable enterprise; in 1922, the Indian River fishing industry was bigger than that world famous Indian River citrus industry; and the region thrived on both commercial and sport fishing. She continued by saying numerous fish houses and tackle shops operated along the river; by the 1950s pier fishing had become a major activity for tourists as well as locals, and every coastal town had a fishing pier; her Thompson grandparents operated the Titusville fishing pier and her family had the great fortune to live right next to it; a pioneer in the fiberglass boat building business, her dad built his first 16-foot T-craft runabout underneath the apartment where they lived; there was a small basin by their house, when the wind blew out of the east, big mats of seagrass drifted in; and then the Manatees would come, they could sit on the dock, and touch the backs of the grazing Manatees with their bare feet. He went on to say they welcomed the summer when clouds of moon jellies floated into the basin, sometimes there were so many moon jellies that it seemed like one could walk on them as they filled the

water column from the bottom to the surface; Bottle-nosed Dolphins fed outside the entrance to the basin every evening; they could see the Dolphins tossing fish in the air and leaping after them; watching the Dolphins from the pier was better than being at Marineland because the Dolphins were in the wild, in their home in the river; on summer nights the bioluminescence was spectacular; and staring into dark waters was like peering into a fairy land, as tiny luminous creatures scattered through shimmering seagrass like flickering stars. She mentioned when she was 11, her grandfather had told her something that was so profound, she has never forgotten it; they were standing on his fishing pier looking down the river at the cranes, barges, and the dredges used for building the NASA bridge and causeway; he told her that all the new development was going to kill the river; her grandfather only had a seventh grade education, yet he knew that the causeways and growth was going to be very bad for the Lagoon; that was about the same time that her father built a push net and started dropping her, the net, and a rowboat off at Haulover Canal, on summer days she they could catch shrimp for her grandfather to sell at his pier; and like many kids from families who made their living from the river she was expected to work and it suited her just fine because all she ever wanted was to hang out on the river and fish. She stated later she built 150 crabtraps and she started running them every afternoon after school; when she was 17, her grandfather co-signed for her first bank loan and she bought 500 yards of Gillnet and a bowrunner boat so that she could fish for Mullet; there were massive schools of Mullet back then; the same school of Mullet could pass under her grandfather's pier for more than 20 minutes; she made a lot of money as a teenager fishing for Mullet; being on the river was a magical time for her; the water was crystal clear and close to shore the bottom was carpeted with rippling and waving seagrass; a walk along any shoreline revealed Fiddler Crabs as far as she could see; when she approached they raced toward their holes, and the motion of hundreds of Fiddler Crabs running for cover looked like water parting as she moved along the shore; and with the coming of spring, hordes of bigger Crabs made their presence known, as any sandy beach with a hard onshore wind was covered with spawning Horseshoe Crabs. She went on to say flocks of hungry shorebirds feasted on their eggs, gaining weight for their long distance flights to the arctic tundra to nest; she did not know it then, but she was experiencing the end of the grandeur of the IRL before her grandfather's prophecy came true; the 2000's were a period of intense focus on the Indian River as a world class fishery, particularly for its abundant prized Red Fish; anglers came seeking the high quality of the fishery, particularly for sight fishing opportunities in clear shallow waters; the area became a premier destination for competitive angling; it was a regular stop for the professional fishing league Worldwide Red Fish Tour and prestigious local events such as the red bone large celebrity tournaments; guides who consistently performed well in these tournaments gained recognition and some ended up with their own television shows and a large platform for conservation messaging and promoting the Lagoon; and regardless of whether a fishing tournament is a local event or a major professional tour, fishing tournaments are a big business for the hospitality industry, as hotels and restaurants fill to capacity for days as anglers scour for the best fishing spots. She noted the economic worth of unpolluted water through the creation of jobs and fishing, tourism, recreation, and other industries is well documented; these assets make it easy to attract a good workforce for the economy; people come here to enjoy the same magical experiences she had while she was growing up; bioluminescent kayak tour operators put hundreds of people out on the water every summer night relying on schools of mullet for their guests' experience; Manatees often swim right up to the kayaks and fishing is a widespread activity; popular past times for visitors and residents include birding and wildlife photography; without a healthy Lagoon, the unique nature would not exist; it has been shown time and again, property values increase in direct proportion to their proximity to clean water; and a huge portion of ocean seafood relies on estuaries, and their salt marshes, with estimates that over 70 percent of the U.S. commercial catch and 80 percent of recreational catch depend on these vital nurseries of the sea for critical life stages. She mentioned generations of her family and many others have depended on a healthy Indian River to make a living; this map of Florida salt marshes shows the critical importance of the Mosquito

Lagoon and Space Center salt marshes as recharge areas for fisheries; very little salt marsh acreage exists along Florida's southeastern coast below Kennedy Space Center; she knows that the Lagoon is getting better, the water is clearer and algae blooms are generally spotty, smaller, and do not linger as long as earlier blooms; there is a lot more bait now and fishing continues to improve; seagrass has started coming back strong in the southern Mosquito Lagoon in 2022 and in the northern Indian River in 2024; in 2025, this year, it has expanded south into the basins between the Titusville railroad bridge and NASA Causeway; and with better water quality, it should continue its southern movement. She commented one way to measure the character of a community is to look at what one protects, one protects what it values; the IRL is more than a beautiful body of water nestled inside coastal barrier islands, it is one of the greatest estuaries in North America; its diversity of life is unmatched and its total annual economic value is more than \$28.3 billion, a staggering economic impact that affects communities and economies throughout its entire length; everything about the way of life here in Brevard County is enhanced and given greater value due to the influence of the Lagoon; she still likes to fish, but she does not keep them to sell any longer, she throws them back so others can catch them too; due to development and a growing population, the Indian River will never again be wild and free like it was when she was a kid; but it can be brought back to a condition where people's children and grandchildren can enjoy it as much as she did; it needs to be treated like it is a giant aquarium that is always going to have to be managed; and there is still a long way to go, but it is the responsibility of the people to leave a restored IRL and a funding source to keep it healthy as a legacy for future generations to enjoy.

C.5. Presentation - Municipal Perspective - Frank Catino

Frank Catino stated he would like to share a little about himself because they said municipalities but it shows up there as captain Frank Cantino; he went to jury duty one time and the judge looked at him and said he always wanted to meet the guy whose wife had the real job; that is part of his life, the other part, he has been involved with the City of Satellite Beach for about 45 years; he had the great opportunity when he was much younger to serve on a lot of the boards and then serve on City Council as the longest running elected official; it taught him a lot; and he would like to thank the County Commissioners and Ms. Barker for working with the municipalities. He continued by saying he really thinks working together with a half-cent sales tax brings in more recurring dollars, where grant dollars are available to municipalities to do and complete more projects; these funds are being used for meaningful projects that directly benefit the Indian River Lagoon; none of this would be possible without the tax and the strong collaboration among the County and participating cities; people must remain committed to work together to continue advancing these critical projects; while there is still much work to be done, funding is often the key factor that determines how quickly progress can move forward; and the bloom and a half-cent sales tax has brought together the County and municipalities along with community organizations to help educate the ever-growing population for a better environment. He went on to say years ago he was doing that job and was in the middle of nowhere, a place Aaron Adams told him, "until we went there with the airboats, humans might never have walked these flats"; and he is walking with a gentleman complaining about the IRL and he really thinks the man just wanted him to shut up so he could fish, and in doing so he said, "I'm going to tell you the problem, how to solve it, very easy, just tell people to go home and look in the mirror", and that was one of the things that really changed and also one of the things that he wanted to thank was the growing population and the National Estuary Program (NEP), Brevard Zoo, Indian River Coalition, and the cities that have created the sustainability boards to educate the public; all those dollars can be put out there, but if people do not do a better job on how they live daily, it is wasting the money; and to him the education has been important and he thanks those groups for it. He noted the fund, to be honest, is really a partnership; the citizens are not paying it all; yes, the citizens pay a good portion of it, but there are tourist who pay, there are grants because the County has this fund, and the

County is partnering with people to put the dollars together to get more bang for the buck; he thinks people have to realize that in 1955 there were only 25,000 people living in this County, there is over 650,000 people now; the municipalities and County infrastructure is aging and as a society people cannot go back and live the way they have lived in the past and expect the environment to change; and he thinks working together is a critical factor in making the dollar go more. He stated the cities have worked closely with the County to complete important projects funded by the tax; one project is septic to sewer and other projects are trunk line replacements for stormwater and retention ponds along with muck dredging; it is not over and he does not believe it is ever over; as municipalities in the County and the general public, they must always work towards a cleaner environment; one thing he thinks people need to realize, he knows everybody is in a hurry, but it is important that they spend the dollars wisely and do not waste; Chesapeake Bay took 40 years, Tampa Bay was about a 30 year project, and none of those projects are stopping; Brevard County is in a very different system; it needs to use the best technology and remember tech has a lifespan and will need to be upgraded someday when better technology comes along; and he can say when Satellite Beach back in the 90s, St. Johns River, Marty Smithson came to them and wanted to put baffle boxes in; they were pretty progressive and buying up most of the beach, and wanted to get into this program, so they put the baffle boxes in; and today those baffle boxes are no longer there. He went on to say in that short period of time, they lived their life and better technology came along; they have to reach out to this technology and keep using newer technology, especially in stormwater ponds and stuff that is going to help; when one looks at population growth, one could sure live fine with 25,000 people, but 650,000 when a lot of the cities were built back in the 50s and 60s, and have a hard time changing their makeup because there is no more land to do it; people would never build the beach towns the way it was done in the 50s, if it were being built today; and he is going to tell a story. He stated a few years back Dr. Duane De Freese came to him and said he wanted him to go out with this guy named Grant Gilmore and that it is going to really cool, they will listen to fish talk to each other, he thought this is really going to be good, two doctors trying to get him to go out there, as he goes out there every day to try to catch fish and they do not love him, but now they want him to listen to these fish talk; well it was one of the couple things that really changed his thinking; the one that the gentleman told him to just go home and look in the mirror, he has a small company called Patagonia, the person who said that, and this day he went out that night and fish do talk to each other, it was amazing; but he said something that night that he looks back on and it came true; he said something about the river dying bad and that no one believes him; this river system has been dying for a long time, way before the bloom; and he says this not in a sarcastic way, but the bloom in the long run might have been Mother Nature's wakeup call to everyone. He continued by saying he thinks until the fish washed up in people's backyards and floating in the river, he is not saying people did not care, but out of sight out of mind; people did not see it, who were not on the Lagoon; the commercial fishing guides were saying it for years, scientists; the mass public did not see it until this happened; on this slide, believe it or not this little guy swam around Melbourne Beach and many years ago there were giant ones; this is just a little one that swam around not too many years ago; here is another picture of the Lagoon before the algae bloom; this picture he wants people to keep a remembrance of because he is going to show it again in a second, the grass and the little fish, it was amazing fishery; then comes this, an aerial of the algae bloom, and remember the spot he asked everyone to remember, this is it after the bloom cleared and the grass is gone and is just sand; here it is a year and a half ago, starting to come back in about 20 feet of that same spot; and there it is today. He stated the sales tax and the hard work from the County and the municipalities are starting to show, they cannot quit; 10 years is just a drop in the bucket into making this better; and he thanked the Board for its help.

C.6. Presentation - Economic Impact of the Indian River Lagoon - Chris Peterson, St. Johns River Water Management District Member

Chris Peterson stated he was introduced as being from the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), and he is the secretary of the SJRWMD governing board, but tonight he is not here speaking on their behalf, he is there speaking as a citizen and a Brevard County business owner; he wants to talk a little bit about the money of water; he expressed his appreciation to everyone for the opportunity to speak about one of the most important issues facing Florida, the health of the waters; from the Everglades to the Indian River Lagoon (IRL), from the springs to the St. Johns River basin, the story of Florida is the story of water; and today he would like to share what is being done by the legislature, the Governor, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), SJRWMD, and importantly Brevard County to restore and protect these vital resources. He went on to say first he would like to explain why this means so much to him; he loves natural Florida and spends his time boating, fishing, and it is more than a past time, it is a way of life; he has been so passionate about it that he built his career around it; today he has the privilege of serving as President of Hell's Bay Boat Works where they build the finest shallow water skiffs in the world right here in Brevard County; according to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, saltwater recreational fishing alone generates around \$9.2 billion of economic impact that supports about 88,000 jobs in Florida; when combined with freshwater fishing, the total estimate is \$13.8 billion and supports about 120 jobs here in Florida; this is why he feels it is so important to spend valuable resources on fixing the water and saving the Lagoon; but here is the truth, without clean water there are no healthy estuaries, and without healthy estuaries, there is not any good fishing, and without good fishing nobody needs the world's finest skiff which means all the families that depend on Hell's Bay Boat Works would be impacted. He continued by saying clean water just is not about environment it is about people's livelihood, their heritage, and their future; in this year's 25-26 State budget, it includes almost \$1.4 billion dedicated to restoration and water quality; the same budget declares that since 2019 Florida has invested nearly \$9 billion in restoring and protecting the State's waterways; in the 205 Governor's budget it includes \$600 million for targeted water, quality improvements, and spring protection efforts; in that same budget \$25 million was allocated for the IRL protection and for priority water projects; and that budget also has \$382 million of a larger chunk that is set aside for expanded water quality improvement projects, including wastewater, stormwater, and septic conversion. He mentioned closer to home, the State has also recognized the crisis in the IRL; since 2019, nearly \$390 million has been invested in lagoon restoration and \$100 million set aside for water quality projects with the IRL basin, from septic to sewer conversions to wastewater treatment upgrades and stormwater retrofits; people know the Lagoon cannot be saved by just one project or one-year funded, it takes consistent, long-term commitment and that is exactly what one can see; long before the State level commitment, Brevard County voters took a very bold step in 2016, approving a half-cent infrastructure sales tax specifically dedicated to restoring and improving the IRL; this half-cent sales tax referendum, often called the Save Our Indian River Lagoon (SOIRL) program was designed to raise approximately \$586 million over 10 years to fund local restoration efforts; and through this tax so far Brevard County has already planned and implemented hundreds of projects or put them into progress. He stated they were all designed to reduce and remove excess nutrients and pollution that undermine the health of the Lagoon, to reduce and prevent nitrogen and Phosphorus from entering the Lagoon with projected annual pollutant reductions already measured in hundreds of thousands of pounds once all of these projects are completed, supported upgrades to septic systems, stormwater improvements, sewer expansions, and innovative approaches like the new science to reduce the pollutant inputs; some of the standout projects funded through this tax include projects in partnership with Brevard County, one of them being the Crane Creek M1 Canal flow restoration project; right here in Brevard County, the Crane Creek project is now complete; for decades the M1 canal sent polluted water east into the IRL; today with a new operable weir, pump stations,

and treatment, wetlands west of I-95, the flow has been redirected; the project will prevent over 24,000 pounds of nitrogen and 3,100 pounds of phosphorus from entering the Lagoon each year; and it restores up to seven million gallons per day of fresh water flow back to the St. Johns River and away from the IRL. He noted that is seven million gallons per day of fresh water that is badly needed over in the St. Johns River and is not needed in the IRL; another set of projects making a difference are living shorelines; instead of hardened seawalls, they are building oyster reefs, planting mangroves, marsh grasses, and using nature to stabilize the coast; Brevard County alone helped fund oyster reefs and living shoreline projects that stretch for more than 2,300 feet filtering water, reducing erosion, and providing much needed habitat; the Titusville causeway project is a standout, there are over 650 wave attenuation devices installed, four acres of seagrass restoration and millions of clams, they are very important and the zoo has done clams and others; he thanked them for clams; and mentioned none of these efforts would be possible without partnerships through the cost share programs, local governments, and utilities bring projects forward and the State helps fund them. He continued by saying this model stretches taxpayer dollars, rewards innovation, and ensures that both State and local priorities are met; these projects not only improve water quality, they support the economic and recreational value of the Lagoon, strengthen property values, protect livelihoods of the residents who depend on clean water for tourism, fishing, and people's quality of life; also all of these dollars have been reinvested here and everyone has helped build these things, contractors, neighbors, all benefit from these and there is always an economic multiplier to that where they spend their dollars; and hopefully they will buy a boat, he will. He went on to say the synergy between State funding and local investment represents a powerful model for environmental stewardship; the State of Florida's historic water budget brings broad strategic support to communities Statewide; local investments like Brevard County's half-cent sales tax provide targeted community-driven action where water issues hit home; the combination of State leadership and local initiative is what makes Florida uniquely positioned to tackle the complex water challenges from nutrient pollution to water sustainability, and ecosystem restoration; as the SOIRL sales tax approaches its sunset this year, the community faces important decisions about extending and refining this successful local effort; public engagement and support will be crucial as the community continues to confront legacy pollution and build on the progress that has already been made; and some of that progress has been seen tonight in some of the slides. He added they are making progress and that is a great thing; together with these partnerships between the State, the County, the national government, cities, scientific experts, and engaged residents, they are setting a new standard for water stewardship in Florida, one that protects the waterways today and preserves them for generations to come; but one point is very important to understand, local investment is not separate from the State funding, it is the key that actually unlocks it. He stated across Florida, vast majority of water quality grants, restoration funds, and infrastructure programs operate on a cost share model; that means that State dollars are awarded competitively and require local governments to bring real funding to the table; in Brevard County that half-cent sales tax, not just a local commitment, is the financial foundation that allows Brevard County to compete for more and to secure State funding; because of this investment, Brevard County has been able to meet the required local match thresholds, often well over 50 percent or more for State water quality grants; projects funded through the SOIRL program are structured to align with State priorities making them eligible for funding from FDEP in the water management districts; and every dollar invested through that half-cent sales tax has been leveraged to attract additional State dollars multiplying that impact well beyond what local funding could ever achieve. He went on to say without this dedicated local funding source, many of these projects would simply not qualify for State assistance, regardless of how urgent that need may be; in practical terms, that means that this half-cent sales tax turns local dollars into matched State investments, allows Brevard County to move projects forward years sooner than waiting for State funding alone, and ensures that State funds are also spent on shovel-ready, engineered, and accountable projects rather than just sitting idle; this partnership model is intentional; the State of Florida has made it clear

communities that invest in themselves rise to the top of the funding list; by approving the half-cent sales tax, voters send a strong signal that this community is very serious about restoring the IRL; and the State responded by becoming a partner in that effort. He continued by saying the success that is being seen today, cleaner water, nutrient reduction, major infrastructure upgrades, is not a result of one funding source alone, it is State dollars, local investment, scientific planning, and public accountability; that is how real restoration happens and why it is maintaining strong local funding commitment remains essential, not just to continue the work that is already underway, but to ensure that Brevard County remains competitive for future State grants and cost share opportunities; when one steps back and looks at the big picture, the message is clear, Florida is investing in water like never before; the legislature, government, water management districts, and local governments like Brevard County are backing it up with billions of dollars, innovative science, and real results on the ground; however, the money and the projects alone are not enough, the success requires continued community support, tough choices, and a shared vision for the future because whether it is the Everglades, the springs, the St. Johns River, or the IRL these waters do not belong to any one person, they belong to everyone. He stated the IRL is the lifeblood of Brevard County; it fuels the economy, supports a way of life, and defines identity as Floridians; thanks to the half-cent sales tax, thousands of pounds of harmful nutrients have been removed, converted septic tanks, restored oyster reefs and clams, installed living shorelines, and begun to reverse decades of decline; if people want strong property values and a healthy future for Brevard County, it must keep that half-cent sales tax; he advised to keep pushing forward together to ensure Florida's waters are clean, abundant, and alive for generations to come; in Florida the water is the golden goose that drives the economy; and the water is its soul.

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Altman stated he thinks people can see what an amazing team they have between the Federal government, State, local government, water management district, community leaders, and businesses, it is a really remarkable group of citizens that are doing remarkable things; and he would like to open it up for public comment, there are about 25 cards.

Commissioner Delaney stated before public comment she would love if people could also add into their comments what they would be interested in SOIRL 2.0 looking like; at the last workshop a lot of people came up with support, but not really what their vision was for the future; and she would love to hear that if people have thoughts about it.

John Nico stated he lives in the north end of Brevard County; his background is in urban planning and he moved to Brevard County about four years ago from Winter Park, Florida; he is a Florida native and he chose to move to Brevard County because he realized quickly that this area has the potential to be one of the most spectacular places to live in the world; in many ways it already is, but there is still important work that needs to be done; and he expressed his appreciation to the Board for its commitment, hard work, and leadership that has brought everyone to this point. He went on to say people are here today because they know the work and research that is being done to restore the Lagoon is effective in showing real measurable progress; one can see from both the research and the projects, the results are trending up and stabilization is occurring up and down the County, 72 miles of the Indian River Lagoon (IRL); there is sea grass returning, fish habitats beginning to form, shellfish are starting to spawn, and the shorelines are beginning to stabilize; in just a short time since he has lived here, he can genuinely say his quality of life has improved and the Lagoon is a big reason why; and he believes one day, if the hard work continues, the Lagoon could give back to the communities the abundance and the sustenance that it once provided 60 years ago. He went on to say this is why the half-cent sales tax matters and is so important; if it does expire Brevard County will lose \$58 to \$60 million every year that is currently being dedicated to restoring and protecting

the Lagoon; the big picture here is that the funding for sewer conversions, stormwater treatment, muck removal, and habitat restoration will all lapse, and the progress that has been made thus far will eventually decline; the County would be putting millions, if not billions of dollars in tourism, and the quality of life for the residents at risk; property values would decline; and the diverse economy would be compromised by cutting these funds dedicated to a healthy Lagoon. He noted protecting the health of natural resources is one of the strongest economic drivers; people come to Brevard County and keep coming back because of the water, the wildlife, the recreation, and the quality of life that nature provides people; as a resident and someone who shares this County with millions of visitors each year, he is proud to pay a half-cent sales tax to ensure that Brevard County has a healthy, vibrant, and living estuary for generations to come; to be clear he is not asking for an additional tax, he is asking to keep the one that is already in place; it is a tax that is working; and thanks to Save our Indian River Lagoon (SOIRL) and many other partner organizations working toward restoring the Lagoon, real progress is being seen in a relatively short period of time. He added the Lagoon is the crown jewel of Brevard County and it is the residents who should have a chance to vote again on the referendum and decide whether to protect it.

Robert Rupe stated he was talking to some people in the past and they said SOIRL is not really helping or doing that much, so why keep it; the only thing he ended up thinking in the past is what is basically slowing the County down as far as fixing the Lagoon; the only thing he can think of is the Board and the City Commissioners who are basically allowing development, yeah they fixed the Lagoon, now let them develop; there have been loads of development lately, last three or four years; he wonders why the County has to do all the development without doing things like Low Impact Development (LID), basically make sure to keep all the stormwater on the property and not allow it to go out to the Lagoon; if there was something like that, hopefully if all the cities and County would end up doing that it would help a large part, as far as making SOIRL look like it is doing a lot better job than what a lot of people might think; and he knows it is doing good, but it could definitely be doing better.

Robert Pickert stated he is a longtime Brevard resident, a sailor, IRL supporter, career environmental professional, and environmental health and safety manager for Wakefield Biochar; he has provided previous comments on proposing the beneficial reuse of IRL muck amended with biochar and other Brevard natural resources for a local industry to produce a slow-release fertilizer and soil amendment; he stands by his previous comments that the sale of this material could replace or supplement the SOIRL tax with \$20 to \$40 million of annual non-tax net proceeds to fund the SOIRL program including muck dredging; and today he would like to take a little bit of a different tact and emphasize the SOIRL health benefits for restoration of the Lagoon. He went on to say he first wants to make it clear that these are his comments and his alone as a Brevard resident, and based on the limited muck analysis that he has seen; Wakefield Biochar has been supportive, but the restoration of the IRL is not in the company's business plan; in fact, the County could produce all of the biochar that it would need; the Solid Waste Department is developing a plan to manage woody waste from the curbside yard waste collection program and storm debris; the Director of Solid Waste has advised him that the Solid Waste Department has no interest in a commercial venture in which it is attempting to sell a product; his three-minute pitch to the SOIRL COC was not enough time to educate the committee on the uses of biochar to support the restoration of the Lagoon; and he hopes the COC invites him back for a more thorough presentation on the properties and relevant applications for biochar. He continued by saying the original SOIRL Ordinance and Comprehensive Management Plan requires the SOIRL COC to not only allow, but to foster tolls and techniques for restoration of the Lagoon and to identify and develop long-term funding sources to preserve, protect, restore, and enhance the IRL system; on to SOIRL health, in all of the IRL restoration projects discussed, there seems to have been some precious little focus on SOIRL health; as he looks at Ms. Barker's slide on pollution sources versus fund allocations,

muck flux and stormwater treatment account for over 50 percent of pollutant sources; he sees an additional 26 percent where SOIRL health is critical to the success of the Lagoon, including miscellaneous base flow, atmospheric deposition, and lawn maintenance; biochar provides habitat for beneficial soil microbes, absorbs water, and absorbs nutrients in a way that makes nutrients bio-available to plants and less leachable to groundwater and the Lagoon; he recommends the SOIRL program convene a group of SOIRL health experts and stakeholders to evaluate the benefits of muck biochar-based fertilizer SOIRL amendment appropriate for Brevard County's sandy soil; and this effort could support a public SOIRL health information campaign and become a galvanizing message for SOIRL health in Brevard, but first, additional testing of the dewatered muck from each of the dredged dewatering sites and an inventory of muck is being stored or land applied must be completed to properly manage the muck. He noted biochar would help address 77 percent of IRL pollutant sources and could serve as a long term funding source for the Lagoon, making biochar something of a silver bullet; and he supports the reauthorization of the tax and as a supplement and/or transition to more sustainable funding.

Milo Zonka expressed his appreciation for this workshop and the wonderful presentations that have been heard; he stated he is in attendance on behalf of the East Coast Zoological Foundation, which the Board may not be as familiar with, but it is the parent organization for the Brevard Zoo, and the soon-to-be parent of the Bowen Aquarium, and also partner with the County through the Restore Shores program which provides a lot of the staff and volunteers for a significant number of programs that go on to help with the oyster beds, seagrass, and some of the other projects that happen; he went back and looked at the data of population in this County and going back to 1850, the first census, there were 139 people in what was St. Lucie County, which then became Brevard County; today he thinks the projection is there will be 681,000 residents of this County this year; and as the old earth day poster cartoon talked about meeting the enemy, the enemy is the people. He commented for everyone in attendance this evening, the people are the problem and potentially the solution; he thinks as people sit and look at the science and the results of the efforts that have gone on with SOIRL and all of the programs that are in work, that continue to give fruits to the labor, the question being talked about is, and people can talk about blame, the people did this to themselves, people can pat themselves on the back, they started doing some great things, but what do the people need to do next; he thinks the challenge is if there is a good collection of science, good programs, what people would ask for is to place it on the ballot and let the population of this County decide; and that is really the only question in front of this Board; the people are not asking the Board to decide for them, they are asking the Board if it is a worthy question to place on the ballot for the voters of Brevard County to decide; and if the residents decide yes, the people will tax themselves and visitors to help participate in righting some of the wrongs, that just the presence of population has created. He noted people are not evil and do not have any ill-intent, they just want to live in Brevard County; he was thinking about Mr. Taranto's question of where people were on August 23, 2016, and he was at his son's football practice, looked at his phone, he does not remember that day particularly, but his son and his family are hopefully the growth; and so the people want the County to grow, for people to live here, thrive here, and families to grow here. He stated the people need to make the investment to protect themselves; the mission of Brevard Zoo is to share the joy in nature so that wildlife and people can thrive; he thinks that is a fundamental challenge that everyone wants to have, look forward to, and fight for; and ask the people the questions and let them vote on it in November.

Fred Goldstein stated he is a resident of Merritt Island and also a member of the COC, but he is speaking on behalf of himself; yes, the Lagoon is an economic engine, but he is going to focus on an area not spoken about as much, health and healthcare; from the time he was a young kid, he wanted to study sharks; ultimately he received a degree in zoology focused on marine biology; sadly studying sharks was not to be, but his career went into a world full of

sharks, healthcare; for the past 12 years he has had a consulting firm in population health; population health is an area that studies, measures, and develops programs to improve the health of communities or individuals living with various disease and conditions; in population health they look at the inputs to our health this way, genetics is the deck one is dealt, healthcare is the repair shop, but per the National Academy of Medicine, the environment where one lives, works, and breathes is what drives 80 percent of the health status of individuals; and it is not the healthcare system as most believe. He went on to say to talk about the environment, on the positive side there is research on what are called blue spaces; these are areas near bodies of water such as lakes, rivers, and coastal communities; research has shown that people who live near the coast and saltwater typically live one year longer; living there is associated with positive impacts on their health such as lower rates of depression, improvements in health indicators such as lower cortisol levels, reduces cardiovascular disease, and improved mental health; this is not to scare anyone or to let the fear-mongers run wild, but to discuss what was impacts, and how it is getting better; and in Brevard County, the blue space became a polluted space. He noted he will highlight a few potential health issues; studies have detected toxins from blooms in the nasal swabs of residents; now that may be due to the body eliminating them; another study found that toxins from blooms in the IRL were associated with causing Alzheimer's like brain damage in dolphins; they do not know if or how either of these may impact people; while exposure to some toxins and pollutants may result in short-term health impacts, others may take years and years to develop; and as former hospital Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) executive, he also looks at the total cost of care. He noted when the IRL is polluted, they are not just losing seagrass, manatees, and more, they are potentially increasing the rates of preventable hospitalizations, ER, and doctor visits for various conditions; now for the good news one heard this morning, over the past few years, they have experienced fewer and smaller blooms; things are getting better; turns out the Lagoon is also critical for one's health; and to leave everyone with one final thought, people's health and the health of their children is tied to improving the blue space.

Bill Debusk stated he is in attendance as President of the local Sierra Club; he has seen some comments on social media and they are not really positive for this half-cent sales tax and that is not great; renewing the half-cent sales tax is the best and most proven tool to improve the health of the IRL; it will only pass with overwhelming voter support and that support depends on trust; the residents must see their leaders fiercely protecting the Lagoon every single day; people remember how horrible it was back in the day with the fish kills, algae blooms, and starving Manatees; the County cannot afford to go back to these days; the IRL is crucial to the economy, without a healthy Lagoon, it risk losing the very foundation that makes this County a desirable place to live, work, and visit; but placing the half-cent sales tax on the ballot is not enough. He went on to say elected officials in Brevard County must insist on strong measures that mitigate the harm caused by a rapid population and construction growth; there needs to be stricter regulations on runoff, smarter development factors such as LID, and innovative solutions to prevent nutrient pollutions from seeping into the Lagoon; the citizens of Brevard County must see the local officials actively participate in stopping the flow of pollution into the IRL; the Board recently provided two great examples; one, when it called for an in-person public meeting on Blue Origin's wastewater permit; they want to dump a bunch of wastewater into the Lagoon; the Board stood up and had a public meeting; two, the Board recently voted to make homeowners along the Lagoon eligible for at least \$6,000 of financial help for septic tank upgrades; and those are the types of actions local leadership must continue. He mentioned the IRL can be saved, however, it will require ongoing proactive leadership of the elected officials meaning taking decisive actions to tackle pollution at its source, enforcing smarter growth standards, and preventing new threats from undermining the progress; only through this visible commitment will the citizens gain the confidence that renewing the absent sales tax is not merely a temporary band-aid over an endless stream of pollution; and the citizens need these

visible commitments to embrace the vision that the half-cent sales tax is a vital investment for fully restoring and protecting this priceless Lagoon for generations to come.

Maryann Civil stated she lives in northeast Palm Bay and has been lucky enough to live on Turkey Creek for 35 years; she was also lucky enough to marry into a commercial fishing family from Florida and he is still commercially fishing, Blue Crabbing at 76, and he loves it; the reason she is in attendance tonight is not only to thank Ms. Barker and her crew because she thinks they are doing an excellent job, they are on the Lagoon two to three days per week, and they have noticed there is a lot of oyster recruitment going on in the Lagoon which can do nothing but help the water quality; she also spent almost 30 years as a professional geologist in the State of Florida working on projects of groundwater and soil contamination; one of the basics of those projects is starting at the source of contamination and moving outward to clean it up; and Turkey Creek has always been a little bit of a problem because there are over 200 miles of canals that dump into Turkey Creek. She noted St. Johns, Brevard County, and the City of Palm Bay have worked hand-in-hand along with Melbourne Tillman Water Control District to improve conditions on the creek; she has noticed since the MS1 structure at the C1 canal, is a top-flowing structure that was retrofitted approximately 15 years ago, that there is a lot more floating vegetation coming down the creek; when there is high flow conditions, like September, October, and November, every year there are tons of floating vegetation; in Ms. Barker's slide show, approximately 40 percent is due to muck accumulation; and as far as the contamination, her recommendation would be to look at the source where all that vegetation is coming from, and she knows on Turkey Creek a lot of it is just west of this top-flowing structure that is not being contained and managed properly. She added maybe if the Board could partner with Melbourne-Tillman to get that vegetation during high flow conditions under control, the County will not have to dredge as much; as she stated she has lived on Turkey Creek for 35 years and there have been three dredging events that she is aware of; and she thanked the Board noting she is in favor of the half-cent continuation and to please put the word out.

Vince Lamb stated he is long time Merritt Island resident and a past Chair of the Brevard Indian River Lagoon Coalition; last week he expressed broad support for what the SOIRL program has accomplished and he certainly supports its renewal; tonight he wants to specialize a bit and focus on basic septic systems; he thinks basic septic system removal should be a main emphasis on the SOIRL program moving forward; an estimated 60,000 septic systems currently exist in the IRL watershed in Brevard County; the basic septic systems are high among the sources of nitrogen and phosphorus pollution into the Lagoon; during the first nine years of the SOIRL program, almost 1,000 septic systems have been removed with either sewer connections or upgrades to advanced septic; and this pace needs to increase to support the legislative mandate that basic septic systems in the Lagoon watershed be removed by 2030. He continued by saying removing the basic septic systems is complicated; sewage processing capabilities must be increased and lines extended into chosen areas; in low-density areas where this sewage service is not practical, advanced septic is the best alternative; each one requires custom engineering work and a permit process; grants are needed to reduce the burden on the property owners; reducing and removing the basic septic systems is a key component of many water body restoration efforts, including the Chesapeake Bay Foundation; the Florida Keys serve as a role model that the last septic system was removed from the Florida Keys a few years ago after a 25-year program, that included County, State, and Federal funding exceeding \$1 billion; and the Keys have less septic systems than Brevard County. He went on to say he wants to encourage the Natural Resources Department and the COC to examine the progress of the last nine years and devise a plan for moving forward; should Brevard County place an emphasis on the septic systems that are close to the Lagoon and where should the new sewage lines be planned to reach more neighborhoods; if the SOIRL plan renewal includes a bold commitment to removing basic septic systems near the Lagoon, the referendum will be more compelling to the voters; clearly this is just one component of the

SOIRL plan, but this one has high visibility; and he thanked the Board for hosting the event and providing people the opportunity to speak.

Barbara Wall stated it is nice to see everybody and nice to have such a positive group presenting everything; she has learned a lot; she is on the COC, but not representing them this evening; she is there to thank the Board, Ms. Barker and her incredible team; she hears presentations at the COC once a month and it does last for many hours sometimes; they are all wonderful, exciting, educational, and informative; she would recommend that anyone that questions what is happening on this SOIRL group to come to the meetings, see what happens, listen, and learn; she also wanted that the IRL to her is a legacy; she just became a great grandmother which means that four generations of her family are here; and most of them are not living on the Lagoon, but enjoy it every day. She mentioned she has not only seen the cleanup which has been wonderful, she sees the fish jumping, the birds feeding, the Dolphins, the water getting clearer all along the shoreline, which is beautiful; she also sees the beach cleaner; she used to do a lot of beach cleanups all the time and there is not much to cleanup because everyone is taking their own responsibility; and that leads her to her last point which is information, talking to everyone new coming into the community is the best source of keeping the river, the oceans, and the environment clean, it is up to everyone to promote that positive attitude and inform those people.

Cammie Donaldson stated she has lived in Brevard County since 1962; she came as a toddler with her parents; her first recollection of the Lagoon was about age four watching fireworks at the Eau Gallie Causeway and seeing what they called phosphorus, not knowing what it was, it was the bioluminescence in the water; of course, as a child, that is a magical looking thing; her parents could not explain but everyone thought it was really cool; in a few years, her father was able to through his business, Southern Gun Exchange on US1 serving the hunting and fishing community, were able to move to Indian Harbor Beach; and from the age of six on, she grew up on the IRL. She mentioned when she was little, one could walk the shoreline and it was filled with fiddler crabs, and people could see Needlefish on the water surface all the time; she fell off the dock at the age of seven and cut her feet all up on all the oysters; 10 years later all those oysters were gone; they used to take the garbage can out to the end of the dock, turn the light on, and they could fill that garbage can with Blue Crabs in an hour at night under the light; one could shrimp, they put out shrimp traps; it was a very lively Lagoon; they saw the Horseshoe Crabs that Ms. Thompson talked about; it was beautiful; and yet she is almost 20 years younger than her husband and he tells her stories of the things he saw in the Lagoon that she never got to see. She continued by saying when she was in her 20s as a young adult, she was already seeing that she was no longer seeing those things; the Needlefish were gone, the Fiddler Crabs were gone, the oysters were gone, and people were building sea walls; things were happening in the Lagoon; she 100 percent supports the sales tax; and she knows as a business person, the inconvenience of discretionary sales tax, every time she does the book keeping; but she thinks it is great and wishes she could do more. She went on to say two years ago, she now lives in downtown Melbourne, as an adult she cannot live on the Lagoon on her money, and they did the septic conversion through the City of Melbourne where she got money through all the stuff that was just learned; her husband spent a lot of time talking to all the neighbors; thankfully the new construction people are having to hook up to sewer; she was actually astounded to find that in downtown Melbourne there was still septic; but they did it and they are so proud and happy that they were able to do that because they are on a very ordinary income and would not have been able to do it without help. She noted she will second what Mr. Lamb said about the septic; it could be streamlined because it is too complex for the average person; needs to be a little more streamlined so the County could get a bigger bang for the buck; she asked the Board to please keep the sales tax.

Spence Guerin stated he is the husband of Cammie who just spoke; he would like to thank Mr.

Lamb for speaking up about septic tanks; as was just said, they benefitted from that change over; it took a long time and the City had turned down all kinds of requests from people in the area to get them off of septic tanks; consequently some people invested in high end septic tanks and they are still on septic tanks; they are not going to leave because there is not enough financial incentive for them to give up their invested septic tanks; there are problems in that program that need addressing; not everybody in the area opted to get off of septic tanks; and there are some problems in that area that he would love to pass on to the capable team that is heading up this whole effort. He mentioned, as Ms. Thompson suggested, how bountiful the Lagoon was, he would like to add to that; when he was kid before the high-rise bridges, a lantern would be held over the bridge at night and the water was alive with shrimp, crabs, and all kinds of fish; one could see way down in the water, there were Trout, and they were attracted to all the activity around the light, and it brought all kinds of things; the water was very alive; and if one hung the lantern over the water tonight at the causeway somewhere, one would probably see nothing; the changes are just huge; and people who move here from outside the area, there is always stinking and rotting fish, but the Lagoon always looks beautiful, and they can see sunsets and sunrises, therefore, everybody loves it, but they do not know what they do not know. He noted it takes education beyond the effort that is currently being made, in his humble opinion; it is very difficult; that is an ongoing long term effort; he has had efforts regarding that in the past which unfortunately he failed; the need is there on educating the general public, they are huge and ongoing and will ever be ongoing; he thanked the Board for what it is doing, he is glad to see the progress being made; and he mentioned there is a long way to go.

Jim McKinney thanked the Board for its service and the progress it has made; he stated he grew up in South Florida on Biscayne Bay in the Florida Keys; when he got ready to retire, he said he was coming back to Florida where he can fish every day because ice fishing is an unnatural act as far as he is concerned; if he cannot feel his feet, he does not know why he is there; he is a conservation coordinator for a local chapter of a fishing club by the name of Salt Strong; he thinks Salt Strong has 50,000 members in several states; they are really concentrated in Florida where there are 450 members just in Brevard County; they have monthly meetings; and as Conservation Coordinator he is always looking for volunteers to go out and work with all of the groups; and he knows a lot of people in this room who have spoken this evening because he sees them at those things. He mentioned the goal is conservation, community, and education; those are the things that he is really invested in as a native Floridian, it matters a lot; he has a big passion for this, it is important; he thinks everyone here this evening is because people care and he thinks it is the people's job to educate others; he goes to meetings and hears people question progress and saying there is a lot of seagrass; he sees the changes are dramatic; they are making progress, but without an ongoing source of funding, projects fail because they are not being maintained; one can spend millions and millions of dollars, but the maintenance of that has to continue, it does not just happen; and that is why people will say, 'they did this thing and spent all this money and it is back to the same problem again' and that is why it has to continue. He stated they are on the path; and he thinks they can get there, but it is going to take a lot more time, effort, and education.

Judy Trandel thanked the Board from having this in Palm Bay; she stated she is there to ask the Board to fix the problem, to protect the Lagoon; the question is not whether the Lagoon is worth protecting, it absolutely is, the question is how to protect it in a way that actually works; the request of the half-cent sales tax deserves support, but only if it focuses squarely on fixing the pollution at its source; the Lagoon has been dying because for decades, pollution has been flowing into it every single day from three primary sources, aging stormwater systems that were never designed for today's development or rainfall patterns; these systems funnel fertilizer, oil, heavy metals, and bacteria straight into the Lagoon; outdated sewage infrastructure, including leaking pipes, lift stations, treatment facilities that release nutrients and pathogens during failures and overflows, and thousands of septic systems many decades old, that leech nitrogen

into groundwater, which ultimately ends up in the Lagoon; common sense says this, do not keep mopping the floor while the pipe is still leaking, fix the leak; extending this sales tax makes sense if and only if it is used to fix these core problems first, updating stormwater systems, replacing failing sewers, infrastructure, and converting septic systems to central sewer where it makes the biggest impact; when the damage is stopped at its source, restoration efforts will actually work; and water quality improves, seagrass returns, fish and wildlife recover, and taxpayers see real measurable results from their investment. She mentioned the half-cent sales tax, which actually costs taxpayers a full cent because there are no half-cent denominations, spreads the cost fairly across residents, visitors, and seasonal users while keeping property taxes lower; but with that investment comes responsibility; voters deserve transparency, accountability, and a clear commitment that infrastructure fixes come first; saving the IRL does not start in the water it starts underground in pipes, pumps, and storm drains; and if the problem is fixed first, the Lagoon can heal, and this tax exemption can be a true solution, not just another temporary patch.

Joanie Regan stated she lives in Cocoa Beach and retired from Cocoa Beach a few years ago after managing the City's stormwater utility for over two decades; they put in many stormwater projects that greatly reduced the volume of runoff to the Lagoon; most projects built native landscape bio-retention gardens while reducing impervious coverage, basically reducing the asphalt footprint along the roadway corridor; a great example was the Minute Man Corridor LID project which included raingardens, permeable pavers, street trees, and underground percolation chambers; once SOIRL was established, the support for these Lagoon projects was greatly improved through funding and coordination, and the projects became more meaningful because the pollutant reductions were better documented from a watershed perspective; it also allowed the opportunity to leverage grant funding more effectively and put the County and the cities on the same page, the same Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP); and Ms. Barker and her team have put together an amazing program that systematically crunches the pollution reduction and cost data and monitors Lagoon improvement all through outreach with a diverse COC. She commented as for what she thinks for the future of stormwater, she thinks the County needs to move to LID methods for stormwater management, low impact design and low impact development which minimized impervious surfaces which generate the huge volume of runoff and also exacerbates flooding in the low lying areas when the Lagoon is at its highest elevation in late summer and fall; LID methods put rain into the ground close to where it falls so the freshwater input to the Lagoon is much reduced; when reducing the volume it is also reducing the pollutant input; and freshwater in huge volume is a pollutant itself. She went on to thank the Board for this opportunity to support great cost-effective Lagoon restoration; and she noted she is very much hoping to see this on the ballot in November.

Anne Conroy-Baiter expressed her appreciation for the Board's work associated with this; she mentioned it is a lot of information and she thinks the information so beautifully presented by Ms. Barker and the other speakers need the light of day; she is the president and CEO of the Melbourne Regional Chamber of Florida Space Coast and also a resident of Cocoa Beach; she has gotten to witness the changes on the Minute Man Corridor and what a wonderful effect that project has had on Cocoa Beach's economy; as a chamber CEO, she wants to be clear, a healthy IRL is not just an environmental priority it is an economic one as well; the business community depends on a strong quality place to attract and retain customers, investment, talent, and visitors; and that is why the chambers supported the SOIRL initiative when it was first proposed and why it continues to support it today. She continued by saying this program has produced real measurable results, so much data, hundreds of community and homeowner projects, completed major reductions in nitrogen and phosphorus, and a growing pipeline of infrastructure improvements that address pollution at its source; the data backs it up; a healthy Lagoon supports tens of billions of dollars in annual economic activity, including tourism, recreation, marine trade, so much fishing, and even aerospace; and it contributes \$28 billion in

regional GDP and supports more than 128,000 jobs; it is not an either/or choice between economic growth and environmental stewardship, they are directly linked; she also wants to commend the County Commission and staff, this program is widely recognized as a model of successful voter-approved government initiative, one that is transparent, adaptive, and grounded in science and outcomes that matter to the business community; and the chamber believes strongly in letting voters decide. She went on to say the role is not to dictate the outcome, but to ensure the community has clear, factual information about what is working, what is at stake, and why this matters to a shared economic future; Commissioner Delaney asked what the speakers are looking for in the next stage; as she hears, one of the things that stuck in her head tonight was the baffle boxes are gone; this program is so flexible and everyone is living in a time of such rapid escalation of technology and the fact that this program allows for the adoption of technology as it develops is an amazing thing; and she thinks that is going to be the key to the future of it. She commented a thriving Lagoon supports thriving businesses; they are proud to stand behind a program that proves progress is possible; the Melbourne Regional Chamber believes that protecting the IRL and strengthening the economy go hand-in-hand; and it is committed to ensuring its economy has the facts, the voice, and the opportunity to shape its future for the long game.

Lynda Weatherman, Economic Development of Florida's Space Coast, stated the Economic Development Commission (EDC) and the IRL National Estuary Program (NEP) have worked closely together with many of the communities and business partners to integrate the plans to restore the health of the IRL, urging clean water and habitat restoration, innovation and technology development, cultivate workforce development, and protect the nature-based economy and quality of life; the partnerships can include marine industries, recreational boating, ecotourism, water quality initiatives, and water dependent businesses; from a business perspective, the Lagoon helps reduce risks, supports reliable operations, and enhances the overall attractiveness for the community; when managed strategically, it provides benefits similar to transportation and utility infrastructure while also strengthening quality of place; water quality initiatives and partnerships continue between the NEP and EDC as it will deliver economic return for protecting this very important critical asset; and she would encourage all interested parties to review the NEP's IRL economic valuation study which includes an economic impact and eco-system valuation, recently released in September 2025. She continued by saying the report finds 28.3 billion annually and 8.3 of that is wages and 124,000 jobs, which have been referenced in the past; additionally, the economic services amount to an estimated \$1 million annually; these are products, services, and recreational opportunities derived from the IRL; these services reflect activities including recreational fishing, boating, shoreline activity, habitat quality, water quality, flood risk mitigation and coastal protection, and commercial fishing; the message today is simple, the IRL is not just an environmental asset, it is an economic driver for Brevard County; in regards to the EDC's economic strategy, the IRL assists and supports our efforts in an area attraction of talent for workforce and retained workforce; Brevard County competes for talent, particularly in aerospace, advanced manufacturing, technology, and the IRL plays a significant role; access to waterfront recreation and natural beauty influences where professionals and families choose to live; and the Lagoon strengthens the County ability to compete with skilled workforce and supports the lifestyle expectation of today's workforce. She noted finally, some evaluations just cannot measure; she knows there are numbers today, but some cannot measure, for example how does one measure the enriched quality of life and the pride and pleasure the Indian River Lagoon affords the community, the citizens; leveraging the Lagoon is not a single project, it is an ongoing strategic priority that supports long-term prosperity; and when investing in the health of the IRL, it is investing in the strength and competitiveness of Brevard County for today and for generations to come.

Captain Alex Gurichky stated he is a lifetime resident of the Brevard County area, lifetime lover

and enabler of all his knowledge in the Lagoon; he is a 20-year fishing guide and commercial fisherman who has now converted his business because there was no other choice, to working originally to advocate, but now in the past five to seven years as hands-on, boots-on-the-ground restoration effort work, as much as he can between his fishing, at this moment in time; he works with everything from clam restoration project with Clair Wiggins and UF where they have been able to put in millions and millions of wonderful calms that he gets to work with on a daily basis; he also works with mangrove restoration; he is also part of an environmental outreach arm of a large boating and fishing industry conglomerate, Starbrite, in their project sea safe initiative; he works with their conservation director who is also a local resident to get involved in as many of these projects as he possible can; and he does that because it has been his life since he was a child. He went on to say he watched all of the glory of the late 80s and early 90s and into the heavy grass growth of the early 09s; he also sat there on his boat with clients and watched the devastation unfold on a daily basis; it was not a long-term watch, it was over months from beautiful to dead brown and no grass; he was actually pretty instrumental in stopping an ill-thought-out train across the Banana River on yet another dirt causeway out of the port; that was about 10 years ago; and it kind of reshaped how the port looked at their cargo. He mentioned he wants to the Board know because he has been here since some of the first meetings of this plan, that some of this stuff is absolutely working; the amount of grass that one can see, the grass is real and he sees it on a daily basis being on the water five to seven days per week; that is all of his time, he has no more time to be on the water; the way he thinks can be better with this plan moving forward, hopefully not just 10 years but 20 or 30 years as those other areas that have done their due diligence and worked on their plans that are decade plans, is flushing; not an inlet, because everybody thinks an inlet is a fix, but actual studies that can show people this is how it can be done, because there are some ways that flushing can be done; another big one is visible, in neighborhood stormwater retention projects, it is a huge thing; and the muck problem is not a temporary problem, it does not need piece-meal, dredge here, dredge there, 10 years ago when he stood at the dais and said the County should have a Brevard County Division of Dredging and start at the north end of the County to 15 to 20 years later at the south end and turn them back around and re-dredge everything because it is a reoccurring problem that will never be fixed unless there is a reoccurring fix to the situation.

Mary Bowman stated she lives in unincorporated Indialantic; Commissioner Feltner knows how much she does not want to do this because they talked about it at the Zoo; she wants the Board to know how much she supports this and how important it is; her sister just reminded her that in 1970 they were forced by their father to dig a ditch to hook up to the sewer in Satellite Beach so that he did not have to pay the fee; and children do not have to do that any longer if people save the tax. She went on to say there is nothing political where one gets collaboration, cooperation, the working together; if one had every problem that the Board has to face have this much support, the Board would not have a job and it would be amazing; she does support this, she supports Ms. Barker, Dr. Duane De Freese, and the amazing people who work with them; they do not have turnover; these people are passionate and they are doing a good job; and she supports them.

Meghan Murphy stated she prepared her remarks this time, but then an off-the-cuff question was asked do she is going to deviate a little bit; she is in attendance to encourage the Board's support for the IRL, but also for something just as critical, public trust, education, and meaningful community engagement; specifically, she would ask the Board to place the issue on the ballot and let the people decide while continuing the many successful partnerships and projects described tonight; and she would also encourage the Board to focus more than ever on helping the residents to understand why the SOIRL program matters so much, and help people understand how they can all be a part of the solution. She continued by saying she recognizes and appreciates the essential large-scale infrastructure projects that were described here that

the County was doing and no one disputes that there is more work to be done; she would encourage the Board to focus on more robust community engagement; in order for this ballot initiative to be successful, people need to understand also how the impact fees from development helps to mitigate water quality impacts and how the County intends to hold large-scale industry accountable for their role; and she asked the Board to not let social media disinformation undermine this valuable work. She added it really is important. She stated now she is going to deviate; she is somebody who lives in a neighborhood who started to recognize the degradation or decreased quality of the landscape in her community, and she comes from a nice community, and people start to work on those things and she has called every single department, County, State, and local and she has had such positive experiences; people have come out and spoken, literally last week someone from Brevard County Natural Resources came out to speak to the HOA board to talk about what can be done about the aging infrastructure, how to protect the ponds while learning to develop plans to improve water quality; they are adopting better management practices, but how do they hold vendors accountable, how do they get homeowners to change the way they view the landscape, and how do they reduce the number of herbicides that are being sprayed and sold to individual homeowners; and she does not know the answer. She mentioned she thinks there are 50,000 homeowners associations in Florida; she thinks there are something like 70,000 stormwater ponds and that number is increasing all the time with development; that cannot be changed, but people can change the way they manage the landscape; she knows in Brevard County that the number one expense for any homeowners association, on the water or not, is landscape; they need vendors to understand that they cannot get away with mow, blow, and go, spray herbicides and destroy the environment any longer; in order to make informed decisions the HOAs need the County to continue to partner with them; and for all the people here supporting these big projects and these big things, every little moment, every little interact, and every opportunity that people have to impact the way that individual residents in this County spend their dollars makes a difference and everything that one is doing means something to them, good job.

MJ Waters expressed her appreciation to the Board for holding this and listening to all the wonderful people saying great things; she stated she moved to Palm Bay 40 years ago and she is still in Brevard County; she first experienced the IRL with a friend of hers who had a boat, they went out to the Lagoon and slipped in the water and this giant beast came at her and scared the bejeebers out of her; it was a manatee and she had no clue what that was; after she retired in 2014 she went to volunteer at the Brevard Zoo and Mr. Winsten put her in the little place they have about the Lagoon, which she knew nothing about, really; she was there for a few months and he came by one day and said he needed to talk to her; and that is when the Brevard Indian River Coalition was forming to try to pass the half-cent sales tax; a lot of those people are here today, who were involved; it was a really small motivated group; and so they got together and got a whole lot of other people involved, spent a lot of time educating people about what they wanted to do, Ms. Barker put together a great plan, and she wanted to remind everyone that that sales tax initiative passed in every single precinct in Brevard County, even the people way out west of I-95 wanted to support it. She mentioned there is a big basis of support because people move here because they love nature, the Lagoon, biking, and everything else; that is a real positive thing; the one thing she wants to say about the plan is that a lot of the plan is focused on getting the bad stuff out, which is really important; there is a lot of innovation and creative people in this community and she thinks those people need to be pulled in in terms of things like what one can do to make development safer and better for the Lagoon because there has got to be ways to do that; technology is changing all the time; a lot of people mention stormwater, but how do people make that more effective; how does one stop getting more septic or go about getting fewer or better septic systems because to her stopping the bad stuff from coming in is equally as important as getting the bad stuff out; and people can tell she is a real scientist by the way she talks about this. She commented the other thing she

thinks is sewage treatment plants; there are a lot of leaks that go on every now and then with sewage plants throughout the community and it is a real challenge to upgrade a big sewage plant, but that does not mean it should not be taken; and that maybe something that is not necessarily part of the SOIRL Plan, but definitely Brevard County has a role to play in that with the water treatment.

Craig Wallace stated he would not normally be one of the citizens that would be expected to come to a Commission meeting and speak about things like this; he is a scientist, an electrical engineer that knew nothing about the Lagoon until he came to Brevard 10 years ago; he will address Commissioner Delaney's question in a second; his perspective on this, he came here to retire and not be standing here speaking to the Board, however, he got caught up in the fish kills and trying to figure out the problems behind it; he is a firm believer in science; he went to Ms. Barker's presentations back when this program started and he was enthralled with all the good information he did not know before; and he continued on going to the COC meetings, and he learned a lot. He mentioned he felt like he was taking a college class on the Lagoon; he stated he would encourage everybody, especially those people that are not here tonight to come to some of those COC meetings and engage and start working with the Zoo on some of these projects that are going on because that is the way one learns about the Lagoon; the first project he did was growing oysters in the backyard, he is fortunate enough to live on the Lagoon; he got engaged from that because it was cool to see oysters grow; his grandchildren would come and see it; and these are the ways to engage people in understanding the Lagoon, and if one does not understand the Lagoon he or she will not vote for the sales tax. He added unfortunately there are people that just do not know about it; there have been surveys done; and to Commissioner Delaney's question of what one would do differently it is more of the community engagement, and if that is not done, like Captain Catino mentioned about looking in the mirror, the people are the ones who are impacting the Lagoon; and if people learn and understand about the Lagoon better, they will do a much better job in supporting these efforts. He went on to say the other thing is science; he is a true believer in science and when he looks at some of the stuff they have come up with and the continuous improvements to the program, that is critical to have that ability to bring in new science, new ideas, and incorporate that into the program every year; and he asked that the Board please not to do away with that because it is critical.

Sarah Rhodes-Ondi stated she is the community stewardship coordinator for the sea turtle conservancy at the Barrier Island Center in Melbourne Beach; Brevard County has invested this half-cent sales tax quite wisely by creating a Save Our Indian River Lagoon (SOIRL) project plan; the plan is multifaceted and includes muck removal, habitat restoration, stormwater, sewer and septic upgrades, nutrient removal, and a large component of public education; it lays out priorities based on which projects are shovel ready and which will make the most impact; the plan's progress can be monitored by a very impressive user-friendly ArcGIS map; and if one has not checked that out yet, it is amazing, she has never seen that level of accountability in any project like this before. She continued by saying that quantifies the nutrient removal expected by implementing every project; the long-term effects of these investments will restore the health and biodiversity to the Indian River Lagoon, sustain wildlife, and economic value of the IRL, but the SOIRL program needs more time; there are a lot of projects on that map, they are just getting started; as an ultimate testament to the efforts of the SOIRL program and their partners and collaborators, seagrass is returning, and in some areas of the Lagoon it can be seen, and improved water quality and expanded seagrass is critical to the health of the Sea Turtles that reside in the IRL; juvenile Green Turtles live in this critical IRL habitat year round; and they spend six-plus years there before migrating to the ocean as adults. She mentioned Green Turtles are herbivores and feed primarily on seagrass; without seagrass, Green Turtles will not have the food they need to survive; about 50 percent of the Sea Turtles encountered by the University of Central Florida Marine Turtle Research group have fibropapillomatosis (FP) a

tumor causing disease caused by a virus that is linked to human-caused degradation of the environment; the effects of the disease for Sea Turtles can range from annoying to fatal; Sea Turtles show high sight fidelity to their forging grounds in the IRL, and remain in the region despite the seagrass die-offs and poor water quality conditions and are highly likely to benefit from the ongoing habitat restoration efforts and improved water quality conditions; the Sea Turtle Conservancy at the Barrier Island Center is the official nonprofit friends group partner of the Brevard County Environmentally Endangered Lands (EELs) program; and they are committed to continuing to support the efforts of the Brevard County SOIRL program from many years to come, by offering those critical hands-on stewardship workshops, getting the community actively engaged, which many are saying they need to do more of. She noted they are offering staff and interns to engage the local citizens in habitat restoration and to educate the public about they can do to help restore this vital estuary and protect endangered and threatened species.

*The Board recessed at 7:52 p.m. and reconvened at 8:06 p.m.

Sharon Noll stated she is there as a Brevard County beachside resident, a waterfront property owner, an avid boater, environmentally-concerned citizen, and she is not speaking on behalf of any organization; for those who know her in her personal efforts to improve the IRL understand that she places strong emphasis on personal action and responsibility alongside government participation; she does not believe in waiting for government to act when there are things, even small actions, that she can do herself to protect the waterways; she believes the half-cent sales tax is one of those small actions that have large impact; and as it has been said numerous times this evening, the IRL did not decline overnight, more than 60 years, a combination of governmental decisions, some good some not, and some simply necessary to support an aging infrastructure, along with everyday residential practices contributed to the challenges that are being seen today. She continued to say for that reason, restoration will also take time, consistency, and sustained effort; from her vantage point, the SOIRL program is addressing these problems at their source; stormwater improvements, wastewater upgrades, septic to sewer conversions, muck removal, and habitat restoration are not flashy projects, but they are the unglamorous work that will improve the water quality, reduce algae, and help seagrass recovery; if anyone understands doing unglamorous work, it is her; these are long-term solutions not quick fixes; in balance, however, even with the amazing challenges that have been seen in the river, the program is not perfect, it does not always have the desired results, but progress requires commitment, funding, accountability, and an engaged community, which can be seen tonight. She mentioned frustration and anger are understandable within the community, but that should motivate people; every citizen should be motivated to become properly informed, positively involved, and part of the solution; and to Commission Delaney's questions, if there could be an increase in funding for things like baffle boxes, maintenance of the baffle boxes, and the filters that go around them to stop the muck, trash, oil, and debris from going into the river, that would be fantastic; beyond that she trusts Ms. Barker and her team implicitly.

Gina Lindhorst stated she has two items to briefly comment about; first of all, all over Brevard County there are unplanned overflows and frequently related to regular rains; rainy days like unnamed storms for eight to 10 hours of rain causes severe flooding and rainwater excess collection; this is primarily from high density developments, and climate yes, but primarily high density developments; there has been a lot of building and that affects the collection of rainwater; these are infrastructure issues; sewage plants are addressed by impact fees and they need to be maintained; impact fees will help everyone; and she asked what should be done with all the planned development that cause frequent overflows or unplanned dumping of sewage when there was just a rainy day. She noted SB 180 does not control local development projects, it controls regulations, therefore there is control over local development and how high

density happens in the area; people notice most all developments are approved according to zoning change requests and that is not helpful or necessary; the second item she would like to say a little about is SOIRL must approach good neighbors like for-profit industries for funding to undo what they are contributing by infusing damaging fresh treated water; there are several organizations, companies that have industry that generates a lot of treated fresh water that is damaging to the Lagoon; and they should be asked to match or double the half-cent sales tax revenues, they have been and they can afford that; they have been causing damage last year and expects to do so indefinitely; there are at least two different companies that she can think of; and she supports continuation of the half-cent sales tax to address some of the IRL pollution problems. She asked the Board to please allow residents to make a choice about their taxes.

Peter Mannina stated he is the 2026 Board Chair for the Melbourne Regional Chamber of Commerce; when talking about workforce people often focus on skills, housing, and wages, those are critical, but workforce is also about where people choose to live, work, and raise their families; the health of the IRL is essential to that decision; a restored Lagoon strengthens the community in ways that directly affect workforce recruitment and retention, much to what Linda Weatherman shared earlier; it supports outdoor recreation, youth activities, and access to nature, things that matter deeply to families, young professionals, and the next generation of talent, such as his two boys who are 13 and 11, growing up in this community; and for many residents, the Lagoon is not a luxury it is part of their daily lives, culture, and even sustenance. He went on to say from a business standpoint, companies want to locate in places where employees can thrive; a clean accessible Lagoon enhances quality of life, supports tourism and small businesses, and reinforces pride in place; these are the intangible factors that increasingly drive workforce decisions; what is especially powerful about this program is that it engages the whole community, homeowners, students, volunteers, businesses, and local governments; thousands of residents have taken direct action through Lagoon Loyal; septic upgrades, which have been heard a lot about tonight and restoration projects; that level of civic participation builds ownership and long-term stewardship, as Chair Altman said in the spirit of this meeting of this tonight; if looking ahead, Lagoon restoration is also about investing in the youth; it creates pathways into environmental science, skilled trades, marine industry, and public service careers that will shape the future workforce of the Space Coast; and in short, a healthy Lagoon supports a healthy workforce. He added it strengthens the community fabric, fuels economic opportunity, and ensures that the Space Coast remains a place where people want to build their lives and careers; and the Melbourne Chambers is proud to stand behind a program that proves progress is possible. He commented about 10 years ago as he was preparing to move, 10 months prior, was March of 2016; he remembers living in Orlando hearing the news about the fishkill and the bloom, not yet being a resident of this community, wondering how something like that could happen so close to home; and since then, he has literally talked to hundreds of people in this community who have been here their entire lives and have told him stories about what the Lagoon represented to them, before he came to know it as a resident nine years ago; this presentation tonight, and much of what was heard, has helped to educate him in ways that he quite honestly was not before, except from those firsthand testimonials from lifelong residents; and he hopes the word continues to be spread like this. He reiterated on behalf of Melbourne Chambers, they deeply support this being on the ballot.

Kimberly Newton stated she serves on the SORIL board in the education outreach and advocacy seat; she has heard a lot tonight about the need for more education outreach and advocacy; she definitely agrees and they will work hard to make that happen, the County staff is amazing, but personally out in the field, as well as at events; she looks forward to seeing how that can be grown if given the opportunity; she expressed her appreciation to the Board for holding this event and actually listening, that is apparent by the feedback and by initially doing this, and the residents that showed up this evening to listen to one another and share their

experiences and ideas; and she stated she would like to invite anyone that would like to follow up further after this meeting to feel free to reach out to her and give her some ideas for the outreach and education pushes for the County's environmental office, they are great with correspondence, but give them a minute because they are constantly bombarded, but do great work with all requests. She went on to say now speaking as a resident, environmental educator, and a naturalist, to her addressing the SOIRL 2.0 looks like continued community education needs, eliminating all biosolid spray, and source points for the pollutions; it cannot be cleaned up if people do not stop putting it in; responsible development, implementing low impact design and best LID practices; there is a wealth of information here in the County to educate Commissioners and developers; she is a former chair of the US Green Building Council; it is in 172 countries, plus they do great work, and she is still loosely affiliated with them; and she is happy to answer any questions on how to educate developers and correspond on how that would go for making those procedures mandatory, but encouraged, and provide information so that they choose to make the right decisions.

Doug Hook stated he is the father of a seventh generation Floridian, himself being a sixth generation Floridian; he wanted to talk not only as a citizen, but also as the eyes and ears of multiple organizations; he is representing the Florida Native Plant Society's Conradina Chapter, the Port Malabar Garden Club, and also Palm Bay's Sustainability Advisory Board; he could go on and on about how important this half-cent sales tax is; everybody else has told its benefits and the positive impacts that it has had on the environment in the area; talking back to SOIRL's Arc map, there are seven projects that are happening in or around Palm Bay, that are going to positively affect the Palm Bay community; and he appreciates the Commission and the SOIRL team for being focused on Palm Bay as well. He went on to say as Commissioner Delaney has said, what would he like to be done in the future, he thinks one of the things that has been brought up tonight is the septic-to-sewer conversion; he knows that tonight in the City of Palm Bay they are looking forward to having a big push by the end of the year, on trying to help connect some Palm Bay citizens from septic-to-sewer; he thinks the timing of that lines up perfectly for them to have an opportunity to lean on SOIRL and use that as a way to increase the visibility and impact that this upcoming vote is going to have; having that kind of coincides with a push towards septic-to-sewer right in front of the election cycle is definitely something to consider; and one of the other things that has been brought up and he is glad to have it brought up because there is a lot of things that SOIRL does that people do not know about, and that the half-cent tax does, there has been a lot of talk about people not knowing why they should continue doing things when they do not see the positive impacts. He noted it is one thing to talk about mowing, about water quality, and it is another to talk about all these scientific measurables that people can see and prove what is happening, but it is another thing to get up in front of citizens, engage them, and tell them this is where his or her money is going, this is how they can teach people, this is how they can improve someone's yard, someone's life, and someone's family; something to keep in mind along that line is to continue using funds or potentially use funds in the future for SOIRL, to build partnerships with local municipality sustainability boards, build partnerships with the Florida Native Plant Society's different chapters throughout the area, build partnerships with the Garden Clubs; there are numerous garden clubs that service Brevard County; also reach out to the partners that are not necessarily part of the community themselves, such as the Marine Resource Council (MRC) and Ocean Research and Conservation Association (ORCA) down in Vero Beach; and these partnerships can help develop and build these educational projects that the County is looking for in a low cost and effective way. He noted he knows from his perspective on the Sustainability Advisory Board, he is constantly looking for new projects and new things to champion; and that would be a great way for the County to bring in partnerships with local municipalities and increase that visibility.

Jim Burney stated he is there to express his gratitude for the achievements of the SOIRL

program through the years and also the County Commissioners that have supported this program; he is a Brevard County Lagoon-front property owner, third generation Floridian, environmental services business owner, biological sciences UCF graduate, professional wetlands scientist certificate holder, and an EEL Selection Management Committee (SMC) member; he and his wife are also Bowen Aquarium founding members who have a strong commitment to the community; he is also there to express his support for the proposed half-cent sales tax referendum to provide continuing funding for the SOIRL program; previous experts and he is sure some of the following speakers illustrate the overwhelming environmental public use and economic benefits of the program provided by the Lagoon protection efforts, so he will not belabor those established points; but unfortunately, with urban development encompassing the Lagoon in Brevard County, the system may off-handedly be described as a massive retention pond, or as Dr. De Freese described, a series of; since one cannot reverse human development to date, he feels it is everybody's fiscal, ecological, and moral obligation to mitigate further water quality degradation and continue critical research and habitat restoration efforts to offset decades of urban impacts; and the priorities as he sees them using his professional experience, personal observations, and media to scratch down what he sees as priorities, starting with some of the infrastructure, would be invest in domestic wastewater plant improvements, or the wastewater stream to eliminate accidental or other discharges into the Lagoon, invest in public stormwater management projects to reduce nutrient loads and other pollutants into the Lagoon, continue septic to sewer conversions, and finally to conduct canal dredging to reduce existent nutrient recycling and release native sediments; and having scratched those downs and listening to presentations, they are pretty eerily similar to what is already being done by the plan. He mentioned, as far as research and habitat restoration priorities, those go hand-in-hand, one cannot have the project without the research; seagrass establishment is a base community, oyster bar and clam bed restoration and establishment, mangrove and living shoreline expansion, native sand exposure due to the dredging operations, and then as an SMC member, the two programs that go hand-in-hand with EEL conservation lands, conservation buffer property preservation by acquisition and easements in order to retain what kidneys the County does have; and lastly is the public education outreach side of things. He went on to say public education programs and events and community involvement projects are crucial to keep this thing going; and he reiterated his appreciation to the program leaders, staff, volunteers, amazing people, and the County Commission.

Dr. Chris Edwards stated the last time he spoke with the Board he said, the elephant in the room was development and he thinks that is the biggest challenge, the amount of population that is increasing, unless there is the infrastructure in place, the County should limit development; that might seem like a tough challenge, but that is how he really feels; the real elephant in the room tonight is collaboration; just like Chair Altman said, the energy and the love in this room and the amount of organizations; he has a list of like 15 organizations that committing their life to saving this Lagoon; and this Board is a part of that success. He went on to say the tip of the spear SOIRL and COC; without that, how can this energy keep going; to speak to Commissioner Delaney about what he would like to see, he would like to see less toxins; he is naturopath by training; he knows a lot about toxicity and it is a problem that is faced by humans; in the world people live in today is toxicity; people want to get it out of the Lagoon; it might want to consider banning glyphosate in this County, it is a cancer-causing chemical; he supports low impact development; the County should ban grass, no more grass and have native landscaping; he also supports technology and science and he thinks that SOIRL gets really high marks because that is what they are using; maybe biochar is something that should really be looked at; and the last thing that he might recommend is septic inspections. He noted a lot of places in this country one has to have his or her septic inspected; maybe someone could come up with a law that says if anyone sells a house that has a septic system it needs to be inspected, that would be a good start; obviously, the County wants to get

rid of all septic systems; and he wants to commend all the Commissioners for opening this up to the public, he really has not heard a lot of negativity.

Stuart Nicholson stated he is a resident of Palm Bay; unfortunately, a year ago he had to replace his septic system; his street is on the septic-to-sewer plan and even listed as funded; when he finally got through to the Palm Bay utilities department he learned that they had not written the grant yet to get that; he said basically, it would be years before he could hook up with the grant, the plan, the approval, and the work; his point really is there is still plenty of funding needed to get these programs through; and he will leave it at that. He noted the Board has heard a lot tonight about it, and his final point is to thank the Board for the challenging job it has and giving up its nights for attending and host things like this.

Commissioner Delaney asked Ms. Barker if the Board just voted on something that people who paid for their septic tank can now apply for up to \$6,000 or something like that; she advised Mr. Nicholson to reach out to Ms. Barker because that just happened like two weeks ago or something.

Mr. Nicholson stated what turned out to be the case is that his street is septic-to-sewer, and the way the law was written he could not also apply for the advanced septic system.

Commissioner Delaney responded okay.

Keith Winsten stated he was there with the Board a week ago and mentioned he was there to listen and hear what people had to say; last week he was charting responses and last week 18 out of 19 were pro-SOIRL; they had great recommendations, appreciated the science, and appreciated public transparency; tonight 30 out of 30 who spoke tonight were in favor of SOIRL; he thinks the Board is hearing the community loud and clear; he admires the Board for what it has done from north to south County; and he wanted to respond to what Commissioner Delaney had said, he listened today and kept hearing people talk about a few things, one was engagement and education, how to focus, also a realization that everyone is in this game forever. He went on to say pass SOIRL 2.0 and when it is done there will be other issues to deal with; he is going to do some shameless self-promotion and say there is an infrastructure project that can be invested in once and it will be sustainable after that; in fact, it will pump \$500,000 or more back into the IRL every year; it is adoptable and will reach 600,000 people in the first year, that is the Bowen Aquarium; and an investment in the Bowen Aquarium will do so many of the things that he has heard tonight in perpetuity and it will be self-sustained and reach tourists and locals in large numbers. He mentioned tourism has committed \$15 million to this; he would love to see the environmental side; just one example of that, there was a conversation tonight and the speaker talked about FP turtles which are the little Green Turtles in the Lagoon, which they treat primarily at the L3 Harris Sea Turtle Center at the Zoo; at the Zoo people cannot see it because it is behind the scenes; at the Bowen Aquarium they are blowing that inside out, people will see the treatment happening, see those turtles going home, and it will be real for everyone who visits; and as looking at SOIRL 2.0 if the Board wants to push the boundaries a little bit, do something unique that is a one-time investment that will carry this community forever, as the Zoo is 30 years old and the Board knows how it has grown, he is going to ask that that it consider if there is a way to fund the Aquarium, accelerate the construction, and have that feed off and that payoff forever, and that public peace besides all the research and all the work they do with the sea turtles and everything else. He noted they will take those 600,000 people out over the Lagoon to see what is being done; he thanked the Board for holding the workshops; he stated he has learned a lot; and he appreciates the openness to hearing what else can be done to SOIRL as well.

Nicholas Frank Sanzone stated he does sit on the COC as well as many other boards; he is not

representing any of them today, he is there as an individual, as a resident, and as a person, just like the Board with lots of choices; the Board has a choice and that choice is to give the community a choice; he hopes that is thought about long and hard; and he will tell the Board a little story about himself. He went on to say he was a Brevard County resident, a seven-year old little boy on the Lagoon on a field trip doing the stingray shuffle, which many of the Board has probably done before; touching the water and being involved with a master naturalist, walking the paths down at the Barrier Island Center as a kid, it changed his life forever; he went to school, learned environmental science, soil and water science and how they interact; what he learned was that people are an important part of that equation; then he began educating, after college he needed a job so what did he do, he was a tour boat captain, well actually a first mate; the narrator would go on to talk about all the things and learn and share with groups of people all over the world; and Disney Cruise Lines would come to the Lagoon and they would want to know what is this beautiful place, so-called one of the most diverse ecosystems in the world, an economic driver, a home, a place where people can raise children, share stories, and share something sacred beyond oneself that existed before people were ever here. He mentioned he got to be part of that first half-cent sales tax when he worked at the Marine Resources Council; it was amazing, all of those people coming together sharing their stories and wearing those blue shirts, attending those meetings; he imagines everyone remembers that pretty well; today a lot of these faces when looking out into the crowd, are very familiar to a lot of others because they spent a lot of time together, a lot of hard work, and a lot of volunteer hours; he has been privileged to work with and lead volunteer groups in the Lagoon planting seagrasses, oysters, clams, and when someone sees somebody's life change by being involved with a program that he or she did not know about a week ago, it is astounding; there was a young woman who volunteered with him planting seagrass and clams who went to Rome to talk about her seagrass work that she did; and it warms his heart to know that all the work that people do to keep the Lagoon healthy keeps the community healthy; he asked again for the Board to think about it, take its time it has a choice to make whether or not to give the residents a choice to make; and he really hopes the Board decides to do that, and he thinks the rest of the people here do too.

Dr. Chris Edwards asked why the Board does not do this for 20 years, why in 10 years will the Board have to do this again, can the Board not consider going ahead and proposing it for 20 years; and he noted he meant to mention that in his allotted time.

Chair Altman stated as the Board moves forward in this process there will be more and more public hearings, start writing the ordinance, and those options will be weighed, this is just the beginning.

Isiah Mayers stated he likes the IRL, the animals that live in it, and all the people are kind of stupid, but he likes them too; just like a previous speaker stated, the Board has to give the people a choice; tell them what is happening and if they care about it, then they will show up, vote, and actually do something; the right questions have to be asked; and people have to partake in things like this.

Commissioner Delaney stated she wants to thank everyone for coming out and sharing his or thoughts, support, and ideas for the future; she thanked the presenters and staff for their involvement; one of the things a speaker brought up was impact fees and she just wants it to be known that the Board had passed going out for an impact fee study months ago and that will be coming back, which is the first step in possibly raising the impact fees, which has not been done in some cases for over 30 years; that will be coming up in a few short months; she does not want to take the positivity out of the room because it has really been an incredible night, but she has been looking at some feedback, not just from people showing up to these meetings but also people who have reached out personally and she has looked on social media, she has put

out some articles asking for responses back from the public, and she really wants to try to put out the best work going forward as she is sure the rest of the Board does also, and some of the feedback she has received is obviously infrastructure; people want to make sure that the infrastructure gets fixed, but also some things like herbicides that has been heard tonight, microplastics and testing of the water; and she does not know if SOIRL is the appropriate place for this to be brought in, but also expanding the conversation to getting the space industry partners to contribute to this. She noted she is sure they do contribute in some capacity, but especially with the permits that Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) has brought to light, it is not just Blue Origin, it is all of them; they are all using the resources that the Lagoon has; she thinks that is a broader conversation that she would love to look into; she feels like it is not just about nutrients but also true, clean water; the point of this is to pursue clean, safe water for the community to enjoy because that is the way to truly help heal the Lagoon from E-coli, Per- and Polyflouroalkyl (PFAS), and countless other toxins that she does not know the names of; Low Impact Development (LID) was brought up a lot tonight and that popped something into her mind that she learned from the Eastern Central Florida Regional Planning Council (ECFRPC) and that was that Volusia County gave a presentation on what they do and they almost like a menu that developers can kind of pick from and incentives for the developers to incentivize them to make better choices; and she thinks that could be a cool thing to look at in the future, especially since the Comp Plan is being brought back to the table once all the legislation gets hammered out. She went on to say some more of the feedback that she has gotten, there has been a lot of talk about community engagement and participation in the Save Our Indian River Lagoon (SOIRL) meetings, and something that has been brought to her attention is that public comment is at the end of the SOIRL meetings and maybe that is something the Citizens Oversight Committee (COC) would consider is allowing a public comment portion at the beginning, even if it was said one can only speak during one of the public comment sections, that way if people do not have the time to stay for a two to four hour meeting, they could still come and speak; she knows there has been talk about having more meetings, but she is wondering if the County Manager, County Attorney, or Ms. Barker could lay it out for the public a little more of exactly how this process is going to go as far as more public meetings to talk about the ordinance, the what, when, where, and how of all of this because she thinks the public is wondering and she is also wondering.

Commissioner Feltner stated he thinks he said earlier that the County has to get the referendum language to the Supervisor of Elections in August; that is the latest the Board can get that done; certainly he thinks the Board will take that up beforehand; he might suggest that there be some budget workshops coming up and probably after that would be the best time for the Board to take the issue up in light of other budget constraints, concerns, and goals that will be flushed out in the workshops; and he asked if that is going in the right direction.

Jim Liesenfelt, County Manager, stated he was going to go through it like he did at the last meeting, the Agenda Item approved by the Board, because he wanted everyone to know the five steps; approve legislative intent and that is permission for staff to start working on advertising the ordinance for voter referendum, renew the half-cent infrastructure sales tax for the SOIRL program, return to the Board for public hearing in April or May, and then direct staff to work with municipalities amend the existing tax use and interlocal agreements; step three is to work with municipalities and the community on a project plan that identifies the most cost-effective pollution reduction opportunities, unfunded needs for restoring health to the IRL ecosystem to be implemented with funds or leveraged by extensive sales tax if renewed by the voters, solicit public input to be considered during development of the ordinance, which is being done today, ballot language, the SOIRL project plan, and to direct staff to develop that ballot language for the 2026 November election; there will be some steps working with the public and getting some input; and when the public gets the opportunity as it goes to the Board for adoption of the ordinance and the ballot language, that will be done at a public hearing at a

Board meeting in Viera. He added that is also an opportunity for the public too. He noted he knows the Natural Resources Management staff seem to go out to a lot of public meetings and different associations; and they get asked a lot, so they go out there quite a bit.

Commissioner Adkinson expressed her appreciation to the presenters, staff, and to those who are still in the room; she stated there was talk about the need for education and the desire for education, and it is her understanding that the County cannot do a whole bunch of promoting of passing this tax; that does not mean that the County cannot say what good has been done with the money from the last 10 years; the people can go out into their communities and say what they have heard and encourage people to look at the County's website and find some information, facts, not just hearsay; and she thinks that is the biggest thing that can be done tonight. She commented she thinks the two biggest things the Board is supposed to get out of tonight is hearing the people if they want the Board to put this on the ballot, and she is going to do it every time; the other thing is for staff to hear some of the public's suggestions and it did and it will continue to go out and gather more thoughts; the biggest thing to be done is to go out into the community and for the residents to tell people what they think about this and how they think others should vote on this, tell them why, tell them about this meeting; and the next time there is one, help spread the word so there are more people showing up.

Commissioner Feltner expressed his appreciation; he stated when he first came up with this concept and he called each one of them he said they would not just do a presentation, but they would each do it in two places at two different ends of the County; they were all very gracious and agreed to it; he appreciates all the staff coming down here; he wants to thank the cities of Palm Bay and Titusville for their hospitality and for making their chambers available to the Board; he appreciates the public that has come out and shared their thoughts at both events, it is great to hear from the public; he heard some things tonight, how can the public participate more, there are a lot of groups here tonight so when leaving talk to others and find volunteer opportunities before making it to the car; and he has been out with many of the groups and he really appreciates the people who go out and help clean things up, it is a very humbling thing to go out there and try to clean up the waterways and there are a lot of passionate volunteers who do that every day. He went on to say he has heard a lot about discharges, leaks, and some other things; people will see some additional infrastructure in the future; the engineers who work for the County are thinking about these kinds of things and how holding vessels can be made to handle that when there are sudden surges that come, or a pipe that breaks; it is a lot of infrastructure to manage; they are working on some of those things; he has heard a lot about low impact development, he really appreciates that; he thinks he heard someone say ban grass and he has told people for many years that someday he aspires to live on a parcel of land with two Pigmy Goats and to let them eat everything; and he appreciates the sentiment. He commented he thinks it is an interesting thing as people get older and things change, even in the landscape, he sees more and more people planting things and having larger beds and such so there is less grass to take care of; he is thinking about that too at his point in life; he thinks one will see a lot more of those kinds of things happening, sort of organically; he had a lot of takeaways from these two meetings; and he really appreciates everyone coming out.

Chair Altman stated he just wants to thank everyone for their incredible input, their wisdom, and insights, they are guiding stars along with this staff that is a bedrock of what the Board does; he has optimism; and he leaves this meeting a lot more optimistic than when he came in.

Mr. Liesenfelt expressed his appreciation for everyone coming out and to the City of Palm Bay for hosting the Board; and he noted for everybody, this is not being live-streamed, but it will be on the County's YouTube channel tomorrow.

Commissioner Delaney stated she just wants to give a plug for Speak Up Brevard, it is open

right now so if there are any great ideas about what the Board can do to make the government more effective or efficient, check it out on the website.

Upon consensus of the Board, the meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

ATTEST:

RACHEL M. SADOFF, CLERK

THAD ALTMAN, CHAIR
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
BREVARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

DRAFT