IRL COUNCIL
CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes from the meeting of

November 6, 2025

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Historic Sebastian Elementary School, 1235 Main Street, Sebastian, FL 32958

Remote Access: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87054557595

Member In-person Attendance: Christine Bamberger, Greg Braun, Frank Catino, Cheryl McPhillips, Doug Patterson, Steven Schlitt, Keith Winsten

Member Online Attendance: Julie Braga, Jerome Gayman, Nickie Munroe, Suzanne Scheiber, Tess Sailor-Tynes, Julie Strickland, Jenny Tomes

Guest in-person Attendance: Caitlin Moscrip, Matthew Vatland, Merrit Kennedy, Brandy Nelson, Cortney Cortez, Maddie Drewery, Caitlin Butler

Guest Online Attendance: None

1. **Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance** (Frank Catino, Chair)

   Captain Frank Cation called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. and led the committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. **Introductions** (Frank Catino, Chair)

   Captain Catino led the group in introductions.

3. **Agenda Revisions** (Frank Catino, Chair)

   No agenda revisions were made.

4. **Minutes Approval** (Frank Catino, Chair)

   Requested Action: Approval of Minutes from CAC meeting on August 21, 2025.

   MOTION WAS MADE BY STEVEN SCHLITT TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES FROM AUGUST 21, 2025. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY DOUG PATTERSON. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. **Public Comment**

   No public comment was made.

6. Presentations

a. *Indian River Lagoon Water Quality and Biodiversity* Small Grant Project (St. Edwards School)

Students from St. Edward's School carried out a study on the water quality and biodiversity of the Indian River Lagoon, with partial support from an IRLNEP small grant. During fieldwork at six sites, they learned sampling techniques and about lagoon ecology, focusing on key health indicators. The results indicated that areas with seagrasses supported higher biodiversity.

b. *NOAA Habitat Restoration Project Year 1 Update* (Kevin Walker, IRLNEP)

Kevin Walker from IRLNEP reviewed the progress after the first year of the NOAA Transformational Habitat Restoration grant. The project's aim is to accelerate habitat recovery in the lagoon and foster a collaborative restoration culture. Two partners have finished their deliverables and are now in the monitoring phase, while others are securing permits or actively engaged in restoration efforts.

c. *2025 Indian River Lagoon Economic Valuation* (Valerie Seidel and Cortney Cortez, The Balmoral Group)

Cortney Cortez from the Balmoral Group discussed the results of the economic valuation study of the lagoon. The study encompassed the valuation of ecosystem services associated with restoration projects financed by the NOAA Transformational Habitat Restoration grant. Also included are assessments of property value impacts, benefit-cost analyses, regional economic effects, and tax revenue. A dashboard link to county-by-county socioeconomic metrics was provided. The goal of the study was to assign monetary value to the benefits people in the region gain from a healthy habitat that provides ecosystem services.

d. *Looking Back 10 Years* (Dr. Duane De Freese, IRLNEP)

Dr. Duane De Freese, Executive Director of the IRLNEP, provided an overview of the IRLNEP's accomplishments in reorganizing over the past 10 years. Topics discussed included the creation of the Management Conference, funding, economic impact, and the development of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). Completed projects by county were also included.

7. Old Business

None

8. New Business

a. 2026 IRL Council Meeting Calendar (Kathy Hill)

Ms. Hill presented the calendar and requested to report any conflicts on the dates.

Requested Action: Motion to recommend that the IRL Council Board of Directors accept the IRLNEP Management Conference recommendation to adopt the proposed 2026 IRL Council Board of Directors and Management Conference meeting calendar.

MOTION WAS MADE BY KEITH WINSTEN TO RECOMMEND THAT THE IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS ACCEPT THE IRLNEP MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATION TO ADOPT THE PROPOSED 2026 IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND MANAGEMENT

CONFERENCE MEETING CALENDAR. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY CHRISTINE BAMBURGER. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

b. Fiscal Year 2025 Final Budget Amendment (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Kolodny reviewed the changes attributed to benefits with the FRS System.

Requested Action: Motion to recommend that the IRL Council Board of Directors accept the IRLNEP Management Conference recommendation to approve the Fiscal Year 2025 Final Budget Amendment by Resolution 2025-05, pursuant to Florida Statutes.

MOTION WAS MADE BY GREG BRAUN TO RECOMMEND THAT THE IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS ACCEPT THE IRLNEP MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE THE FISCAL YEAR 2025 FINAL BUDGET AMENDMENT BY RESOLUTION 2025-05, PURSUANT TO FLORIDA STATUTES. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY DOUG PATTERSON. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

9. IRLNEP Staff Reports

a. Community Engagement Update (Kathy Hill)

Ms. Hill highlighted the top social media posts and their reach. The achievements of the three Community Engagement Coordinators were reviewed, and the first-quarter engagement statistics were shared: 648 total engagements in FY 2025. The winner and runners-up of the 2026 Annual IRL Calendar were announced. Highlights from the 2025 Annual Report were also presented.

b. Information Technology and Data Science Update (K.J. Ayres-Guerra)

Ms. Ayres-Guerra announced the highlight of the quarter: the birth of her son. A review of upcoming projects was conducted, and Ms. Ayres-Guerra expressed her gratitude to the staff for their support during her leave.

c. IRL Project Update (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Kolodny reported that 25 CCMP projects and activities are currently underway. Twenty-one new CCMP projects are set to start. Eighteen projects were completed in the first quarter. Mr. Kolodny requested reviewers for the pending RFPs.

d. Executive Director Report (Duane De Freese)

Dr. De Freese provided a brief legislative update and shared statistics on research topics published in Frontiers in Marine Science. He announced upcoming participation in the Florida Ocean Alliance and the ANEP Fall Tech Transfer Meeting. The deadlines for the Call for Abstracts for the 2026 IRL Symposium were reviewed.

10. Final Comments (Committee, Staff, Public)

Greg Braun requested an update on the Space Center. Dr. De Freese responded that there have been no major changes since Space Florida submitted the presentation. Expect more launches.

Heather Stapleton announced that ORCA is hosting a tour on Wednesday, November 12, of the Habitat Restoration project at Riverview Park in Sebastian. Other restoration project sites to visit include Restore Our Shores Buffer Zones at Fisherman's Landing, Pineapple Park, Kelly Park, and Geiger Point. All restoration sites have received IRLNEP Funding.

Dan Kolodny announced the Small Grant timeline. The Small Grant Application will be posted on December 15, 2025. The first day to accept applications is January 5, 2026. Applications are due

no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, March 6, 2026. Review and scoring will take place from March 9 through April 24, 2026.

11. Next Meeting

Citizens' Advisory Committee meeting: February 12, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.
Historic Sebastian Elementary School, 1235 Main Street, Sebastian, FL 32958

12. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:26 p.m.

NOTE: If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearing, he or she will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, he or she may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes (2014).

Pursuant to the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person requiring special accommodations to participate in this workshop/meeting is asked to advise the agency at least 48 hours before the workshop/meeting by contacting Erin Bergman at (314) 347-5854. If you are hearing or speech impaired, please contact the agency using the Florida Relay Service at 1(800) 955-8771 (TDD) or 1(800) 955-8770 (Voice). For more information, you may contact: Erin Bergman, IRL Council, 1235 Main St, Sebastian, FL 32958, (314) 347-5854, or by email at bergman@irlcouncil.org.