

M E M O R A N D U M

To: Howard Tipton, Town Manager
From: Isaac Brownman, Public Works Director
Report date: September 12, 2024
Meeting date: September 23, 2024
Subject: Bay Isles Association, Inc. Pedestrian Tunnel (Underpass)

Recommended Action

Continue conversations with Bay Isles Association, Inc. and Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) regarding potential partnership arrangements, or full transfer of ownership and maintenance, of the Bay Isles Association, Inc. Pedestrian tunnel.

Background

The pedestrian tunnel connecting the Bay Isles Harborside development and Seaplace Condominiums to east and west areas of Gulf of Mexico Drive (GMD) was originally constructed in the late 1970s by Arvida, Inc. This was to provide a safe, convenient bicycle and pedestrian crossing across GMD as this segment of GMD has no nearby marked surface crossings. An FDOT permit document dated July 2, 1990 shows the ownership and maintenance entity of the tunnel as the Bay Isles Association, Inc.

The Bay Isles Association is now contemplating abandoning the asset due to the maintenance obligation and costs of the tunnel. They have approached both the Town and FDOT about taking over ownership and maintenance.

FDOT and the Town have independently observed and analyzed the structure. FDOT indicates that it appears to be structurally sound. By observation, the Town would agree. Due to the elevation of the tunnel, tunnel drainage requires functioning submerged pumps. These pumps appear to have been recently repaired. The pump discharges runoff through the private Bay Isles system(s). The ramps into and out of either side of the tunnel are on private property, not in the GMD right-of-way. On the east side, the entire ramp is on Bay Isles Association, Inc. property and on the west side the ramp is on Seaplace Association, Inc. property as well as potential individual unit owners' property. The ramps themselves do not meet ADA standards for accessible ramps. For example, by FDOT measurements, parts of the ramp are upwards of 19% slope; ADA standard is 8.3%.

FDOT has approached the Town about partnering with them (FDOT) to take over ownership and maintenance, or for the Town to take over entirely. The Town could also work on a three (3) entity partnership to include Bay Isles Association, Inc. and FDOT.

Though the Town has participated in conversations with Bay Isles Association and FDOT, FDOT is not sure how to handle the ADA accessibility issue. Right-of-way space would need to be donated to the State of Florida by each of the property owners. As conversations progress, the Town would need final construction plans, record drawings, historical ownership and maintenance records of the tunnel, and costs to maintain it over time from Bay Isles Association, Inc.

The pedestrian tunnel is a Longboat Key community asset. It provides the sole safe GMD crossing between Bay Isles Harborside, Seaplace and areas surrounding. It is a robust, well built, large structure that is visually innocuous. It is used by members of the community, however, it is unknown to what degree.

Staff Recommendation

Continue conversations with Bay Isles Association, Inc. and Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) regarding potential partnership arrangements, or full transfer of ownership and maintenance, of the Bay Isles Association, Inc. Pedestrian tunnel.

Attachment

PowerPoint Presentation (Available in the Town Clerk's Office)

End of Agenda Item