



MEMORANDUM TO VENICE CITY COUNCIL

FROM:

DATE:

COUNCIL MEETING DATE:

SUBJECT / TOPIC:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE TOPIC AND THE PROPOSED SOLUTION:

SUPPORTS STRATEGIC PLAN:

COUNCIL ACTION REQUESTED:

Mr. Mayor, City Council Members, City Manager, City Attorney, City Clerk,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is John Holic and I am a resident of the City of Venice and Commodore of the Venice Yacht Club, with me is Melinda Short, is also a resident of the City of Venice and a Past Commodore of the Venice Yacht Club. The Venice Yacht Club has been designated a Clean Marina by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection since 2010 and we are proud to have maintained that designation ever since. We are here this morning to offer you an opportunity to be proactive in the fight for clean water and the potential reduction of Red Tide.

When I sat on City Council, the Venice area had a very severe outbreak of Red Tide and we found that the city did not have much in the way of programs to curb pollutants into the Gulf waters other than sand filtering for some of the existing outfalls, other outfalls discharged water from the land directly into the gulf with no filtering. Our council directed staff to monitor all the outfalls so that we would be able to have a better idea of how much the city was contributing to the nutrient problem or if our methods were contributing to the solution.

Unfortunately, I left the council before any results from the study became available, but I did see some of the monitoring equipment when it was installed toward the end of the Osprey Ditch. If you have not been made aware of the results of the monitoring, you should be able to request a presentation from Engineering so that you can provide answers to residents when they accuse the city of polluting the waters and causing red tide.

In the meantime, the Venice Yacht Club is being proactive and has already installed four artificial reefs under our docks, each reef is capable of filtering 30,000 gallons of salt water per day once the reef forms naturally. I invited CM Ed Lavalley and Assistant CM James Clinch to the yacht club to see our reefs in action and they were impressed enough to have \$5000 of city money allocated for the purchase of reefs for various city docks. That should provide enough funding for 12 reefs, fewer if you pay for installation.

Melinda Short and I have teamed up from the Venice Yacht Club to form the Roberts Bay Artificial Reef Project and we have partnered with Sarasota Bay Watch, an action-oriented grassroots, non-profit organization dedicated to restoring coastal ecosystems through citizen participation, as our scientific

guidance authority and 501 c (3) monetary collection and disbursement agency, and the Suncoast Reef Rovers, an all-volunteer underwater action non-profit to do installation of the artificial reefs for free.

We have applied for a \$5000 grant from the Venice Yacht Club Charitable Foundation and feel comfortable that they will grant us the money. We are here today to ask the City of Venice to grant \$5000 to the Roberts Bay Artificial Reef Project through Sarasota Bay Watch. If the city and VYCCF will contribute the funds, I have a verbal commitment from Jon Thaxton of the GCCF for an additional \$5000, making it a total of \$15,000. I will try to get Sarasota County to contribute \$5000 as well since this project will affect the entire Roberts Bay area. We will promote the project by advertising the reefs at \$200 per reef installed to residents and businesses of the Roberts Bay Area. In other words, the residents or businesses will pay half and Sarasota Bay Watch will pay half and the Sun Coast Reef Rovers will install the reefs for free as well as perform annual maintenance inspections for at least two years for free. Our initial venture should be able to install over 65 artificial reefs in Roberts Bay and that equates to over 2 million gallons of water filtered every day, over 60 million gallons filtered per month and almost a billion gallons of water filtered per year, all for a \$5000 contribution and no work by anyone on city staff.

We respectfully request that City Council direct staff to allocate \$5000 to the Roberts Bay Artificial Reef Project 1 through Sarasota Bay Watch and become a full partner in this effort. We also respectfully ask that you add the topic of “cleaning up water in Roberts Bay” to your discussion in the upcoming Strategic Planning session.

Thank you for your time this morning.



Roberts Bay Artificial Reef Project (RBARP)

Venice City Council Meeting – January 24, 2023

Goal: Is to keep our waters clean and support life using a simple and environmentally friendly solution – artificial mini reefs.

Organization Background: RBARP was recently formed and has joined ranks with the Sarasota Bay Watch Organization, SunCoast Reef Rovers, and the Venice Yacht Club. The organization would like to provide Ocean Habitat Mini Artificial Reefs to Robert Bay homeowners to place under their docks.

This organization will promote coastal stewardship and environmental aid to the City of Venice. RBARP will promote the community involvement in improving our waterway to create mini ecosystems. Each mini reef once installed is capable of filtering 30,000 gallons of seawater everyday removing the plankton from our water which is found in abundance in the over nutrified waters in our waterways. Studies have shown that by using these mini reefs that red tide can be reduced.

Funding: The Roberts Bay Artificial Reef Project would like to request \$5000 in funds from Venice City Council. If granted the funds would be used to purchase 12 mini reefs. Additional funding of \$5000 has been requested through Sarasota Bay Watch through the Venice Yacht Club Foundation.

Installation: the installation of these mini reefs will be performed by the SunCoast Reef Rovers at no cost to the homeowner. An annual maintenance schedule will be performed to ensure that the mini reefs are properly secured on a yearly basis.