



Meeting Minutes - Draft
Sanibel Plan Update Steering Committee

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

9:00 AM

MacKenzie Hall - 800 Dunlop Road

1. Call To Order

The meeting convened at 9 A.M.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Johnson led the pledge of allegiance.

3. Roll Call

Present: 7 - Larry Schopp, Eric Pfeifer, James Evans, Nicole Decker-McHale, Bob Moore, Calli Johnson and Jeffrey Muddell

a. Motion to excuse absent member(s):

All committee members were present.

4. Consent Agenda

a. Adoption of the December 17, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Vice Chair Pfeifer moved, seconded by Committee Member Evans to adopt the December 17, 2025, meeting minutes with scrivener errors along with changing the wording on the discussion regarding affordable housing and funding. Clarification was made that the funding was specifically to recommendation for ongoing exploration of funding not general funding. The motion carried.

5. Old Business

a. Steering Committee Tentative Schedule of Topics

Planning Director Paula McMichael announced that the February 18th Sanibel Plan Update Steering Committee meeting will be cancelled. Ms. McMichael provided an overview of the topics anticipated for discussion at the March meeting.

The committee inquired about the surface water management topic.

Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of holding more than one public discussion workshop. Planning Director Paula McMichael noted that public workshops could potentially be scheduled in April and May.

b. The Sanibel Vision Statement

Discussion ensued regarding the co-chairing roles of the Community and the Sanctuary.

A brief discussion was held regarding the Vision Statement. It was noted that no clear recommendation was made to the consultants. Discussion ensued regarding The Vision Statement being a philosophical expression and not an operational component of the Sanibel Plan.

Discussion ensued regarding City Charter and that any changes to the Vision Statement would require City Council approval and potentially a referendum. Planning Director Paula McMichael spoke to the first community workshop and the Vision Statement, emphasizing that amendments would be require formal approval process.

Discussion ensued regarding the hierarchy between the Community and the Sanctuary. It was noted that approximately 70% of the island is designated as conservation land, and that the Sanibel Plan is primarily focused on maintaining the island as a sanctuary. Any adjustments to the Plan could be considered if necessary.

The committee discussed the relationship the correlation between the businesses on the island and what we have to provide to the citizens and visitors.

Further discussion addressed conservation land, empty commercial properties, and residential properties currently on the market or under renovations. The committee expressed concerns about the lack of investment in commercial properties, noting that this may reflect characteristics of the Resort Housing District. Discussion continued regarding the Resort Housing District and occupancy percentages.

c. Citywide Public Workshop - February 19, 2026

Chair Johnson provided potential feedback, noting that many individuals become after first visiting the island and emphasized the importance of that pathway to residency.

Committee Member Moore stated that it is important to attract people to the island and to be more specific about what will occur at the public workshop. Suggestion of providing a clear agenda outlining the topics to be covered.

The committee inquired who would be facilitating the workshop.

d. Sanibel Plan Survey Draft

Chair Johnson thanked the consultants for making revisions that reflected committee feedback.

A brief overview was provided noting that the Sanibel Plan is a long range planning document with a ten to twenty (10-20) year horizon. It was stated that the Evaluation and Appraisal Review (EAR) is conducted every seven (7) years, while the Sunrise Plan is updated every twenty (20) years.

The committee discussed whether the intent of the survey was adequately captured by the current question and whether there is need to consider changes to the Vision Statement or to the hierarchy between the Community and the Sanctuary. Committee members discussed the value of obtaining preliminary community input through a survey prior to considering any potential changes to the Vision Statement.

The committee expressed interest in learning more about the current composition and future direction of the community, including whether respondents are full-time or part-time residents, whether they anticipate relocating in the coming years, and the reasons for those decisions. Suggested survey questions focused on understanding where the community is currently and where it may be heading.

Discussion ensued regarding families with children and the potential impacts of students aging out of the Sanibel School, which may contribute to families relocating off island.

The committee discussed the repercussions of recent storms and whether this period represents a watershed moment for the community. Members discussed whether this concept should be reflected in the survey and emphasized the importance of understanding the "why" behind the responses. Additional discussion focused on expanding demographic questions, including whether respondents live on the island, work on the island, or visit the island.

The committee noted that the survey represents an important opportunity for community engagement

Further discussion addressed strengthening demographic data, rewording questions, and adjusting the placement and flow of survey questions. Committee members also discussed survey questions related to business owners, potential businesses, and the overall economic future of the island.

Planning Director Paula McMichael spoke to the proposed timeline for releasing the survey to the community in advance of the public workshop.

Discussion ensued regarding whether the survey responses should be anonymous or

include identifying information.

Additional discussion focused on recommendations for refining survey questions, including revisions to existing questions, potential additions, and overall survey structure.

Public Comment:

Peter Papas, a resident of the island for 55 years and a life member of the Sanibel-Captiva Conservaion Foundation (SCCF), stated that he has attended all informational events sponsored by COTI. He requested the opportunity to address the committee when the consultant is present. Mr. Papas spoke to the concept of a "watershed moment" and its meaning, stating that the community faces a responsibility to persuade citizens through reasoned dialogue. He expressed concerns that survey provide only partial insight and commented that since the hurricane, the community has not fully acknowledged the independence of investment and resiliency. Mr. Papas provided background on his long standing involvement in the City, referenced original zoning and planning efforts, and stated that businesses will thrive in different ways. He emphasized the importance of clearly explaining the type of community Sanibel seeks to be moving forward.

Bob? , stated that the purpose of the survey should be clearly communicated., noting that respondents may disengage after five minutes. He recommended ordering questions logically, combining related questions, and avoiding biased phrasing, including questions implying whether Sanibel Plan should be changed. He encouraged reviewing the survey from the perspective of someone unfamiliar with the Sanibel Plan.

Jason Halliburton, expressed appreciation for the committee's engagement and stated that the survey was not yet ready for distribution. He emphasized the importance of the Sanibel Plan Update to the City's future and recommended further refinement of the survey. He suggested holding the first public workshop prior to launching the survey, noting that the workshop input could better inform survey content and encourage deeper engagement. Mr. Halliburton also commented on the Vision Statement and shared suggested language for consideration.

Pasquale Russo, spoke to the Vision Statement as a balance between residents, visitors, and the business community. He referenced losses sustained from the storm and the significant financial challenges facing the island. Mr. Russo emphasized the importance of recreation and activities and suggested incorporating related questions into survey to encourage longer stays. He expressed concerns that without support for entrepreneurship, the community could decline, and described the storm as a wake-up call and an opportunity for change. He also commented on survey questions

related to business and stated that he was not in favor of open-ended responses.

Discussion ensued regarding whether to delay the survey until after the public workshop or to proceed with the original survey and workshop schedule. The committee discussed the advantages and disadvantages of postponing the survey.

Planning Director Paula McMichael outlined options for the committee, including further review and revision of the survey, compiling committee comments and concerns, delaying publication, or electing not to conduct a survey.

Craig Pinder the consultant spoke to flexibility in the process of release of the survey for when the committee feels the survey is at the level of release. Mr. Pinder noted that the consultants support distributing a survey to obtain public feedback.

Vice Chair Pfeifer moved, seconded by Committee Member Muddell to amend the agenda to have public comment on this agenda item. The motion carried.

Committee Member Evans moved, seconded by Committee Member Moore to adopt the changes that were discussed and with the continuous input from the public along with Committee Member Evans review of the final survey.

Committee Member Evans moved, seconded to by Committee Member Moore to amend the original motion. Adding to adopt the changes that were discussed from the committee with feedback from public input. Allowing Committee Members to submit suggested comments to staff by February 4th for the review of the final survey by Committee Member Evans. The amended motion carried.

6. New Business

a. Recreation and Open Space Element

Vice Chair Pfeifer stepped out of the meeting at 10:36 A.M.

Planning Director Paula McMichael spoke the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee meeting held on November 11, 2025.

Committee Member Evans stepped out of the meeting at 10:37 A.M.

Committee Member Evans and Committee Pfeifer rejoined the meeting at 10:39 A.M.

Discussion ensued regarding the Dunes and minimum standards applicable to golf courses on the island.

Further discussion ensued regarding language, recommendations, and updates proposed by the committee to the Recreation and Open Space Element.

Discussion ensued regarding senior activity needs.

Additional discussion addressed green space clarity, the caring capacity of the beaches, and nature trails.

Committee Member Muddell stepped out of the meeting at 10:44 A.M.

Committee Member Muddell rejoined the meeting at 10:45 A.M.

Discussion ensued regarding the fishing pier and funding considerations related to the pier.

Discussion ensued regarding clarification of policy 2.1. Planning Director Paula McMichael referenced applicable state statutes and noted that draft language would be developed to provide clearer guidance.

Planning Director Paula McMichael read an email from the Recreation Director conveying information related to the Santiva Islander and their current location.

Discussion ensued regarding e-bikes and paddle bikes.

b. Intergovernmental Coordination Element

Planning Director Paula McMichael provided background on the Intergovernmental Coordination Element and explained the rationale for its inclusion.

Chair Johnson stepped out of the meeting at 10:55 A.M.

The committee requested clarification on whether certain provisions remain in effect, noting that referenced figures appear to be outdated.

The committee discussed updated language, additional recommendations, and proposed changes to the Intergovernmental Coordination Element.

Discussion ensued regarding gas tax.

Chair Johnson rejoined the meeting at 10:58 A.M.

Discussion ensued regarding development on Captiva.

The committee discussed the decreasing enrollment at the Sanibel School and the potential formation of a task force to further investigate the issue.

Discussion ensued regarding bridge toll revenue.

Committee Member Decker-McHale stepped out of the meeting at 11:05 A.M.

Committee Member Decker-McHale rejoined the meeting at 11:11 A.M.

7. Next Meeting Date

- a. Wednesday, March 18, 2026 at MacKenzie Hall

8. Public Comment

Chair Johnson spoke to the process of emailed in public comment. Discussion continued regarding an email that was sent into the Sanibel Plan email address.

9. Adjournment

With there being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:14 A.M.