

FORT MORGAN NEWS

July 2022~Issue 185



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings All:

I hope all of you enjoyed the long weekend for our Independence Day and also took a few minutes from the fireworks, bar-b-que, and family get-to-gathers to give thanks and remember why we are celebrating – the 246th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

First, I would like to remind everyone of the Chan West Memorial at Holy Spirit Episcopal Church of Gulf Shores beginning at 10:00 a.m. on July 9. Chan's son Harold West invited all of Chan's friends to join the family at the church and share stories, photos and remembrances on the web site set up for the occasion, www.chanwest.com.



Attendance at our June meeting to hear Tasha Simon -Section Chief Alabama DCXNR, Andrew James – civil engineer, Paige Felts - permitting professional of Volkert, and Pete Mitchem – Southwest District Ranger Alabama DCNR present their tentative plans on the proposed bike path was beyond expectations. Thanks to them for taking their time to inform of us their work. Also, thank you to the forty FMCA members who attended our last meeting for your attendance, polite attention, and lively and sometimes animated suggestions on Alabama DCNR's preliminary plans for the bike path. I can only hope that your input will find its way into the decision process in finalizing the plans. If you have additional comments, please email Tasha Simon: tasha.simon@dcnr.alabama.gov.

I'd also like to think that part of the reason for the increased attendance at the June meeting was the vote to approve the updated bylaws for FMCA. If so, please thank Karrie Lovins and the rest of the Bylaws Committee for their hard work and a job well done.

This month, the Beach Safety Committee will report on their findings on FMCA's role in a beach safety program – suggestions for solutions that are effective, practical, and that encourage community involvement, and can be implemented relatively quickly. This work of this committee can change the way the peninsula's first responders approach beach safety.

As a reminder to the membership, 2022 dues help support our newsletter and our civic involvement programs. If you have not renewed your membership, please do so immediately to remain active on our mailing list and voting rolls.

When you come to the 6:30 p.m. meeting on July 11 at The Shell Banks Baptist Church, please bring a friend or a neighbor. The diversity of input and our numbers are our strengths. Thank you for your continued support of the FMCA and the Fort Morgan Community.

George Mitchell, FMCA President

Fort Morgan Civic Association purpose is: Promoting the interests of the Fort Morgan Community, Working together for its betterment, Preserving its natural resources, and Ensuring environmentally sensitive development. If you have any questions or concerns, please email FMCA at: fortmorgancivic@gmail.com

FMCA Membership ~~~~~

Reminder: Annual Dues are due by Due December 31 annually. Additionally, please contact FMCA Membership Chair at fortmorgancivic@gmail.com for any changes to membership status (i.e., address / email update, death of a member)

For membership application by mail or online, access Fort Morgan Civic Association website (<https://www.fortmorgancivic.org/>), click on membership tab, and select desired process (online or mail), then follow the prompts.

FMCA General Meeting – Upcoming Guest Speakers ~~~~~

We are currently planning guest speakers for the remainder of this year’s monthly meetings. If you would like to recommend a speaker or a relevant issue you would like to hear more information about, please email your ideas to: FortMorganCivic@gmail.com

FMCA Bike Trail Update re: ADCNR presentation during 13 June FMCA General Meeting~~

Bike Path Update! On June 13, 2022, FMCA held our monthly meeting at 6:30pm. We welcomed the group from Alabama State Parks & Department of Conservation and Natural Resources & Volkert Engineering who have been integral in working on the plans for a new bike path in Fort Morgan (FM). The FM bike path will extend the bike path that currently exists in the City of Gulf Shores and originated at Gulf Shores State Park. The guest speakers in attendance were: Tasha Simon, Natural Resources Section Chief, Alabama State Parks & Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (DCNR); Andrew James, Civil Engineer, Volkert (Engineering Firm); Andrew James, Civil Engineer, Volkert (Engineering Firm); Paige Felts, Environmental Permitting Professional, Volkert (Engineering Firm); and Pete Mitchem, Southwest District Ranger, Alabama State Parks & Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)

Approximately 40 FMCA members & local residents attended the meeting to learn more about the bike path update and be part of the discussion. Those in attendance were 97% in opposition to the project and they had a lot of good questions and concerns raised about the bike path project. Those present represented residents/home owners from all areas of FM Peninsula: North & South of Hwy. 180; as well as, East & West end of the Peninsula.

Background:

The Alabama State Parks received funds (approx. \$4.2 Million) from the BP Oil spill. We do not know why or how a bike path was decided to be planned with this money. We do not know if it is possible for this money to be used in Fort Morgan for the many other tourist and public needs that we have. We have asked these questions and not given any answers The “bike path” plan is the only plan that has ever been proposed by the State for the money to be spent in Fort Morgan. About 18 months ago there was a meeting (not in Fort Morgan) between representatives from the FMCA Executive Committee, Alabama State Parks personnel and the engineers from Volkert. The FMCA members attended the meeting to learn more about the plans for the bike path and ask questions. They voiced numerous concerns and questions that the property owners in Fort Morgan have about this project. Over a year later, none of those concerns have been addressed and the bike path that is still being planned has not changed. The four members who attended that meeting were also in attendance on June 13, 2022. The four members were: Joe Emerson, Greg Strategier, Michael Ludvigsen, and Karrie Lovins.

Bike Path Update:

This project is not finalized so the plans that were being shared at the meeting cannot be shared publicly. We were allowed to view printed versions of the plans, but no photos could be taken and the five copies of the plans we viewed were all collected at the end of the meeting. The bike path plans shown did not even have mile markers on the printed plans, so no one could actually observe how it affected their private property. The Right of Way (ROW) for Alabama State Hwy. 180 is approx. 330 feet wide - about 165 feet from center line going both north & south. The easement is adjacent to and abuts all private property owners' land along Hwy. 180. This is where the bike path will intersect private driveways. According to the Andrew James, Civil Engineer for the project, "to come up with the bike path along Hwy. 180, has been like threading a needle." He is referring to the current pathway they presented on June 13, 2022. The Bike Path being planned (as of June 13, 2022) shows that it will run 100% on the North side of Hwy. 180. Mr. James pointed out that the phrase "threading a needle" refers to the numerous environmentally sensitive aspects of the land in Fort Morgan. This project will affect a great deal of endangered Alabama Beach Mouse Habitat and protected Wetlands in Fort Morgan. It will require significantly large number of permits that are required by USFWS & USACE. The bike path is 10 feet wide; made of asphalt; and will include some raised decking where it is needed to go over water & wetlands. Mr. James additionally stated that in most spots, the bike path is about 10 feet away from the edge of Hwy. 180. There will be untouched land & vegetation between the edge of Hwy. 180 & the bike path. Ranger Pete Mitchum stated, "No golf carts will be allowed to travel the bike path". There will be poles erected in certain areas preventing golf carts and they will also be fined if they do use the bike path. Located Approx. at mile marker 10 (near FM pizza place), the bike path plans include: 20 parking spaces and a restroom with 4 stalls. Paige Felts stated that within the 15 miles of the bike path plan that was being shared on June 13, 2022, they propose filling in less than 1 acre of wetlands.

Below were some of the main topic points of discussion, concerns raised, & questions asked by residents:

- Safety of Residents; of Motorists; of Public; of Private Property owners; of Tourists / Visitors; of the Bikers & Pedestrians using this bike path

- Was there an impact study completed on the Residents, Businesses, and homeowners in Fort Morgan? Answer No

- Why are the effects on the Human Element of the project being ignored?

- City of Gulf Shores had to clear away all vegetation between Hwy. 180 and the bike path in their city limits due to assaults and criminal activity. Has this safety concern been addressed for this portion of the bike path planned for Fort Morgan?

- Why has there not been any public input on this project?

- Why does it feel like this is being forced upon the community who as a majority opposes it for valid safety concerns?

- Has the local wildlife been taken into consideration as to the safety of the public using the bike path?

- Why not run the bike path in the same land that has been cleared & developed for Utilities? EMC does not own the land below the power lines but it must be kept clear.

- Where will the bike path run north of Hwy. 180 when it is closest to Mobile Bay and the Pines Boat Launch? There is clearly a lot of erosion to the land already in that area and not even 4 feet of flat land to put a bike path? Erosion will continue.

- Why doesn't the plan for the bike path originate on the south side of Hwy. 180 until about the location of the Beach Club then move it to the north side of Hwy. 180? Joe Emerson stated this would have the least impact on private driveways and be safer overall. If this is an acceptable path (as Joe Emerson outlined above), then have a cross-over for the bikers and pedestrians in the longer safer

straightaway of Hwy. 180. Include flashing lights for a crosswalk & lowered speed limit for that portion of Hwy. 180.

-Why not expand the Footprint of Hwy. 180 to include a bike path? That extra lane could also be used for evacuation during emergencies on the Peninsula.

-As it was shared on June 13, 2022, the bike path plan will cross more than half the private driveways along Fort Morgan Road (Hwy. 180). We counted 142 private driveways on the north side of Hwy. 180. and 72 private driveways on the south side of Hwy. 180. Additionally, it crossed all public streets and entrances to businesses are along Hwy. 180 (higher traffic areas) and they will be affected, too.

-Has there been a traffic study done?

-Has there been a study done to collect information on how the visiting motorists will navigate the bike path on private driveways, as they exit Hwy 180? We have major safety concerns on Hwy. 180; this only adds to safety concerns. On Monday, June 6, 2022, two motorists were tragically killed in an automobile accident on Hwy. 180.

If you wish to be part of the discussion, you can send your comments and questions to Tasha Simon Natural Resources Section Chief, Alabama State Parks & Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (DCNR): Email: tasha.simon@dcnr.alabama.gov; Office # 334-242-3902 / Cell # 334-850-2469. Please CC: Fortmorgancivic@gmail.com so we can compile all comments for future discussions with the State regarding this project.

Government Affairs ~~~~~Michael Ludvigsen, FMCA Government Liaison

US Fish & Wildlife

The efforts continue to have Pine Beach Trail renamed in honor of Chan West.

Alabama Legislature

No update.

ALDOT

No update.

ADCNR

The Fort Morgan Pier work is ongoing.

BCSS / ADEM

An update will be provided during the next FMCA General Meeting.

Baldwin County

An update will be provided during the next FMCA General Meeting.

Fort Morgan Volunteer Fire Department~~~~~

The Fort Morgan Volunteer Fire Department is seeking volunteers. No experience necessary. Must be full time resident of Fort Morgan. Training is provided. We meet the first and third Monday at 6:30 p. m. at Fire Station one. Come and visit our sessions.

Stay Safe,
FMVFD

Fort Morgan Peninsula Neighborhood Safety & Crime Report ~~~~~BCSO

“If you see something, Say something”. It is so important, for the Sheriff’s Office to know what you know.

EMERGENCY: 911 -Report all potentially life-threatening and suspicious activities
Sheriff’s Department—Administrative Office.....972-6802
Sheriff’s Office Website: www.sheriffobaldwin.com
Anonymous Tip Email Address (NOT for Emergencies):
<http://sheriffobaldwin.com/contactRC.asp>

Fort Morgan Planning & Zoning Committee~~~~~Chuck Scott, FM P&Z Advisory Cte Chair

Recent Committee actions:

CASE ZVA22-48: The committee voted 4-0 AGAINST granting this variance. It is the opinion of this committee that the amount of Wetlands infringement is significant and the location and or size of the building should be reconsidered prior to submission of a new variance request.

CASE ZVA22-49: The Committee voted 4-0 IN FAVOR of granting this variance. The possible wetlands infringement is incidental and the property use and proposed dwelling is customary in the area.

CASE ZVA22-50: The Committee voted 4-0 IN FAVOR of granting this variance. The request was considered to be reasonable and appropriate for the location on the Bay

CASE ZVA22-53: The Committee voted 4-0 AGAINST granting this variance. This design was considered to be in blatant disregard for the well-established building height standards.

Future Fort Morgan Planning and Zoning Committee meetings will be noted on <https://www.fortmorgancivic.org/> as well as associated case files.

Hurricane Re-Entry Decals ~~~~~

In the event of an emergency, where Fort Morgan and / or Gulf Shores is evacuated, Fort Morgan residents will need to display a re-entry decal on their vehicle. Property owners should receive two decals mailed to the billing address on record with Baldwin EMC during the month of October every two years at no cost (City of Gulf Shores provides). Up to three additional decals may be purchased in person from the Gulf Shores City Hall and the Gulf Shores City Store at a cost of \$5 each. Proof of residency or property ownership along with a Driver’s License for identification will be required for the purchase of additional hurricane/beach decals in the form of a deed, lease, or utility bill that bears the street address of the property for which the decal is being purchased. Incoming new residents will not be charged for the initial first two decals. Further information is available at: <https://gulfshoresal.gov/1753/Hurricane-Re-Entry-DecalBeach-Parking-Pa>

Chan West- Memorial ~~~~~

The family of Frances “Chan” West, who passed on August 1, 2021, hopes that you will join us at a memorial service to remember and celebrate her life.
Saturday, July 9, 2022 at 10:00 am
Holy Spirit Episcopal Church of Gulf Shores
616 W. Fort Morgan Road, Gulf Shores, AL 36542

Some of Chan’s favorite foods will be served after the service in the reception hall and any favorites you wish to share are welcome. We sincerely hope to see you there. There are many not included in this email, so we ask for your help in extending this invitation to all of Chan’s friends.

We’ve also created a website, www.chanwest.com, to share photos, stories, and remembrances. We welcome you to add your own as well using the "Submit Remembrances" tab on the website. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to one of the organizations to which Chan contributed her time, passion, and endless energy. The website provides a list of many of these organizations.

The extended Chan West Family

Upcoming Events/ Community Support Opportunities in Fort Morgan:

Share the Beach~~~~~

Alabama's sea turtle nesting season is in full swing. Please help our visitors know that, sea turtles and people like our beaches clean, dark, and flat:

- **CLEAN:** Remove all trash and beach items (chairs, tents, towels, etc.) from the beach every day when you depart.
- **DARK:** Turn off outside lights, avoid white flashlights, and consider changing to sea turtle-friendly lighting if you have beachfront property.
- **FLAT:** Enjoy digging holes and building sand castles during your stay, but knock down and fill in all areas before you leave so our sea turtles can enjoy the beach as well. It also keeps it safer for people enjoying a nighttime stroll or emergency responders driving down the beach!

As always, if you see a sea turtle, stay back at least 30 feet, stay low, stay quiet, and call us on the hotline at (866) SEA-TURTLE (866-732-8878).

Fort Morgan State Historic Site~~~~~

Check for current updates on daily operations / park entry procedures at Facebook (Fort Morgan State Historic Site) and website <http://www.fort-morgan.org> .

Bon Secour NWR~~~~~

Check for current updates on refuge operations by <https://www.facebook.com/BonSecourNWR/>, calling the office at 251-540-7720 or emailing bonsecour@fws.gov, messages will be returned as soon as possible.

Fort Morgan History:

Request for contributions – please contact the FMCA newsletter editor if you are interested in researching Fort Morgan history or providing personal memories to share of Fort Morgan.

A Look Back – July Hurricanes Impacting Fort Morgan

Unnamed Storm July 5th 1916: A hurricane estimated to be a Category 3 hurricane with 120 mph winds came ashore in Pascagoula, Mississippi. Its greatest impacts were in Mobile where storm surge of over 11 feet was recorded. In the Fort Morgan area, damage from the 6.3-foot storm surge and high winds caused significant damage to Fort Morgan and all along the Alabama gulf coast.

Hurricane Danny July 19th 1997: Hurricane Danny made landfall as a Category 1 storm near Mullet Point, Alabama after its eye passed the mouth of Mobile Bay near Fort Morgan. Its impacts on Mobile Bay and the Fort Morgan area included extreme rainfall amounts, as it stalled over Mobile Bay for 9 hours, as well as storm surge. Dauphin Island Sea Lab recorded over 36 inches of rain, of which 26 inches fell in just 7 hours. The storm drifted over Alabama for 3 days causing significant flooding. In Baldwin County, a number of roads south of US Highway 98 were inundated and impassable for days. 60% of the Alabama public oyster reefs in Baldwin County were destroyed. The storm surge on Highway 182 along the Fort Morgan Peninsula was 6.5 feet. Six feet of salt water from storm surge filled the main fort structure at Fort Morgan Historic Site. Hurricane Danny was notable not only from damage from the flooding rains and storm surge but also because it was the only hurricane to make landfall during the 1997 Atlantic hurricane season.

Please visit the following links for more information on the excerpted material above:

https://www.al.com/living/2016/07/vintage_1916_photos_show_when.html,

<https://www.weather.gov/mob/danny> , <https://www.weather.gov/mob/1916Hurricane> and

https://www.al.com/news/erry-2018/05/7d04b4b1aa6891/alabamas_hurricane_hall_of_fam.html

FMCA Contacts

Officers

President	George Mitchell	601-934-3427	georgemitchell0312@gmail.com
Vice President	George Mitchell	601-934-3427	georgemitchell0312@gmail.com
Treasurer	Greg Strategier	337-849-6506	samsplace41805@gmail.com
Secretary	Jamie Strategier	504-616-3275	samsplace41805@gmail.com

Standing Committee Chairs

Bylaws	Karrie Lovins	580-917-4593	klovins68@icloud.com
Communications	Karrie Lovins	580-917-4593	klovins68@icloud.com
Hospitality	Thelma Strong	251-540-7383	
Legal	Judy Newcomb	251-955-1572	judynewcomb@aol.com
Legislative/Government	Michael Ludvigsen	217-473-9728	mtludvigsenjr@gmail.com
Land Use & Conservation	Vacant		
Membership	Vacant		
Sunshine	Vacant		

Other Positions

Editor Fort Morgan Newsletter	Karrie Lovins	580-917-4593	klovins68@icloud.com
FMCA / Local / State / Federal			
Government Liaison	Michael Ludvigsen	217-473-9728	mtludvigsenjr@gmail.com
FMCA Social Media Manager	Joe Emerson	251-550-9021	captjoesells@gmail.com

Fort Morgan Civic Association
P.O. Box 5313 • Gulf Shores, AL 36547
www.fortmorgancivic.org

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FORM – ANNUAL DUES \$25.00 (as of 1 Jan 2022)

Name(s) _____ Date _____

Mailing Address _____ Phone _____

City, State, Zip _____

Fort Morgan Address _____ Phone _____

This property is west of mile 14.7: _____yes _____no -- See Article III, Section 1 below Associate Member? _____ yes

Email (please provide for special alerts) _____

Your employment _____ Spouse's employment _____

Reason for joining the Association _____

We need volunteers to help the Association in the following areas. Which can you assist in? (circle)

- Program Planning: Speakers Phone/Survey Members for Interests
 Zoning: Attend Meetings of Baldwin County/Gulf Shores Write Brief Reports
 Membership: Recruitment Phone Tree Hospitality at Meetings Help with Pot-Lucks
 Communications: Postal Mailings E-mail Writing for Newspaper, Publicity Releases, etc.
 Newsletter: Desktop Graphics/Layout Gather/Submit News Items Write Brief Articles Photography
 Computer: Set Up/Maintain Data Base Spreadsheets Excel Access Word PowerPoint
 What other skills, experience or talents could you volunteer? _____

From the By-laws Adopted April 11, 2005

ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP

- Section 1 Regular (voting) Membership in this association shall be open only to property owners and/or residents in the unincorporated area west of mile 14.7 of the Fort Morgan peninsula.
- Section 2 Associate (non-voting) Membership shall be open to residents of areas outside the Fort Morgan Peninsula whose interests coincide with those of the Association including the preservation of the environment and quality of life of the Fort Morgan peninsula.
- Section 3 Membership application shall be made by completion of a form provided by the Association and payment of the required dues. Dues for the following year shall be determined at the October general meeting and shall be for the following calendar year January 1st through December 31st.
- Section 4 Payment of Regular (voting) Membership dues entitles a member household to one (1) vote. A member household is comprised of Association members living at one physical address. Past year member households paying dues after January 31st and new members joining the Association will have no voting rights until thirty (30) days after payment of dues.
- Section 5 Payment of Associate (non-voting) Membership dues entitles the member to attend all member meetings and receive the monthly newsletter.

Make checks payable to: **Fort Morgan Civic Association or FMCA**

I would like to make a donation to the Operating Fund in the amount of \$ _____

Annual dues @ \$25/household \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Your donation to the Fort Morgan Civic Association is not tax deductible as we do not qualify because of our political activity in attempting to prevent proliferation of large-scale high-rise development on Fort Morgan Peninsula.