



INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA
AGENDA ITEM
Assistant County Administrator /
Department of General Services
Parks and Recreation

Date: April 12, 2022

To: The Honorable Board of County Commissioners

Through: Jason E. Brown, County Administrator
Michael C. Zito, Assistant County Administrator

From: Beth Powell, Interim Director Parks and Recreation

Subject: Update on the Archie Smith Fish House – Ice House Demolition

BACKGROUND

In 2007, the Board of County Commissioners purchased the historic Archie Smith Fish House for \$1.7M as part of the County's environmental lands program process. Though an application was made to the Florida Communities Trust, grant funding toward the purchase price was not approved. The subject waterfront property, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, consists of approximately 1.15 acres located at 1740 North Indian River Drive within the northern city limits of Sebastian.

Structures on the Archie Smith Fish House property consist of the Main (principal) House, a rebuilt overlook and, until recently, the Ice House (over-water original structure historically used to store ice). When the County acquired the property in 2007, conceptual plans were to open the site to the public by rehabilitating the Main House for use as a small museum/visitor center, repairing the dock and providing boating access, and restoring the Ice House.

In 2012, County staff applied for a grant with the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources (DHR) that would be the first step in implementing the conceptual plan. The grant was subsequently awarded to the County and on October 22, 2013, the Board approved the cost-share Historic Preservation Grant (S1429) for the Archie Smith Fish House Restoration which included:

- Facilities analysis and structural evaluation
- Research and documentation of the history of the structure(s)
- Development of as-built drawings
- Development of detailed restoration plans
- Development of detailed construction drawings and bid specifications
- Preparation of permit applications and necessary approvals

In February 2014, staff released an RFQ to complete the Professional Architectural and Engineering Services for the Archie Smith Fish House property. In April 2014, Atelier (the only firm to respond to the bid) was awarded a services consultant agreement in the amount of \$99,000.00 for the planning, engineering/architectural design of the Archie Smith Fish House (site) to include written evaluation and recommendation statement of findings for consideration of the Board. Funding for this work was provided through the approved DHR grant with a 50% match by the County. The plans were completed, and the grant award requirements were met in the Fall of 2014.

On May 12, 2015, the Board approved Resolution No. 2015-60, committing to use \$241,600 in Boating Improvement Funds as the County's match toward the estimated total cost of \$483,200 for the dock restoration associated with Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) grant application through the Waterways Assistance Program. The FIND funding provided in the award received was \$100,000, thus requiring that the scope of work to be reduced to only the reconstruction of the dock (less the floating docks as originally submitted in the FIND application). Based on this funding, the County solicited bids for the reconstruction of the dock. On June 19, 2018, the Board approved an award of \$186,925.00 to Indian River Docks, LLC, to complete the work to reconstruct the dock. As the project progressed, additional work was deemed necessary, and an additional change order was issued in the amount of \$19,178.90 bringing the total cost of the project to \$206,103.90.

Following storms in 2016 and 2017, County staff have worked to stabilize the structures on the site by shoring up the buildings by stabilizing siding, and repairing holes in the roofing. Portions of the drying racks were also removed to reduce the potential for flying debris.

In 2019, County staff applied for a DHR Grant to include the restoration of the Ice House (per the Atelier plans). The DHR grant application request in the amount of \$147,121 was not funded. Partial funding of this portion of the project was provided in the County's approved Capital Improvement Element of the Comprehensive Plan, however, costs and constructability issues associated with the design prevented progress toward reconstruction/renovation. Since 2020, County staff made several attempts to stabilize the structures and protect them from further deterioration while future actions could be determined.

On December 12, 2022, staff received calls from guests of the neighboring Captain Butcher's restaurant regarding the collapse of the concrete floor of the Ice House. Upon investigation, and during subsequent days following December 12th, the concrete floor and walls continued to collapse into the Indian River Lagoon creating floating debris hazards. As time was of the essence, staff contacted the general contractor who had completed the work associated with the Atelier plans for the dock restoration/renovation project, and asked for assistance in containing the debris and an assessment of the structure's condition.

Upon review by the general contractor, the Indian River County Public Works Director, and Parks and Conservation Lands staff, it was determined that the building posed safety hazards to the existing reconstructed dock, as well as to curious boaters and others who might try to access the building. Photographs and records documenting the collapsing structure and exterior leaning building were sent to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection prior to work commencing on the demolition of the structure. In early February, a turbidity curtain was installed under an emergency purchase order, and the general contractor began working on necessary permits required by the City of Sebastian for the demolition, which included asbestos and lead testing prior to initiating any work. On March 14, 2022, the Archie Smith Ice House was demolished under an emergency purchase order issued to the general contractor. Further evaluation and stabilization of the Main House is also needed as its condition continues to deteriorate under environmental conditions.

Staff is requesting Board direction on how to proceed with the area where the Ice House was located based on the fact that the dock is not accessible to the public until modifications are made to the area where the Ice House was located. It is currently not safe for the public to use the dock due to the lack of a fall rail along the portion of the dock where the Ice House was located.

Upon consultation with the County Historian, Ruth Stanbridge, staff has contemplated several options which may include:

- Re-design and installation of a reconstructed Ice House based on the Atelier plans. Re-design would be required to meet any differences between the plans and current Building Department standards.
- Installing similar fall rails/handrails along the length of the dock where the Ice House was located, and installing commemorative educational signage on the dock.
- Designing and installing an alternate structure for public use which may include a decking area with covered pavilion in the location of the Ice House, with commemorative educational signage.

FUNDING:

Funding spent to provide installation of the turbidity curtain, debris removal, and demolition were \$58,107.25 leaving a funding balance of \$291,892.75 in the current fiscal year's capital improvement account – 31521072-066510-14004 - Optional Sales Tax - Archie Smith Fish House Restoration.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff respectfully requests that the Board of County Commissioners provide direction regarding how to proceed with the site as the public dock is not accessible due to a lack of a railing system in the area where the Ice House was previously located. Staff further requests direction as to the Main House structure and its worsening state.

Approved Agenda Item for April 19, 2022