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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Hurricane recovery: County sets up 2 special assessment districts for seawalls, dunes restoration

**December 21, 2017** – Flagler County Board of County Commissioners on Wednesday approved two special assessment districts. One of the districts is for the construction of seawalls in the Painters Hill area, and the second is for dunes restoration – protective berms – for the area between Varn Park and MalaCompra Park in the Hammock.

Hurricane Matthew, a Category 4 storm, passed along Flagler County’s coastline on October 7, 2016, eroding beaches, erasing dunes, structurally damaging houses and flooding entire neighborhoods. It also damaged and destroyed both public infrastructure and private property on the barrier island.

Less than a year later, Hurricane Irma struck on September 11, 2017. It was followed shortly thereafter by heavy rainfalls and several nor’easter storms – which, together, again caused severe flooding and additional dune erosion on the barrier island, exacerbated by the previous damage left from Hurricane Matthew.

“We are approaching the end of our preparations in order to begin these projects,” County Administrator Craig Coffey told commissioners before the special meeting called to establish the boundaries of the two districts. “This is a necessary step in the process to fund these projects.”

Coffey noted that for the Dunes District agreements have to be reached with two separate homeowners associations, and “the club” – the Ocean Course at Hammock Beach. For the Seawall District, 19 individual property owners signed up to facilitate the seawall projects made necessary by hurricanes Matthew and Irma.

Each of the districts involves oceanfront property owners agreeing to pay some of the costs of the improvements to protect their upland properties from the ocean.

For the Dunes District, this includes the construction of a 4.3 mile dune that consists of 8-10 cubic yards of sand – depending on the location. Through the agreement, this district sets a

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**Charles Ericksen, Jr.**  
District 1

**Greg Hansen**  
District 2

**David Sullivan**  
District 3

**Nate McLaughlin**  
District 4

**Donald O’Brien Jr.**  
District 5

maximum assessment that will be paid through an initial payment and five years of annual assessment payments.

For the Seawall District, this includes the construction of 1,311 linear feet (just under one-quarter mile) of new seawall that encompasses 21 individual properties – two of which have existing seawalls and two return walls. Through these agreements, this district also sets a maximum assessment and 15 years of assessment payments to repay the seawall construction.

Both districts being created are done so with the voluntary cooperation of property owners. Flagler County is assisting both areas to facilitate their recovery and protection by organizing efforts through the engineering, permitting, bidding, financing, and construction phases of the projects.

“I want to compliment the county staff for the work they did,” said Jim Ulsamer, representing the Ocean Hammock homeowners association. “There was no playbook ... I don’t think anyone thought it would take this long, but it wasn’t from a lack of effort.”

Commissioners voted unanimously approved both districts – with Commission Chair Greg Hansen absent.

When speaking of the Seawall District, Coffey told commissioners the threat to homes in Painters Hill isn’t always visible from the front view from State Road A1A, but that the threat is evident from the beach side of their properties.

“We are blessed that we have a lot of great residents in the community,” Coffey said. He thanked the partners of both special assessment districts.

Commissioner Charlie Ericksen asked what the seawall would look like.

Coffey answered that one of the goals of completing a length of seawall as a single project with one contractor is that it will look neat and uniform with the same cap and pilings. The seawall will be backfilled, and there will be sand in front of the wall.

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