

MEMORANDUM

TO: CEPD Board of Commissioners
FROM: Brighton Heard, General Manager
DATE: May 11, 2026
SUBJECT: First-Year Accomplishments and Meaningful Contributions to CEPD

Purpose. This memorandum summarizes my major accomplishments and contributions during my first year with the Captiva Erosion Prevention District (CEPD). The items below reflect administrative leadership, project coordination, coastal resilience work, public communication, financial stewardship, intergovernmental coordination, and community engagement completed during a year of significant transition and public-facing activity for the District.

Executive Summary. Over the past year, I have helped maintain continuity in CEPD operations with minimal staffing, coordinated the District through completion of a major beach renourishment project, strengthened public communication and agency partnerships, advanced dune protection and resilience initiatives, improved financial and administrative systems, and represented the District in a professional and solutions-oriented manner before residents, stakeholders, agencies, and elected officials.

Administrative Leadership, Governance, and Operations

- Provided steady day-to-day leadership for CEPD during a period of major organizational transition and coastal resilience activity.
- Managed District operations independently during the first four months of employment and continued to maintain continuity in administration, finance, project coordination, and Board support with very limited staffing.
- Coordinated all Board meetings, workshops, and special meetings, including scheduling, logistics, meeting minutes, meeting videos, and website posting of related materials.
- Prepared and organized Board agendas, packets, meeting materials, and follow-up items to support informed governance and efficient decision-making.
- Managed recruitment, hiring, and training of three bookkeepers/office managers to identify the appropriate fit for the District's operational and financial needs.
- Furnished the office and transformed the conference room into a functional and professional space capable of hosting CEPD Board meetings.
- Guided the District through the Florida Department of Revenue TRIM process, helping ensure statutory compliance and successful completion of the annual tax and budget timeline.
- Completed or oversaw all estoppel letters in-house, bringing a previously outsourced function under District management and creating an additional revenue stream.
- Helped keep Board meeting operations moving despite scheduling challenges, quorum issues, holidays, and staffing constraints.
- Supported updates to governance materials and Board procedures in coordination with counsel and commissioners.
- Strengthened administrative systems, employee contracting, records coordination, and communications processes.

Beach Renourishment Project Management and Post-Construction Coordination

- Coordinated CEPD's beach renourishment project with the engineer, contractor, regulatory agencies, conservation groups, and community stakeholders.

- Served as the central point of contact between CEPD, APTIM, Great Lakes Dredge & Dock, Lee County, regulatory agencies, SCCF, news media, and the public throughout the project.
- Led extensive public communication efforts through weekly workshops during the project, including responses to concerns about dune height, visibility, beach access, and project purpose.
- Guided the project through post-construction completion, certification, reporting, and final payment review.
- Supported Board oversight of the final contractor payment process, including review of liquidated damages and preparation of clear summaries to assist decision-making.
- Coordinated with SCCF before and during the project to accommodate field personnel with housing and facilitate coordination with state and federal agencies regarding sea turtle nest relocation procedures.
- Completed website and social media updates throughout the project lifecycle.
- Used FAA-licensed drone pilot credentials to capture aerial footage of the project and shared videos on social media that generated more than 100,000 views on individual posts and brought positive attention to Captiva.
- Coordinated assistance for City of Sanibel officials seeking to piggyback on CEPD contracts and permits to support emergency renourishment of Sanibel beaches under tight deadlines.
- Participated in local media interviews concerning the project and community reactions to dune heights.
- Helped develop CEPD's messaging in a professional, respectful, and resilience-focused manner during a period of heightened public scrutiny.
- Coordinated completion of post-project sea oat planting across the dune system to support stabilization and long-term beach resilience.
- Coordinated island-wide escarpment leveling to improve beach access and public safety, and kept residents informed through timely Beach Brief updates.

Dune Protection, Access Management, and Coastal Resilience

- Advanced planning and installation efforts for dune protection improvements, including additional plantings, ropes and bollards, sand fencing, Mobi-Mats, and access-management measures.
- Initiated and coordinated efforts to identify, survey, and correct dune crossover and beach access issues following construction.
- Worked to balance dune protection with practical public and private access needs by helping develop a path forward for properly aligned access corridors.
- Began advancing permitting and implementation planning for targeted sand fencing and other protective measures in vulnerable areas.
- Redeveloped CEPD's Emergency Maintenance Plan to make it more practical, current, and aligned with procedures needed for emergency remediation of storm damage.
- Expanded the District's focus beyond construction to long-term dune enhancement, vegetation diversification, and resilience planning through coordination with Coastal Vista.
- Pursued outside funding opportunities to support additional dune planting, habitat enhancement, and coastal resilience initiatives.
- Assisted with legislative and appropriations efforts to seek funding for revegetation and related resilience work.
- Participated in the Florida Gulf Coast University Water School and Naples Botanical Garden's Workshop for Resilience Capacity Building in Southwest Florida: Coastal Protection and Restoration.
- Attended The Future of Florida's Coasts: What We Can Learn from the History of Tampa Bay, presented by Evan Bennett at the Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum, to gain additional insight into estuary impacts and restoration approaches.

Environmental Stewardship, Wildlife Protection, and Invasive Species Work

- Secured emergency authorization from FDEP and FWC to install hay bales along Captiva during nesting season to help prevent sea turtles from repeatedly entering the roadway, and coordinated with SCCF on acquisition and installation.
- Wrote, procured, and administered a \$500,000 Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission grant to remove Australian pine and green iguanas from the island.
- Advanced invasive species outreach by increasing awareness of available funding for Australian pine removal through announcement in public meetings, newspaper advertisements, Beach Briefs, and direct conversations with residents.
- Coordinated contractor participation and homeowner communication for grant-funded Australian pine removal activities.
- Coordinated and accompanied Lee County Code Enforcement officials during nighttime sea turtle lighting surveys to support compliance efforts and help protect coastal wildlife.
- Ensured all Beach Ambassadors completed MOTE reporting training and submit daily reports to MOTE Marine Laboratory's Beach Conditions Reporting System, maintaining compliance with the interlocal agreement and providing useful field data.

Funding, Finance, Banking, and Budget Administration

- Attended Lee County Board of County Commissioners meetings while coordinating and finalizing the Interlocal Agreement with Lee County for the 2025 beach renourishment project, supporting the District's initiative to receive additional project funding.
- Developed the District's annual budget in coordination with accountants and successfully guided it through review and approval by the Commissioners.
- Improved financial and administrative organization by helping manage banking transitions, account cleanup, and related authorizations.
- Cultivated strong relationships among representatives at Bank of the Islands, Fifth Third Bank, Regions Bank, and CEPD leadership through account restructuring, treasury matters, and operational banking needs.
- Coordinated closely with Regions Bank account manager Carla Kuzynowski on a revolving line of credit to establish an emergency fund under the 2024 referendum framework; Ms. Kuzynowski has offered to serve as a professional reference regarding her experience working with CEPD.
- Consolidated 11 bank accounts across four banks down to two accounts.
- Assisted with investment and treasury communications, including coordination related to maturing Treasury holdings and reinvestment direction.
- Worked to improve financial reporting clarity and organization in coordination with the Treasurer, bookkeeper, accountant, and auditors.
- Attended the Lee County Tourist Development Council Beach and Shoreline Funding Workshop to help secure approval of allocated funding of \$264,000 for the District's 2026-27 beach park facility maintenance.
- Scheduled meetings with all Lee County Commissioners to formally request additional funding support for the recently completed beach renourishment project.

Public Outreach, Communications, and Community Engagement

- Improved public outreach by preparing clear written communications, public updates, social media messaging, and Board materials on complex technical topics.
- Prepared and distributed numerous Beach Brief updates to keep the community informed about CEPD activities, projects, and ongoing initiatives.

- Responded to and resolved hundreds of concerns raised by residents in person and by phone, providing professional, courteous, and solution-oriented assistance on behalf of the District.
- Maintained professionalism and transparency while helping the District navigate controversy, public pressure, and sensitive community concerns.
- Represented the District at monthly Captiva Community Panel meetings, providing regular updates on CEPD activities and responding to questions from attendees.
- Participated in South Seas “All Owners” monthly meetings to provide District updates, maintain open communication, and engage with stakeholders on CEPD-related matters.
- Delivered a presentation on CEPD’s work and mission to the Sanibel & Captiva Association of Realtors, helping increase awareness of the District’s role and initiatives; scheduled to present to this group again on May 14, 2026.
- Represented CEPD professionally in communications with consultants, partner agencies, county employees, elected officials, residents, and community groups.
- Built and maintained strong working relationships with Lee County Sheriff’s Office deputies assigned to the island and remained in close communication with them regarding issues involving beaches, dunes, and the Alison Hagerup parking lot.

Staffing, Partnerships, Professional Development, and External Representation

- Recruited, hired, and trained seven Beach Ambassadors to support parking lot operations, public assistance, and on-site management.
- Helped strengthen CEPD’s partnerships with outside organizations including Lee County, APTIM, FGCU, the Captiva Community Panel, and other agencies and stakeholders.
- Represented the District at two Florida Shore and Beach Preservation Association conferences and a Florida Association of Special Districts conference, strengthening CEPD’s professional network and building relationships with industry leaders, agency representatives, and peer districts.
- Supported CEPD’s response to legal and insurance matters arising from public disputes connected to the project, including coordination of information and communication with relevant parties.
- Led the transition of the parking lot payment system and merchant services from ParkMobile to Oobeo to improve operations and increase District revenue.
- Nominated by Lee County Commissioner Kevin Ruane and appointed by the Lee County Board of County Commissioners to serve on the Lee County Coastal Advisory Council.
- Helped position CEPD as a proactive, solutions-oriented organization focused on shoreline protection, resilience, and responsible stewardship of Captiva’s beaches.

Conclusion

Taken together, these accomplishments reflect a first year focused on operational stability, responsible stewardship, transparent public communication, coastal resilience, and strong intergovernmental coordination. The work completed during this period helped CEPD continue serving the Captiva community through a complex and highly visible year while positioning the District for continued improvement and long-term success.