

Majeska back on board

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KEY LARGO — The Key Largo Wastewater Treatment District board last week paid tribute to late Commissioner Norm Higgins with a plaque before appointing former board member Robby Majeska to fill the vacancy left by Higgins' death in December.

Upper Keys residents Burke Cannon, Richard Barretto and Chris Sante spoke on behalf of reinstating Majeska, who left the board last year for an unsuccessful bid for the Monroe County Commission District 5 seat.

Majeska also addressed the four seated commissioners.

"I'm an old factor," he said. "I've been a member of this board for 10 years. I'm familiar with operations. I've gone to Washington on behalf of this board. I want to contribute to the board no matter the outcome."

Commissioner Steve Gibbs was hesitant to proceed with an appointment during the meeting, saying he wanted his colleagues



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Robby Majeska was sworn in to the Key Largo Wastewater Treatment District Clerk Katherine Jackson on Tuesday, Jan. 17. Majeska fills the vacancy left by the death of Commissioner Norm Higgins in December.

to approve a process for vetting all qualifying individuals to ensure the best candidate is selected to represent rate payers.

He proposed to screen candidates until Jan. 31 and to select one by Feb. 7, which would be about a week and a half ahead of the 60-day limit in which the board must fill a vacancy. He said any issues that required a five-board member could be tabled until an appointment was made.

At the time of the meeting, only one other candidate for the open seat put his name forward: David Benoit of Key Largo.

"If we owe anything to the rate payer, it's not having three or four more meetings on filling the seat at the cost of \$400 per meeting just to find that I'm in the same spot as I am now," Commissioner Sue Heim said.

Heim made the motion

See BOARD, page 7A

Majeska

Continued from page 4A

to reinstate Majeska, and commissioners Andy Tobin and David Asdourian voiced their support. But before Heim could pass the motion, Gibbs said he had a question for Majeska.

"If you are reinstated, do you intend to replace the current general manager?" Gibbs asked in reference to Paul Christian.

"No, not at this time," Majeska responded. "We've all had our differences, but I think we all work well together. I look forward to moving ahead."

After Majeska was seated, operations were discussed, and Heim and Tobin said they would decline payment for the Jan. 10 meeting as it was canceled when Asdourian and Gibbs were unable to attend. Three commissioners must be in attendance to proceed with a meeting.

Majeska then asked why law enforcement was called to the district's treatment plant after 1 a.m. Jan. 1, and why the commissioners were not made aware of the incident. Plant operator Jared Primicerio said an alarm was triggered at the facility due to a worn out clamp, which was subsequently replaced.

Majeska and Heim asked for procedures to be put in place so commissioners

are notified of such incidences. Heim also called for better record keeping for resolutions adopted by the board, including how commissioners voted on each item.

Prior to the board meeting, state Rep. Holly Raschein, R-Key Largo, and Tiffany Lorente, an assistant to Sen. Anitere Flores, R-Miami, held an open forum to discuss the fate of the Cross Key neighborhood at mile marker 112. Cross Key residents are concerned about not being compliant with the state's mandatory sewer hookup and potentially facing a \$500-a-day fine. They have called upon the district to provide that service, as outlined legislation establishing the district.

District officials, however, say providing sewer service to the handful of residents living on Cross Key would cost in excess of \$6 million.

Raschein is proposing to amend legislation to make the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority responsible for ensuring that Cross Key residents move forward with onsite sewage treatment.

"We are past deadline in terms of seeking a viable solution for the state-mandated hook-up for that area," she said. "The state doesn't care how we get it done, just as long as it gets done."

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