

## Little Jim settlement approved without fanfare

City and operator Salty3 Baitshack will share the \$16,000 fines

By Kathy Jessup Hometown News

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Under the agreements approved Monday night, the city will pay \$5,000 to cover the cost of FDEP's investigation. Salty3 Baitshack will reimburse the city for nearly \$11,000 in fines and back rent for the state land the docks encroached upon.

FORT PIERCE – The Fort Pierce City Commission Monday approved a settlement with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) that will cost the city \$5,000 and the operator of Little Jim Bait and Tackle nearly \$11,000 for several violations found at the North Hutchinson restaurant/bar site.

The unanimous approval was part of a three-item consent agenda that was okayed with no public comment or discussion by commission members.

Now that the city, the operator Salty3 Baitshack LLC and the FDEP are clearing the slate, it remains to be seen when the city will put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) to determine who will get the next long-term lease to operate the property.

Salty3 Baitshack was not the city evaluation team's pick in 2025, for a new long-term lease for the former military guard site. The process was further complicated by boundary questions posed by other potential bidders.

When the FDEP responded to a complaint, it found that docks built by Salty3 Baitshack had not received permits and encroached on state submerged property. At that point, the city dropped the RFP process and granted the current operator a month-to-month lease to continue doing business while the violations were settled.

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“The Lessee of the Little Jim property has agreed to pay the financial obligations requested by FDEP and cooperate with the City to bring the property into compliance with FDEP demands due to alleged violations on the property,” the agreement with Salty3 Baitshack LLC states. “This Agreement outlines the responsibilities of the parties in anticipation of the City entering into a Consent Order with FDEP.”

There was no discussion Monday night by commissioners about when a new RFP will open to bidders for the award of a new, long-term lease.