

**FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
WORKSHOP
COURTHOUSE ANNEX, COMMISSION MEETING ROOM
JUNE 15, 2021
1:30 P.M.
MINUTES**

Commissioners Present: Ricky Jones-Chairman, Bert Boldt, II-Vice-Chairman, Joseph Parrish, Jessica V. Ward

Others Present: Michele Maxwell-Clerk of Court, Michael Shuler-County Attorney, Michael Moron—County Coordinator, Jessica Gay-Deputy Clerk to the Board

Call to Order

Chairman Jones called the workshop to order at 1:30 p.m.

Chairman Jones opened the workshop announcing the topic to be discussed. Mr. Moron called for public comments. There were four callers on the phone.

John Berry had phone issues on his end. Ken Nelson had phone issues on his end. Chairman Jones said the Board would come back to them after the other public comments.

Rudy Mang spoke in favor of the booting on Alligator Point. Mr. Mang expressed his feelings about the advertisement for our local area. He feels it is a negative factor for the area. Mr. Mang expressed his thoughts on the influx of traffic and issues with parking. He doesn't feel the sheriff should have to spend as much time on Alligator Point and doesn't believe the tow trucks resolve the issue. Mr. Mang expressed his support of booting.

Chairman Jones said the purpose of the workshop was to discuss the options to address the issue in a public format. He said if we start booting under the current terms, it would be more work for the sheriff's office.

Chairman Jones said there is another issue that needs to be addressed and that is people putting up signs on their own and this is illegal.

Mike Booters said parking is an issue along with a combination of many other things. He said Alligator Point was designed as a residential community and they only have one business. The original beach accesses were to allow people who own houses or rent houses to access the beach. Often those people do not have parking to access the beach. Seems like booting is a viable solution. He recommended some type of volunteer parking enforcement on Alligator Point and believes several residents would go through all of the training. He said he knows other communities in Florida have done something similar but he has not investigated. He believes the resolution would be to have someone on site. Mr. Booters would like the Board to consider a volunteer board.

Another option would be to install parking meters or pay for parking lots. He said they would be willing to purchase boots and donate to the county and he knows other residents would do so also. Mr. Booters praised Sheriff Smith for his Facebook videos. He suggested closing the beaches during the construction of the road and bike path.

Jim McCoy said he would be willing to put together a group from Alligator Point to address concerns the Board may have. He said he could also put a group together to purchase the boots.

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Ken Nelson said he was not in favor of public access times. He asked the Board to consider all of the residents on Alligator Point. If permits are issued they should be issued to all property owners not just the ones in select areas.

John Berry said he would like to reiterate that Alligator Point is residential. He said it was his understanding this was workshop was being held to discuss ticketing and the ordinance. The booting would allow for zero movements and then they would have to call the sheriff's department. He said the payments could be mailed in and the funds could be used for the maintenance and upkeep of these areas. He believes there should be access hours for the beaches. He said he would like the Board to think about putting a parking plan in place after the bike path is added as parking spots will be fewer. He feels this could be a safety issue with cars driving over the bike path.

Commissioner Boldt said the safety and welfare of the people are important. He would like to create a plan in an organized fashion that accommodates everyone's needs. He believes for the time being there should be limited access hours for the beach. He said he thinks enforcement with consequences is very important. He would take the idea of the sheriff and start the booting, requiring the payments to be mailed in. He said he was impressed that the citation can be reported to DMV if not paid overtime. We need to address the large influx of visitors.

Captain Dewayne Coulter said the citation for violation of the County ordinance for illegal parking would go to the Clerk's office, and he is not sure if the Clerk could forward that to the DHMSV. There is a way to write a citation for illegal parking. The problem is you have to find the driver of the car to issue the citation, you can't just leave a ticket on a vehicle. The booting would allow for the officer to be called and then the citation is written. Captain Coulter said we may have to work through the process but hopefully, it would eventually deter the illegal parking. He said he believes what they have been doing has helped.

Commissioner Boldt asked if they could discuss the option of a volunteer committee. Captain Coulter said he is not prepared to discuss this matter. This would need to be discussed directly with Sheriff Smith as he believes they would have to be sworn in by the sheriff.

Attorney Shuler concurred that a discussion with the sheriff would need to be held first to see how he feels about a volunteer committee. If the sheriff is inclined to consider this, Attorney Shuler could then research whether it could be done and how it could be done.

Chairman Jones said he is not opposed to the idea of volunteers. However, he does have questions as to how the volunteers would be able to handle the issues.

Chairman Jones believes that we need to mark the parking on the island. The Board would need to designate the parking areas. He believes we need to mark the parking before we start booting cars. He feels that we may have an issue with booting cars if vendors are allowed to use any right of way.

Commissioner Ward said the volunteer board is a good idea as long as the sheriff is on board. She said the big thing that we need is proper signage to let people know where they can park. Commissioner Ward said the Board would need to make sure that the volunteers can handle the booting. Commissioner Ward doesn't want the sheriff's office or the clerk's office to have an additional work load.

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Commissioner Ward suggested in the future putting parking on the property where the old KOA is.

Chairman Jones thinks we do need designated signs for parking and again brought up the issue of homeowners putting up their speed limit and parking signs restating that it is a criminal issue.

Commissioner Boldt said he would like to see a pay to park area possibly on the old KOA property. Chairman Jones said it could help offset the cost to maintain the facilities.

Commissioner Parrish said the road at Alligator Point is public and there is no way to restrict people from using it. If the people of Alligator Point want to turn the road into a private road they could control the traffic but they don't want to do that because the County provides money for repairs to the road. All the public roads are available to the public. The multi-use path is going to be a liability for the county because it is the largest parking area. If you restrict public access you are also restricting the access to owners. Commissioner Parrish is not a fan of the boots because of all of the implications. Not a fan of the volunteer system could be discriminatory in your actions. Alligator Point is a lot different than St. George Island, however it is a public highway. We could build facilities at the old KOA however that is not going to deter people from coming, if anything it will encourage them. Going to need two separate sets of rules for both. Our economy is tourism now. Whatever you do is going to have a trickle-down effect. He said he didn't want to have a workshop without having solutions to the issue but it does allow the public an opportunity to provide their ideas. The liability of the volunteer idea is great and would fall upon the sheriff if he chooses to go that route. The parking issue isn't a twelve-month problem. However, we can all work together to come up with a solution.

Chairman Jones said now homes that were previously used for single-family residents but are now multi-family rentals. This brings in a larger influx of people. Homes converted to have more bedrooms exacerbates the issue. Chairman Jones said we need to come up with a solution that has no unintended consequences.

- We will need to have two plans – SGI and Alligator Point
- We need designated parking spaces
- Appropriate signage for parking
- Once we have it all in place, the sheriff can enforce

Commissioner Boldt would like to poll similar communities to see what others are doing for parking issues. Mr. Moron said the ARPC should have access to this information and he will request it from them. Commissioner Ward echoed that each would need their plan. Commissioner Parrish inquired as to if the homeowners on Alligator Point own the beach. Attorney Shuler said he believes there are both. Commissioner Parrish suggested finding out how Walton County is addressing its parking issues/access.

Mr. Moron asked Chairman Jones to explain to the individuals in the audience what the ARPC does for the county. The ARPC Region is comprised of Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Wakulla counties and their municipalities. The Apalachee Regional Planning Council (ARPC) is a multi-purpose agency of the state that was created on August 23, 1977. The ARPC is one of ten Regional Planning Councils in the State of Florida. The ARPC provides technical assistance in the areas of economic

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development, emergency planning, transportation, and quality of life to meet the needs of our member local governments within the nine-county region.

Commissioner Boldt said he would like Mr. Moron to ask the ARPC how surrounding areas are handling the following issues: Parking fees, boating issues, limiting hours of beach, citizen enforcement of parking, public restrooms.

Chairman Jones said one suggestion for St. George Island would be to add some parking for the several blocks down from the lighthouse. There may be possible areas in the right of way for creative parking. Commissioner Parrish said we would need an entrance and an exit off of the side road and not pull across the bike path.

Commissioner Ward said that she didn't want to speak out of context but she believes we may be able to use some of the TDC funds for infrastructure. However, if not, we will have to find a way to fund it. Chairman Jones said that the Board will not be spending TDC dollars unless they are allowed citing past misuse of funds by Florida counties who had to repay the funds.

Attorney Shuler noted that the right of way Chairman Jones was referring to on St. George Island is like 100-200 foot right of way and on Alligator Point it is 60-100 foot right of way. Mr. Morón said he could sit down with Chris and explain what information that we need and then go from there. Chairman Jones asked Captain Coulter to relay to the sheriff the ideas discussed at the workshop and see what his thoughts are on them.

There being no further business for the Board to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

Ricky Jones – Chairman

Attest:

Michele Maxwell – Clerk of Courts