

JUNE 8, 2016 – WORKSHOP

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida, held a Workshop on Wednesday, June 8, 2016 at 5:30 p.m. at the Walton County Courthouse Annex in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Walton Dunes Beach Access.

The following Board Members were present: Commissioner Sara Comander, Chairman; Commissioner Cecilia Jones, Vice-Chairman; Commissioner W. N. (Bill) Chapman; Commissioner Bill Imfeld; and Commissioner Cindy Meadows. Mr. Larry Jones, County Administrator, and Attorney Sidney Noyes, Assistant County Attorney, were also present.

Chairman Comander called the meeting to order.

Mr. Brian Kellenberger, TDC Beach Operations Director, briefly reviewed the meeting procedures and workshop rules. He discussed the Walton Dunes property history, project history, and discussed the aerial views of the property. Mr. Kellenberger discussed Conceptual Plans 1, 2, and 2A. He reported there would be very little dune degradation, a dune enhancement would be performed, and that FDEP would be consulted to add more structure to the dunes. He briefly discussed the proposed restroom facility, project components, and the projected \$256,900 cost estimate. Mr. Kellenberger reported the Department of Interior-Bureau of Land Management and the Florida Wildlife Service (FWS) have been contacted. FWS has asked that certain items be addressed. Local residents were notified regarding the intent of the project and the workshop.

Chairman Comander opened the public comment portion of the meeting. Several members of the audience came forward to speak in opposition of developing the Neighborhood Beach Access (NBA) into a Regional Beach Access (RBA). They cited dune degradation, safety issues, traffic, and parking as some of the greatest concerns. Photos, letters, and a petition were

submitted supporting their oppositions. One speaker who opposed the development of a RBA presented suggestions to improve the current NBA.

A few audience members came forward to speak in favor of developing an RBA at Walton Dunes. They cited a need to provide accesses with facilities and handicapped accessibility to enable all visitors and residents to enjoy Walton County Beaches. Some suggestions included constructing dune walkovers which would provide dune protection and allow easier access to the beach by those with disabilities; and handicapped loading and unloading areas near the access to aid the caretakers of handicapped individuals in getting their loved ones to the beach.

Mr. Jim Bagby discussed options which would allow the preservation of the dunes, utilization of the existing parking lot, and make the area handicapped accessible.

Commissioner Meadows asked if golf carts were driven to the access and asked where they were parked. Ms. Laurie Reichenbach, Dunes of Seagrove, said multiple golf carts are driven to the access and discussed the areas where people park; not only golf carts, but other vehicles as well. She reported an effort was being planned to consult the county regarding the placement of tow away signs in the unapproved parking areas.

Commissioner Meadows asked Mr. Kellenberger what the distance was from C.R. 30A to the Walton Dunes access. Ms. Reichenbach replied 6/10 of a mile. Commissioner Meadows directed TDC to look at the proposals from a safety, environmental, and parking aspect. There is not enough infrastructure to accommodate 3.2 million tourists. She made the following suggestions: 1. shift the paved areas to the north; 2. construct a parallel loading/unloading area near the access; 3. include a turn-around west of the entrance to the condominiums and homes;

and 4. a review by TDC and Public Works regarding sidewalks and bike paths in the area connecting to C.R. 30A.

Commissioner Imfeld expressed concern that the quality of life for the permanent residents needed to be considered.

Commissioner Chapman discussed his visits to the area and voiced concern with the safety of the beach visitors and residents. He expressed a need to install bike paths to the access. He suggested the following: 1. have Public Works review and survey the available right-of-way to determine the proper placement of bike path(s); and 2. meet with the Walton County Sheriff's Office to determine what signage would be needed to enable parking enforcement. He questioned what dune enhancement would involve. Mr. Kellenberger replied the existing dune would be expanded and boardwalks added to protect the existing dune and dune structure. Commissioner Chapman suggested consideration of the west entrance to construct an enhanced handicapped access and place the restroom structure in the parking area.

Commissioner Jones discussed recommendations submitted by Ms. Beverly Ottzen and suggested working with Deer Lake State Park. Mr. Jay Tusa said this is being explored. Commissioner Jones stated she does not support a RBA in this area.

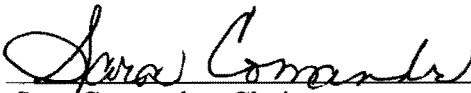
Chairman Comander stated the project needed to be thoroughly reviewed to insure that it is appropriate for the area. She expressed concern regarding the need for a restroom facility and handicapped accessibility. She asked to if a restroom could be built in the existing parking lot and whether a handicapped access could be placed at a NBA. Mr. Kellenberger responded that he would look into the placement of the restroom area and confirmed that a handicapped access could be developed on the east end of the property near an existing path. Chairman Comander


also asked if lifeguards could be placed at a NBA. Mr. Kellenberger said he would research the issue.

Commissioner Meadows recommended the project not be placed on an agenda for hearing until a workable plan can be presented.

Mr. Kellenberger was directed to review and implement the suggestions as discussed.

There being no further items to discuss, the workshop was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Approved: 
Sara Comander, Chairman

Attest: 
Alex Alford, Clerk of Court and County Comptroller