

Mayor's Update 8-6-14

Fellow Citizens,

Following are my comments to the Baldwin County Commission at a regularly scheduled Commission Meeting on August 5, 2014. Other citizens and interested parties of Perdido Beach also attended the meeting and addressed the Commission. Video is available for viewing on the Baldwin County website under Commission – Minutes and Agendas – August 5, 2014.

In Your Service, Patsy

BALDWIN COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING – AUGUST 5, 2014

Comments by Mayor Patsy Parker, Town of Perdido Beach concerning Proposed Policy #9.21 “Public Water Accesses and Road Right-of-Ways Terminating at Bodies of Water”

Mr. Chairman, Commissioners: First of all, thank you for your service to the people of Baldwin County and for your assistance to the Town of Perdido Beach. My comments today in no way diminish my appreciation for partnerships formed and for support given to the Town by the Commission and the Baldwin County Staff. It's a challenge to “start up” a new town and the support given by the Commission has been and is a tremendous asset in that respect.

As a citizen of Baldwin County and Mayor of a waterfront town I come before you today to thank you for making the decision years ago that you will not abandon existing public water accesses. I take you at your word today that this policy is to make clear your past policy of denying requests to vacate water accesses. It seems to me you have removed the words from the proposed policy that would have obligated you to waive your policy given certain circumstances, namely, “...the...responsibility to waive (the) policy in cases of ...health, safety, or to satisfy the greater public need...” We all know that conditions pertaining to health, safety, or public need may be real or they may be manufactured to appear real. Who has the most to gain by presenting evidence that those conditions exist? Of course, it would be the adjacent property owners and why not? If successful, they would be rid of the “worrisome public” and would be the new and proud owners of additional water front property. As Attorney Conner said, you still have the power to waive your policy but you're no longer held responsible to do so given certain conditions, whether real or manufactured.

I'm a great believer that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. Considering past behavior of certain individuals with a great deal of money, influence and power owning property in the community of Perdido Beach, you still may have requests to vacate the only two public boat launches in the community available to the residents and to First Responders. But you will be solely in charge of your decision – you won't be held responsible to vacate on the grounds of health, safety or public good, whether real or manufactured – you will be free to work out solutions that protect public rights.

Someone posted a comment to the news article related to the July 22nd Work Session that residents of Perdido Beach have a wonderful boat launch available in Josephine – implying it wouldn't be a big deal if Yupon Street and Magnolia Street Boat Launches went away. For sure, there is a great facility at that location as well as one located in Lillian, but, yes, it would be a big deal if the ones in Perdido Beach went away.

First of all, why should the folks in Perdido Beach lose a right that has been theirs since the 1970's when the boat launch was built, by all appearances by the Alabama Department of Conservation and still is listed on their calendar as a public boat launch. Second, the Josephine Boat Launch already has issues with overcrowding – why would we force a whole other community in that direction? Third, and extremely important, a crisis on the water – especially in Palmetto Creek – requiring the attention of first responders, would be resolved by the time first responders could go to Josephine, launch and make their way back to the Perdido Beach Community. But most likely the resolution would not be good.

I've spent a great deal of time during the past two weeks reading (again) Baldwin County minutes and other records pertaining to public water accesses in Perdido Beach – a very disheartening exercise. Mr. Larry Chason's comment at the May 15th Road and Bridges Meeting that water access issues have torn the community of Perdido Beach apart is probably the most disheartening of all. I ask, "What is the underlying reason?" Is it because private property owners have tried and continue to try to claim public property for their own benefit? Are they surprised that folks will "fight" to keep what is rightfully theirs? And the Commission has allowed them to tie its hands with threats of lawsuits leading to broken promises to repair the Yupon Street Boat Launch. Where does the responsibility lie for tearing the community apart? Not with the folks who live in Perdido Beach, especially those who own interior properties – they are the victims and the ones with the most to lose. If their rights to nearby water access go away so does their reason for living in Perdido Beach and so do their property values. Their rights are directly tied to decisions made by the Baldwin County Commission. As their mayor I will continue to do everything within my power to see that their rights are protected.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to speak.