

Mayor's Update – July 27, 2014

The Town's Safety Committee met Thursday, July 24th and made plans, in conjunction with the VFD, to hold a Community Meeting to pass on to you information concerning joint efforts by the VFD, the Town of Perdido Beach and Baldwin County Emergency Management related to Hurricane Response and Recovery. As soon as a date is set, notice of the meeting will be posted on the websites of the Town and the VFD, as well as on the signs of the Town and VFD.

On Tuesday, July 22nd a group of town residents attended a Baldwin County Commission Work Session to address a proposed county policy concerning water accesses. The basic statement in the proposed policy is that water accesses will not be "vacated" – (in other words, will not be abandoned by the Baldwin County Commission and given to adjacent property owners). That statement implies that the proposed policy will protect public water accesses for use by the public but one must read on to discover that there are words in the proposed policy that seem to make it necessary for the County Commission to "waive" their own policy in cases of safety, health or public good, "at its discretion". Not surprisingly there's a Perdido Beach connection. For the past 30 years there have been efforts by adjacent property owners to "vacate" water accesses in Perdido Beach, however, to the credit of the County Commission, those efforts have been unsuccessful. Before that time, however, there were successful vacations.

There are two water accesses in the Community of Perdido Beach that lie within the Baldwin County Jurisdiction (Yupon Street and Magnolia Street) – water accesses that have been used by the residents for decades and are still being used on a regular basis and happen to be the only public boat launches in the community that may be accessed by our First Responders. Of course we know that Yupon Street Boat Launch is in very bad repair and could be determined by the Commission to be a "safety" issue, even though the condition is due to neglect by the Commission and to threats of lawsuits by private property owners if the Commission proceeds to repair it. Magnolia Street Boat Launch was in good repair until approximately two years ago, at which time a group of property owners deliberately removed the concrete ramp, with the knowledge of the County Commission. At that time it was reported in the press that Commissioner Burt stated that the County would be moving ahead with repairs to Yupon Street. Of course, we are very much aware that repairs have not been made.

If you're interested in learning about additional Perdido Beach connections to the proposed policy, I encourage you to read the minutes from the BC Road and Bridges Meeting for May 15, 2014 in which Baldwin County property owner Larry Chason describes his version of the Perdido Beach water accesses story.

The proposed policy also appeared on the Baldwin County Work Session Agendas of May 27th and June 24th, for which minutes are posted on the Baldwin County website. The proposed policy was scheduled to be adopted as part of the "consent agenda" on July 17th but was removed from that agenda and placed on the July 22nd Work Session Agenda. It was at that meeting where Perdido Beach residents expressed their concerns with the proposed policy.

To further illustrate the Perdido Beach connection, there were comments made at the Town's July *Planning Commission Meeting* and by Council Members at the Town's July *Council Meeting* that could be taken to indicate that pressure is being brought on the Council to follow the County's example and adopt a similar policy, as well as to establish, for the record, that serious conditions exist on the water accesses within the Town's Jurisdiction related to health and safety. Council Member Condon reported that the Brewer property adjacent to the Escambia Avenue water access is being used as a "bathroom" and Council Member Fishbein reported that drug paraphernalia is being found on the water accesses. Neither of them presented evidence that those things are occurring. Many of our residents pick up trash on the water accesses, as do I, on a regular basis. No other such reports have surfaced and I, personally, haven't seen evidence to indicate that those conditions exist.

Admittedly, trash is left behind but not to the extent that would warrant the "vacation" of any water access. We know privileges will be abused from time to time and those abuses need to be addressed. As mayor of "ALL the residents and property owners" and as council members of "ALL the residents and property owners" the Town Council needs to address issues with the intention of protecting the rights of everyone. Solutions can be found if folks will sit down and talk, with respect for each other, and with a mind to find solutions that protect the rights of ALL.

These comments are mine and made from my perspective. Your perspective may be the same or it may be different. Please let me know if you share my perspective or if you have other thoughts to share.

In Your Service, Patsy