

**MINUTES
WORKSHOP
DESTIN CITY COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 23, 2023
ANNEX COUNCIL CHAMBERS
6:00 PM**

The Council of the City of Destin met in special session with the following members and staff present:

Destin City Council

Mayor Bobby Wagner
Councilmember Johnny King

Councilmember Terésa Hebert
Councilmember Jim Bagby

City of Destin Staff

City Manager Lance Johnson
City Clerk Rey Bailey
Parks & Recreation Director Lisa Firth
Deputy Parks & Rec Director Ryan Reed
Grants/Projects Manager Jeffrey Cozadd

Deputy City Manager Webb Warren
Public Information Manager Tamara Young
City Engineer Ryan Scott
City Attorney Kyle Bauman

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bobby Wagner called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM, followed by the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Nikki Johnson, a Destin resident and member of the Parks & Recreation Committee, stated that she strongly recommends preserving the park in its natural state as much as possible for the citizens to enjoy; adding that what is being proposed is the exact opposite. They will be paving over their last waterfront piece of property to make room for additional parking. She noted that the Parks and Recreation Committee had previously opposed creating extra parking.

Mr. Jay Howard, a Destin resident, agrees with preservig the park space for the citizens and pedestrians to use rather than converting it into additional parking spaces since the parking lot will only be in full capacity probably 4 weekends out of the year.

WORKSHOP

A. Joe's Bayou Recreation Area Improvement Project

Mayor Wagner provided a brief overview of the presentation Mr. Pierce Barrett of FDEP gave to the Parks & Recreation Committee at their previous meeting. He stated that Mr. Barrett plans to make another presentation before the city council in March.

Project Goals: Florida Department of Environmental Protection

- To develop and improve public access and recreational enhancement to the Joe's Bayou Recreational Area and Mattie Kelly Park and Nature Trail

- These improvements are to include, as budget allows, the following:
 - ❖ Improve access to the existing boat ramp area and access piers
 - ❖ Replace/improve the existing fishing pier
 - ❖ Protect and increase access to the shoreline through the construction of a reef breakwater, removal of existing hard scape
 - ❖ Rehabilitation and expansion of parking areas
 - ❖ Improve the nature trails and viewing areas
 - ❖ Wetland enhancement, pond restoration and improvements to stormwater management
 - ❖ Lighting, landscaping, irrigation, and park amenities (trash containers, benches, interpretive signage)

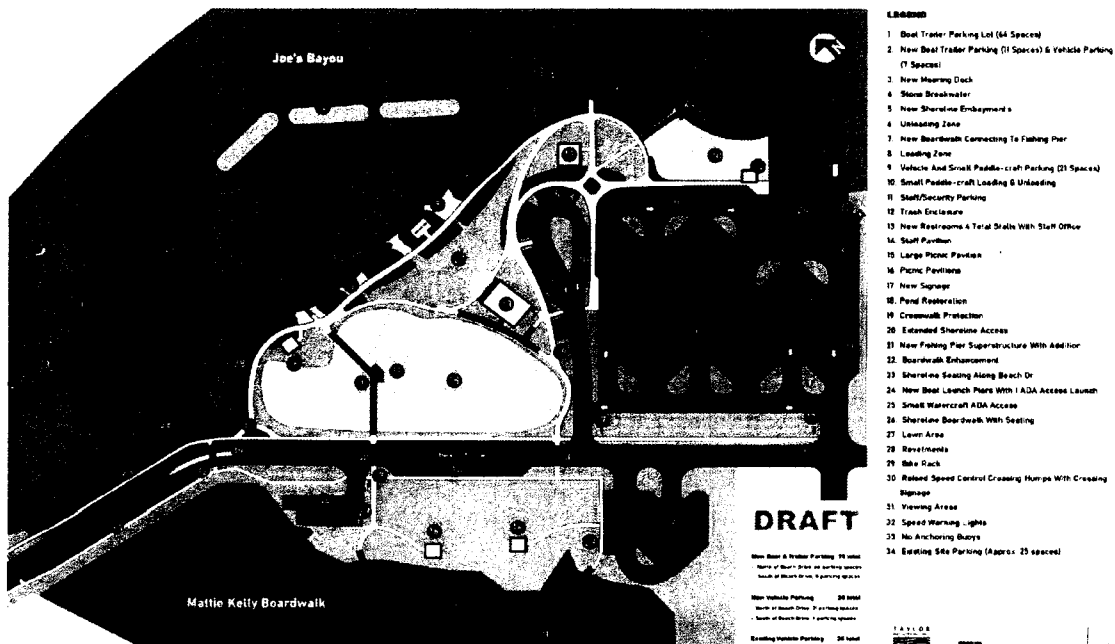
Project Funding

- Funding provided through the NRDA Final Restoration Plan RP-1
- Total amount allocated - \$12,202,891 (Administration / Engineering / Construction)

Mayor Wagner stated that they could potentially build a permanent station and a boat slip at Joe's Bayou for the city's Harbor Master as this area could be one of the main access points or areas of operations for rogue vessels that are operating illegally inside the city limits; adding that these are some of the things he would like to see in the final proposal. He asked for the council's initial thoughts on these as well as the following two slides – Project Master Plan and Aerial Overlay.



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

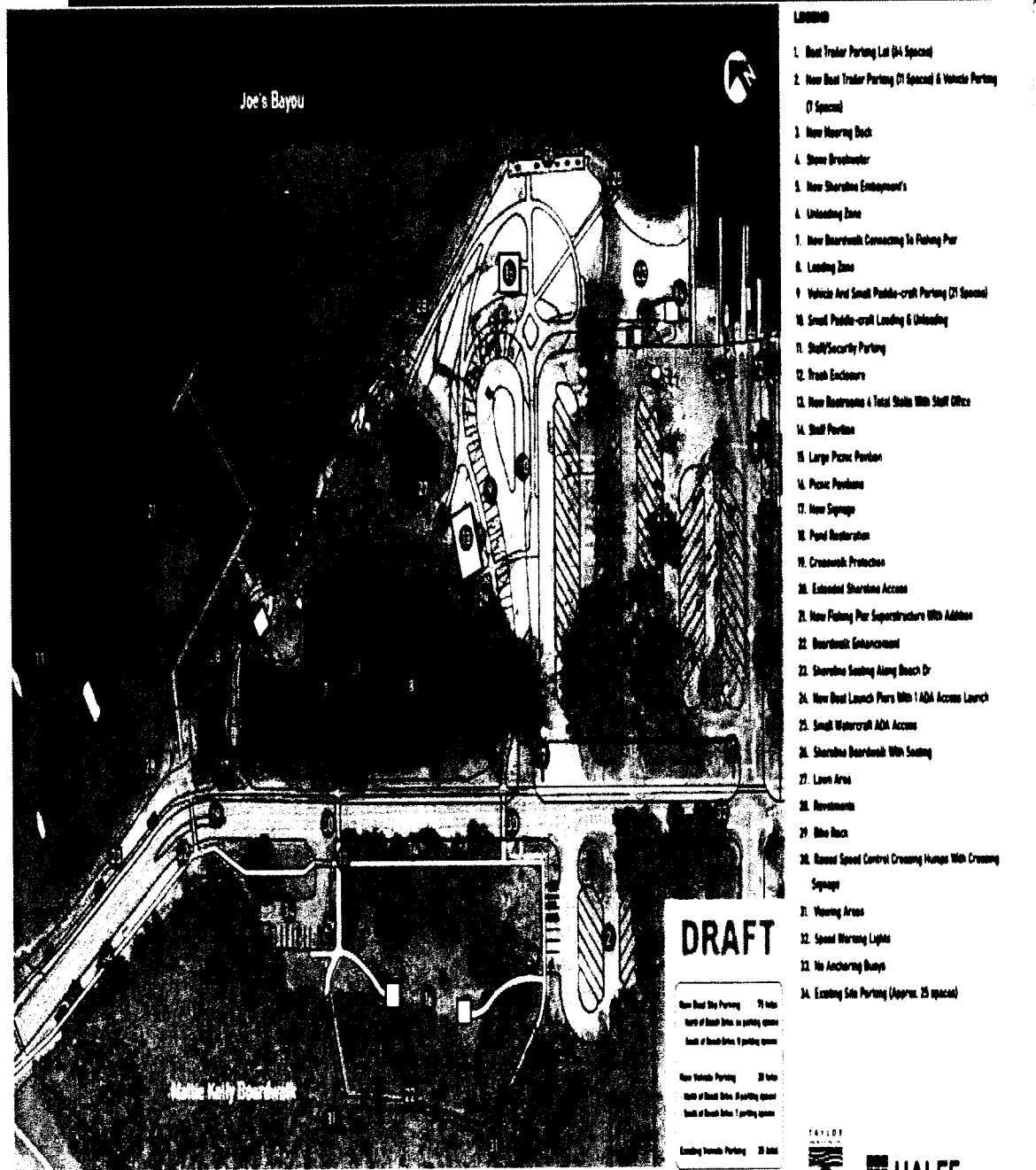


Joe's Bayou Recreation Area Improvements Concept Sketch





FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



Joe's Bayou Recreation Area Improvements: Concept Sketch 8/1/2022



DAG

Councilmember Bagby stated that he agrees with the previous speakers with regards to returning the park in its natural state; adding he was under the notion that their objective is to have a park and not an additional parking lot. He asked approximately how many extra parking spaces they plan to add.

Mr. Pierce Barrett, professional engineer from FDEP, noted that the aerial overlay can be misleading as there is actually less parking at Joe's Bayou currently. The area to the right side of the picture is the current parking lot area. It has very little parking for regular vehicles. The old CEMEX Plant area next to it is where some improvements will be made to allow for regular vehicles that may bring kayaks. He added that kayaks do not always require a trailer. They can be placed on top or at the back of a pickup truck.

Councilmember Bagby asked whether they plan to convert this into a paid parking lot.

The Deputy City Manager stated that it is basically paid parking if a boat is launched, but the other aspects of parking have not been discussed.

Councilmember Bagby stated that they would need to discuss and make a determination in the near future whether they are charging a fair amount for boat launching for resident or non-resident, and whether they should charge for regular parking.

Councilmember Bagby asked whether the Parks & Recreation Committee has recommended this design for adoption by the council.

Ms. Sandy Trammell, Chair of the Parks & Recreation Committee, noted that a 30% conceptual design was presented to the committee, and that the committee made some minor suggestions. Mr. Barrett informed them of their plan to schedule a workshop session with the public on this project in March.

According to Mr. Barrett, they plan to have a workshop session with the public on March 16th with the revision to the presentation they made at the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting addressing some of the comments provided by the committee, and possibly incorporating some of their recommendations into the plan. He also stated that anything dealing with the operations of the park – i.e., allowing/disallowing dogs or charging/not charging for parking – is outside of their scope. That decision belongs to the city.

Councilmember Hebert wants to make sure parking spaces for any truck/trailer combinations are specified and to make sure they can accommodate the length of these vehicles.

Councilmember King asked whether there is a way to put in a washdown area for boats. He stated that there is a big demand for it although it is understandable, they would not be able to accommodate everybody on a busy weekend.

The mayor stated that the staff/security parking area may be a place to put in a washdown area if they limit it to a maximum of 2 or 3 parking spaces for the Joe's Bayou staff and the Harbor Master. He added that he would like to see a code enforcement office or outpost with cameras for the Harbor Master in the staff pavilion just to show they are taking a proactive approach to keep people accountable and help deter illegal operations in that area.

Councilmember Bagby wants to make sure they consider the safety aspects as they progress along with the plan. He stated there will be pedestrians, swimmers, people on paddleboard or non-motorized equipment, Jet Skis and small and large boats. He recommends keeping these groups segregated to avoid putting anyone in a predicament.

Next, Councilmember Bagby addressed the drainage issue. He wants to make sure they seriously consider where they are putting their parking and how they are draining that parking to avoid oil and other substance from vehicles going straight to the bay; adding that the water needs to be treated before it goes to the bay.

According to Mr. Barrett, his agency has the stormwater permitting process that would be completely reviewed. They cannot permit the water from the parking lot to be discharged directly into open water. He continued that the entire area called Mattie Kelly Park is a jurisdictional wetland, and that it is properly designated on the plan so that buildings cannot go into those areas. He added that any stormwater associated with the redevelopment of the park will be properly treated and permitted.

Councilmember Bagby stated that although he agrees that putting in a washdown area for boats is important, it will be the main source of water containing the most harmful substance that will be discharged from this site and therefore needs to be properly treated. He added that he will agree to incorporate that area into the plan as long as it is sustainable.

Mayor Wagner noted that the bottom area of the map showing proposed location of the Mattie Kelly signage is the Beach/Benning circle which has probably the most used sidewalk for people as far as walking their dogs and pushing strollers. Placing a dog/pedestrian drinking station there would be a nice feature to promote that connectivity and mobility.

The City Manager commented that it has always been the city's goal to maximize the open space on the water side for passive recreation. If they needed to maximize the area on the other side for parking it would be a great idea to keep a lot of grass for the majority of the year and then during the busy weekends and during festivals to allow parking on the grass area, with special permission from the council.

Councilmember Bagby would like to know how many parking spaces, short and long, they have out in the park when the plans come back.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Nikki Johnson recommends eliminating the walkover on the water as it is a designated wetland according to the map. She continued that one of the problems they have with Mattie Kelly is all of the trash being thrown in that area. They cannot just go in there to pick them up because it is a wetland.

Ms. Johnson also pointed out that a council agenda item dated February 12, 2019 contains the following statement:

"During the August 6, 2018 council meeting, the Parks & Recreation Committee presented the following recommendation to Council: 'Consensus by the committee to

recommend to the City Council that when the Joe's Bayou recreation area is expanded, to authorize the addition of an on-leash dog friendly area."

Ms. Johnson continued there are very few parks in Destin that are dog-friendly, and that there are none that have water access.

Mr. Michael Thompson, a Destin resident, stated that he is an avid boater and frequent user of Joe's Bayou Boat Ramp. Currently, one of the biggest problems is that there is nowhere to park boats when they come in. They have people parking along the existing piers blocking the ramp with their boat, which is a nightmare especially on a busy weekend. He stated that he supports putting in additional parking for boats.

Mr. Claude Newlin, a Destin resident, pointed out that there is currently a small building and restroom located in the area of the map labeled "staff pavilion." He stated that the individual collecting fees will need more than a pavilion to protect them from electrical storms they usually experienced at summertime. He also recommends keeping the restroom facility so that it can be utilized by people launching their boat.

According to Mr. Barrett, the original proposal was to remove the existing structure and replace it with a new bathroom facility, which is currently shown in the 30% plan. He continued there were comments during the Parks & Recreation Committee about the need for the restroom facility to remain at its current location. That issue is currently being discussed. If the current facility remains it will affect the parking area as the parking area is expanded based upon the removal of the facility. He also stated that the new parking lot layouts will provide for staging areas for boats coming in and exiting the area. He added that the current facility does not meet the current flood standard. He added they would take it into consideration if that is the will of the council, but if the existing building remains, it will not match the new architectural style of the park.

Mr. Newlin also stated that putting in a washdown station for boats would be quite useful, but it could also create a bottleneck, especially during a busy weekend if not properly constructed and have some measure of control.

Ms. Tammy Weidenhamer, a Destin resident, recommends moving the paddle boarding area stating that as an avid paddle boarder, she does not feel this sport mixed well with the boats.

Mr. John Stephens, a Destin resident and livery operator, recommends having more non-overnight and non-commercial transient slips as they can expect more people coming in by boats to get to the park. He also recommends having swimming platforms for children in the swimming area.

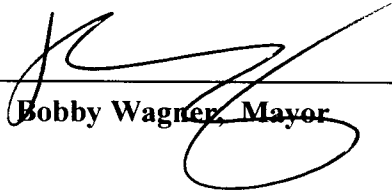
Mr. Chatham Morgan, a Destin resident and business owner, stated that before they make significant changes to the parking lot, they should review the data that show how often current parking lots are at full capacity. He stated that from August to Memorial Day, the parking lots are nowhere near full capacity at all. He would not want to see the city sacrifice a lot of green space, playground for kids, or on-lease dog park for a waterfront parking lot that sits empty a large percentage of time.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 PM.


ATTEST:

Rey Bailey, City Clerk


Bobby Wagner, Mayor