

**SPECIAL MEETING
DESTIN CITY COUNCIL
JULY 15, 2026
ANNEX COUNCIL CHAMBERS
6:00 PM**

*****Core Value of the Month - Integrity*****

CALL TO ORDER

*** INVOCATION**

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

NEW BUSINESS

A. Update on State-Acquired Land in Holiday Isle Adjacent to City's Norriego Point Park

1. PUBLIC COMMENTS

If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the council with respect of any matter considered at this meeting, he/she may need a record of the proceeding, and for such purpose, he/she may need to ensure that verbatim record of the proceeding is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. FS286.0105

Persons with disabilities who required assistance to participate in this meeting are requested to notify the City Clerk's Office at (850) 837-4242 as soon as possible.

CITY OF DESTIN



AGENDA ITEM

COUNCIL MEETING DATE: July 15, 2026
TYPE OF AGENDA ITEM: City Manager Report
AGENDA OUTLINE NUMBER: A.

TO: City Council

THRU:

FROM: Larry Jones , City Manager
Kimberly Kopp, City Attorney

DATE: July 10, 2026

SUBJECT: Update on State-Acquired Land in Holiday Isle Adjacent to City's Norriego Point Park

I. BACKGROUND: The following are recent updates relating to the state-owned Park Property in Holiday Isle (City of Destin).

1. County-Wide Survey Results

On March 26, 2026, the City received results from a COUNTY-WIDE SURVEY that asked randomly-selected County residents what they prefer to see as the public use of the newly acquired land purchased by the State of Florida for a park in Holiday Isle ("Park" or "Park Property"). An outside firm, Cherry Communications (Tallahassee), was utilized by the City for their expertise in conducting phone surveys. This new information will be discussed at tonight's Council meeting of April 7, 2026. In sum, the survey showed that nearly 88% of County residents desire for the Park Property to remain natural or with minimal amenities, that over 75% of County residents oppose commercial marina use, and that only 2% of the County supports a marina rental model. The margin of error for survey results is approximately 4.9%.

Cherry Communications
207 W. Park Ave., Ste. A
Tallahassee, FL 32301
cherrycom.com

2. Adoption of City Council Resolution 2026-05 on March 16, 2026, Requesting City Management of Park and Committing Up to Five Million Dollars.

On March 16, 2026, the City Council approved Resolution 2026-05, *which is attached to this agenda item as additional background*. Resolution 2026-05 respectfully requests that the State of Florida authorize the City of Destin to serve as the Lessee and local managing entity for the Park Property. In the resolution, the City affirms its commitment to managing the Park in a

manner that emphasizes environmental stewardship, conservation, passive recreation, and compatibility with surrounding residential and conservation areas. Further, the Resolution provides that the City of Destin is prepared to invest municipal resources into the stewardship and improvement of the Park Property and is willing to commit funding for the redevelopment, restoration, and enhancement of the Park in an amount not to exceed **Five Million Dollars (\$5,000,000.00)** in order to support environmentally sensitive improvements, passive recreational amenities, and long-term conservation management consistent with the character of the surrounding community. The resolution has been forwarded to County and State representatives as directed by the City Council. It is expected that the City Council's resolution will be considered first at the April 7th BCC meeting, and again on April 21st along with any concept plans approved tonight by the Destin City Council, and a Council decision on free park parking for all County residents, as further explained in the Discussion section of this Staff Report.

3. Zoning/Land Use/Development Order Background Information

The following background information is provided for public knowledge (and has been previously provided):

As discussed at prior meetings both at the City and County level, the current land use entitlements for the State Park property adjacent to the City's Norriego Point Park prohibit all nonresidential uses. Since it appears a condo will not be built on the property, given that the State's purchase was described as for "conservation," the entitlements of the property should be updated so that the property may be maintained for non-residential purposes. This process would include:

1. Amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan (Future Land Use Designation on the Property)
2. Rezoning of the Property, and
3. Amendment to the existing Development Order.

All three of these referenced land use applications would require City Council approvals and public hearings with the public invited to participate, which would occur generally as follows:

Public Hearing One: Future Land Use Map (FLUM) amendment at Land Planning Agency (LPA) meeting

Public Hearing Two: Rezoning at LPA meeting
(Public hearings 1 and 2 would likely be done at the same LPA meeting)

Public Hearing Three: FLUM amendment at City Council meeting (first reading of FLUM ordinance)

Public Hearing Four: Rezoning at City Council meeting (first reading of zoning ordinance)
(Public hearings 3 and 4 would likely be done at the same City Council meeting)

Public Hearing Five: FLUM amendment at City Council meeting (second reading of FLUM ordinance)

Public Hearing Six: Rezoning at City Council meeting (second reading of zoning ordinance)
(Public hearings 5 and 6 would likely be done at the same City Council meeting)

Notably, as has been discussed, the docks are legally classified as a residential use tied to a condominium that was never constructed. Without amendment to the Development Order, the docks cannot lawfully be used independently. In order to comply with existing codes, the docks

would need to be removed or a Major Amendment to Development Order 21-23 would be required, with an additional public hearing before the City Council. Note that Development Order 21-23 prohibits all nonresidential uses of the docks, including but not limited to slip rentals, commercial uses, or any uses that involve boat traffic at a frequency or intensity not typical of a residential area.

The Comprehensive Plan states, in relevant part that:

OBJECTIVE 1-2.8: CONSERVATION LAND USE DESIGNATION. *The FLUM (Map 1-1), shall identify lands that are environmentally fragile for long-term preservation by designating them as "CON." Environmentally fragile lands shall be referred to as conservation resources, which are defined in Rule 9J-5.003(30), Florida Administrative Code. The protection and preservation of conservation resources shall be achieved through the implementation of the following Policies.*

Policy 1-2.8.1: Conservation (CON). *The FLUM shall designate lands that are natural and coastal resources as "CON." It is the intent of the "CON" land use designation to provide for the long-term protection and preservation of environmentally sensitive natural resource systems. The LDC shall be amended to ensure no development is permitted within "CON" designated areas, other than beach accessways, such as dune walkovers, parking, docks, restroom facilities, and passive recreation.*

The City's Land Development Code is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, pursuant to State Law.

Importantly:

- Norriego Point Park, which is adjacent to the newly acquired State Park, contains the Conservation (CON) future land use designation and zoning.
- The Conservation district is **highly restrictive** and intended for environmental preservation.
- Marinas are **not** permitted in either the Conservation (CON) Future Land Use Designation and Zoning District.
- Under the City's Land Development Code (Section 7.12.06(BB) and Table 7-2), development within CONSERVATION (CON) is limited to beach accessways such as dune walkovers, parking areas, docks, restroom facilities (up to one story), and passive recreation. Norriego Point currently holds a Future Land Use Designation and Zoning of Conservation, and this zoning would maintain consistency between the State and City Park.

Finally, please note that if the future land use and zoning for this Property are changed, any proposed use would still need to be consistent with all additional applicable provisions of the Comp Plan and LDC, State and federal permitting requirements, any applicable easements, and any required development order amendments.

Pursuant to Council directives, the City Manager and City Attorney have contacted appropriate County and State representatives. As of the date of this agenda item, the Property is owned by the State of Florida, and there is no known entity with a leasehold interest or approved

management plan for the Property.

4. April 21st BCC Meeting in Response to City Resolution 2026-05:

On April 21, 2026, the Okaloosa County Commissioners discussed City Resolution 2026-05 and noted the City's concept plan. Several members of the Destin City Council, the City Manager, City Attorney, and several residents spoke during the BCC meeting in support of City Council Resolution 2026-05 and in support of the City of Destin obtaining the Lease and management of the Park Property.

From the City's perspective, the discussion reflected both support and hesitation among County leadership.

Commissioners Sherri Cox and Carolyn Ketchel each expressed clear support for the City's request to lease the Park from the State and to assume management of the Park Property. Their statements aligned with the City's position that local stewardship would best serve residents and the long-term interests of the Park.

However, Commissioner Paul Mixon introduced a motion directing the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners to send Commissioner Drew Palmer to meet with State officials, alongside a City representative, to further clarify the State's objectives regarding the Park. This motion was made despite the City's formal request - and despite the support voiced by multiple residents - for the City to move forward with leasing and managing the property.

Commissioner Paul Mixon, Commissioner Drew Palmer, and Chairman Trey Goodwin voted in support of Commissioner Mixon's motion, with Commissioner Sherri Cox and Commissioner Carolyn Ketchel dissenting. The final vote was thus 3-2.

Council Member Destin and Commissioner Palmer were scheduled to attend such a meeting on April 30th. However, it was decided that the meeting will be rescheduled to a date between May 12 and 15th. As of the time/date of this staff report on the morning of May 28, 2026, the meeting has not been rescheduled.

5. Resolution Protection Shorebirds and Staff Recommendation for Conservation FLUM and Zoning; Additional May 2026 Updates

A. RESOLUTION 2026-13 FOR SHOREBIRD PROTECTION AND FURTHER DATA AND ANALYSIS FOR CONSERVATION FUTURE LAND USE AND ZONING: On May 4, 2026, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) informed the City that the 4 acre state-acquired site is an important bird nesting area and that Audubon Florida would survey and post signage to protect nesting birds and discourage public access to sensitive areas. The following day, Audubon surveyed the site and posted signage to protect these imperiled birds, particularly the least terns.

As previously recognized by the City Council, the Norriego Point area was formerly a bird sanctuary and has long provided important habitat for shorebirds, including the imperiled least tern. With its unique location, dunes, and conservation status, Norriego Point provides critical nesting, resting and foraging habitat for migratory and resident bird species, including species protected under State and Federal law. On May 18, 2026, the City Council passed and adopted Resolution 2026-13, which sets forth legislative findings supporting protection of shorebirds and their habitat at Norriego Point, including the newly acquired 3.99 acre state-owned parcel.

The Resolution formally expresses the City Council's support for protecting imperiled shorebird habitat and sensitive nesting areas at and around the City's Norriego Point Park and adjacent state-owned property. **Further, the Resolution provides that the City supports the efforts of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission and Audubon Florida to protect shorebirds, promote conservation practices, and educate the public on habitat protection and stewardship. Audubon Florida made a presentation to the City Council on May 18th, in efforts to protect shorebirds on and around Norriego Point and the state lands.**

The Future Land Use and Zoning of the state-acquired lands remain critical considerations. Long term protection of imperiled shorebirds is best supported through minimal development and conservation land use and zoning designations, as previously discussed by the City Council for the state-owned parcel. These conservation designations would also be consistent with the City's adjacent Norriego Point Park, which is designated and zoned for conservation.

In the event that the State (1) desires the property for use as a public park and (2) does not endeavor to use the property for residential purposes, it would be appropriate for the City to consider changing the current residential Future Land Use and Zoning designations on the state-acquired property to City Conservation.

City Staff continues to strongly recommend that the State of Florida and City Council support a Conservation Future Land Use and Zoning for the property. It is further again noted that the docking facilities on site **do not have a certificate of completion** and are currently approved for **residential purposes only**. Any nonresidential use of the docks is explicitly prohibited in the approved development order for construction of the docks. Under the conservation future land use and zoning designations, the docking facilities could be used as a fishing pier and/or public, transient slips available on a first-come, first serve basis but could **not** be used for overnight slip rentals and/or a marina (provided the City Council also amends the existing development order to allow such nonresidential purposes).

B. STATE/CITY/COUNTY DISCUSSION STATUS: Council Member Destin and Commissioner Palmer were scheduled to attend a meeting with representatives of the State on April 30th. However, it was later decided that the meeting would be rescheduled to a date between May 12 and 15th. As of the time/date of this staff report on the morning of **May 28, 2026**, the meeting has not been rescheduled.

6. OBJECTION TO COUNTY COMMISSIONER DREW PALMER'S REQUEST FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL OPINION

Members of the City Council, the Mayor, City Manager, City Attorney, and residents attended the Board of County Commissioners meeting held on Tuesday, May 19, 2026 at 8:30. The Mayor formally requested the County support protection of the shorebirds but the County took no action on the request.

Instead, near the very conclusion of the BCC meeting during his Commissioner reports, (AFTER all opportunities for public input and without inclusion on the County's agenda) Commissioner Palmer mentioned he had submitted a request for a legal opinion to the office of James Uthmeier, the Attorney General of the State of Florida. **Notwithstanding the BCC's**

prior motion that the City and County approach the State together relating to the State Park Property in the City of Destin, the City was not informed of the County's request for legal opinion prior to it being sent out on Friday, May 15th, nor was any input solicited from the City prior to the County's submission of the request to the State Attorney General. Notably, no copy of the request for opinion was in the May 19th BCC agenda (or any other prior BCC agenda), it is believed that no copies were on the BCC dais for other Board members, and none were provided to the City or residents prior to the meeting. In fact, the sole reason the City received a copy of the Commissioner's request was due to the City's immediate public records request.

A copy of this Request for Legal Opinion is attached to this agenda item. Notably, the Request for Legal Opinion does not include a separate memorandum stating the County's position on the matter, as is typically required to be submitted for such opinion requests. Further, in the opinion of the City Attorney, the County's request for opinion reflects a matter in dispute between governmental entities. Therefore, it was inappropriately submitted to the AGO, which does not opine on intergovernmental disputes.

In summary, the request for legal opinion generally asked the Attorney General (a member of the Cabinet that approved the land acquisition in the first place), whether and to what extent the City's rules and regulations for zoning, permitting and land use entitlements apply, whether the HIIA's restrictions and covenants apply, and whether and to what extent the County would be required to collaborate with the City of Destin (see attached for further details). It appears that the County representatives involved in this request for opinion are searching for an answer other than what the County was already told, in writing, by DEP: i.e., that the County must adhere to City land use, zoning and permitting rules and regulations.

Accordingly, the City Attorney submitted the attached correspondence to the County Attorney on behalf of the City Council, calling upon Commissioner Palmer to immediately withdraw the request for a legal opinion for the following reasons:

1. The most current Okaloosa County BCC Motion relating to the subject property authorized Commissioner Palmer to approach state representatives alongside a representative from the City of Destin. However, the City had absolutely no input in formulating the attached request. This request represents a clear departure from what was agreed upon during the County meeting, where it was understood that the commissioner and a council member would approach the state together. Commissioner Palmer had no authority to submit this letter independently, in place of the agreed joint effort and without any input from the City of Destin.

2. The Attorney General does not have the authority to address the questions posed for several reasons. First, the Attorney General's Office is not the appropriate venue for resolving intergovernmental disputes. If the County's position is to dispute, question, or otherwise challenge the City's land use and permitting authority with respect to the subject property, then a clear dispute exists between the parties. Second, the Attorney General's office cannot issue a legal opinion regarding a legislative action taken by a board or Cabinet on which the Attorney General serves as a member.

3. **The Florida Department of Environmental Protection ("FDEP") has already informed Okaloosa County in writing that it must adhere to City zoning and permitting requirements with respect to the subject property. The City possesses copies of this**

correspondence, which were previously provided to the County.

The County was reminded that the City's Comprehensive Plan and land development regulations are not arbitrary constraints; they reflect deliberate planning, extensive public input, and long-term policy determinations adopted in the public interest. Further, adequate due process requires that the public be afforded meaningful opportunities for participation in relevant local venues of public engagement.

The City Manager and City Attorney recommend that the City Council reiterate its position for the public record that it will not support, endorse, or acquiesce to any effort that seeks to unilaterally circumvent, undermine or fail to acknowledge the City's established land use and permitting authority. This reflects the Council's commitment to protecting its lawful regulatory role, ensuring transparency and accountability in the development process, and upholding the standards and procedures adopted for the benefit of the community and the orderly governance of municipal affairs.

While the County Attorney submitted a response by email to the City Attorney's May 20, 2026 correspondence, (City/County elected officials were copied), neither the County Attorney, County Administrator, or any other representative of the County has responded to subsequent requests from the City for information as to why the City was left out of the drafting of any request for legal opinion to any entity, including the State Attorney General. This failure to include the City is concerning for multiple reasons, given the City's vital interests in the area, including but not limited to the City's ownership of the adjacent right of way, parking area, and 14 acre City Norriego Point Park, the City's representation of the residents and local public, and the City's regulatory authorities and jurisdiction within its municipal boundaries.

One final note: As you know, the County sold and deeded Norriego Point to the City in 2010, with conditions attached. The City adheres to all conditions and operates the property as a public conservation park (the summary of the conditions is that the property be used by the public for park/recreational purposes, no commercial concession contracts, etc). Interestingly, it has recently been determined by virtue of public records requests that on December 12, 2025 (two days after the State's closing on the 4 acre parcel), the County Attorney sent an email with subject line "Norriego Point conveyance to Destin" to Commissioner Mixon, County Administrator John Hofstad, and Deputy County Administrator Craig Coffey, laying out information on the conditions set forth in the deed. The County Attorney also indicated in her email that failure to adhere to such conditions would result in forfeiture of the City-owned property back to the County. The timing and substance of the email is noted, and no commissioner other than Commissioner Mixon is copied to the email.

7. County's August 19, 2025 Commitment/Non-Commitment to Manage and Expend Funds

Immediately prior to the adjournment of the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) meeting on June 16, 2026, Commissioner Drew Palmer again raised the issue of the proposed Holiday Isle state park, despite the matter not being included on the published agenda and after all opportunities for public comment had concluded. During his remarks, Commissioner Palmer referenced the County's August 19, 2025 BCC meeting as the occasion on which the County had committed to managing the proposed state park in Holiday Isle.

There are prior examples of late meeting discussions relating to the state park in Holiday Isle. Notably, the Holiday Isle state park issue was also raised at the August 19, 2025 meeting after public comment had closed and without being listed on the published agenda. This will be discussed at length below. Similarly, at the May 19, 2026 BCC meeting, Commissioner Palmer informed the Board that he had requested an opinion from the Florida Attorney General regarding the Holiday Isle state park, questioning the City's lawful land use authorities. That discussion likewise occurred after all public comment opportunities had ended and without the matter appearing on the published agenda. No copy of the County's written request to the Attorney General was included at that time, nor was any copy forwarded to the City. The City did **not** join the request, and instead, formally objected to the request as described above in the Background section of this staff report. This May meeting was discussed at length with the City Council at its public meeting held on June 1, 2026.

The City Council has acknowledged on multiple occasions that the County's proposed development of the state park in Holiday Isle is a significant intergovernmental issue involving significant budgetary and land-use considerations. Thus, in response to the repeated discussion of this matter outside of Okaloosa County's published agenda process and after the close of the County's public comment opportunities, the City Attorney sent correspondence, dated June 17, 2026, to the County Attorney, with copies provided to all members of the BCC and City Council. See attached correspondence.

In her correspondence, the City Attorney requested that substantive matters reasonably expected to generate public interest or BCC discussion be included on the County's published agenda in advance of the meeting. Alternatively, the City Attorney requested that the BCC provide an opportunity for public comment when such matters are raised during a meeting. It was noted that these measures would further the transparency objectives embodied in Florida's Government in the Sunshine Law and section 286.0114, Florida Statutes, while promoting public confidence in the governmental decision-making process. As of the date of this staff report, the City Attorney has not received a response from the County.

Contrary to Commissioner Palmer's late-meeting comments on June 16, 2026, the City does not believe that the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners committed to manage the state park property located in Holiday Isle. While Commissioner Palmer generally discussed with the BCC submitting a letter to the state to support such a park, there was no such letter in the agenda for the BCC or anyone in the public to review. The City was informed that members of the BCC did NOT have a copy of the letter on the dais during the discussion. Further, there was no mention at the public BCC meeting on August 19, 2025 of any \$3 to \$5 Million commitment relating to the park, nor mention that any County employees or elected officials were considering disregarding the City's state-approved Comprehensive Plan, Land Development Code, and property-specific City-issued development order for the property. Further, there was no discussion that the County would ***"assume full responsibility for the day-to-day management, maintenance, and operation of the park and marina, as well as any adjacent state-owned lands. This includes oversight of capital projects, construction procurement, insurance, maintenance, staffing, rule enforcement, utilities, and all other operational components."*** There was also no formal vote on the topic.

Based on the transcript provided on Okaloosa County's website, Commissioner Palmer stated the following at the August 19, 2025 meeting: *Commissioner Palmer: yes I just have one thing.*

*Something I'm very excited about, as I believe all of us have been separately briefed on the new park that our governor and state legislature has allocated funds for, the state is now requesting that **there be a letter from the county just committing to managing the facilities and some improvements on that property. And so I just I would request that we have a consensus understanding that this will have to come before the board for an MOU at some point for final approval. But for now, if we could have a consensus that we allow the county to put together a-- or the staff, to put together a letter of commitment for us to do that signed by the chairman, I would just ask that the board consider that.** Commissioner Mixon: [inaudible] sir. It's good with me. Is consensus ok for that or do we need to walk it? **Do we have consensus to move in that direction?** Ok. Commissioner Palmer: thank you. It's such an amazing opportunity for the county. I just appreciate you guys all supporting that. Commissioner Mixon: sure thank you. All right. Nothing further. Meeting's adjourned.*

The City's position is that there was no consensus as to management of the park at that time. A formal vote of the BCC would be required based on the magnitude of the dollars allegedly committed by the county in the ensuing letter that was submitted to the State as well as due to the intergovernmental and land use issues involved, all of which have been shown to involve substantial public interest. A formal vote would also be required to allow for any commissioners that might have a conflict of interest to abstain from the vote. If any conflicts of interest exist, an abstention could potentially affect the ultimate outcome of any vote. For example, a two to two vote of the BCC would result in a tie, and thus a failure to approve any such commitment.

Notwithstanding the above, the following is an actual excerpt from the County's correspondence, which was subsequently sent to the State of Florida based on the above "consensus" (note: the County incorrectly describes the acreage of the Holiday Isle state park in the correspondence, as it does not consist of 5.7 acres but rather consists of approximately 4 acres):

. . . We are writing to formally express Okaloosa County's strong commitment to the long-term stewardship and management of this new 5.7-acre park. The County fully recognizes the ecological, recreational, and economic significance of the site-- particularly its vital role in protecting the Destin Harbor.

*In alignment with the conservation and public access principles outlined in the Florida Forever Act (Chapter 259, F.S.), Okaloosa County affirms its intent to support and implement best management practices for the park. To that end, the **County agrees to assume full responsibility for the day-to-day management, maintenance, and operation of the park and marina, as well as any adjacent state-owned lands. This includes oversight of capital projects, construction procurement, insurance, maintenance, staffing, rule enforcement, utilities, and all other operational components.***

*Furthermore, the County **is committed to collaborating with both the City of Destin and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to advance the shared vision for Norriego Point Park. Should it be requested, we are also prepared to fully manage that existing park facility.***

*To demonstrate our commitment, **Okaloosa County is pledging a minimum direct investment of \$3 million, with an overall contribution exceeding \$5 million.** This includes a combination of funding, grants, in-kind services, startup and operational costs, and other associated expenditures needed to successfully launch and sustain the new park.*

At the appropriate time, we are ready to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with FDEP, modeled on the existing MOU for Norriego Point Park. For further coordination, please contact Craig Coffey, Deputy County Administrator, at (850) 609-6136. [Emphasis added]

A full copy of the County's August 19, 2025 letter is attached to this staff report for informational purposes. The bold font has been added to emphasize particular portions of the letter that the City believes surpass the information provided at the end of the BCC meeting on August 19th.

Did the County commit to manage the Park as they indicated in their August 19, 2025 letter to the State? The only two options in response are (1) The County committed to manage the park on August 19th without any public notice or public participation, notwithstanding Section 286.0114(2), Florida Statutes or (2) the County has not committed to managing the park. The County has not been clear on which of these options has occurred.

2. Meeting between DEP reps, City Manager Dr. Larry Jones and City Attorney Kimberly Romano Kopp.

Per Council directive, the City Attorney and City Manager met with representatives of the FDEP to discuss appropriate procedures to obtain management authority at the state park in Holiday Isle. If the City desires to make a request to the State without the support of the County, the City would need to make the request directly to the BOT. The DEP reps indicated that the State would support an agreement that was supported by both the City and the County, given that the BOT approval included documentation that stated the County would manage the park. The State did not have any specific requests for development of the park in Holiday Isle.

3. Meeting between City Manager Dr. Larry Jones, Council Member Destin and Commissioner Palmer.

Summary of Meeting – June 19, 2026

On June 19, 2026, Destin City Council Member Dewey Destin and Okaloosa County Commissioner Drew Palmer met to discuss a collaborative path forward that could lead to the City of Destin serving as the operator and manager of the new state park parcel at Norriego Point.

The discussion resulted in a conceptual framework that would be presented to the respective governing bodies for consideration. The proposed framework includes the following:

- The City of Destin would provide free parking for all Okaloosa County residents at every City-owned parking facility where parking fees are charged.

Upon execution of a lease or other approved legal mechanism granting the City (Destin) full management rights to the new state park parcel at Norriego Point, the City shall provide free parking to all Okaloosa County residents at all City-owned parking facilities where parking fees are otherwise applicable.

- The Destin City Council will consider this proposal at its July 6, 2026, meeting.
- If approved by the Destin City Council, Commissioner Palmer will place the proposal on the agenda for consideration by the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners at its next available (July 14, 2026) meeting.
- If approved by both governing bodies, the City and the County will jointly approach the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to determine the most appropriate path forward and work with the necessary agencies to facilitate the City's leasing and managing the new state park.
- The potential use of Okaloosa County Tourist Development Department funding for the park, contingent upon identifying eligible tourism-related expenditures and ensuring compliance with all applicable legal requirements governing Tourist Development Tax funding, was discussed.
- The City and the County will work collaboratively to develop and implement a parking system that provides free parking for all Okaloosa County residents at City-owned parking facilities while ensuring the system is efficient, practical, and financially sustainable.

The proposal represents a collaborative effort to preserve and enhance the new state park while improving public access for all Okaloosa County residents. This framework is conceptual, and any final agreement remains subject to approval by the Destin City Council and the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners prior to any request for approvals from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and other appropriate agencies.

On July 6, 2026, the City Council countered with an offer to provide free parking to County residents at all Gulf-front parks (and include Norriego Point, which is not Gulf front), provided the City would lease/manage the state-acquired property. The City asked the County to consider this item at there July 14, 2026 BCC meeting, as an item on the BCC public agenda.

II. DISCUSSION: The Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners is scheduled to hold a regular meeting in Crestview on July 14, 2026. Representatives of the City will attend.

The City requested to be placed on the BCC agenda to discuss the City's counterproposal to Commissioner Palmer's request for free parking for County residents at all City lots, but the County declined to include any mention of the Holiday Isle state land issue on its agenda. The City had counter-offered free parking for County residents at all Gulf front parks and Norriego Point park.

At the July 15 Special City Council Meeting, the City Council may discuss next steps based on whatever actions or inactions occur at the July 14th BCC meeting.

A. Link to Strategic Goals / Objectives:

B. Effect on Budget (EOB):

C. Level of Service (LOS):

D. Legislative Sponsor: Legislative Sponsor (for Resolution 2026-16,

only): Council Member Hebert

E. Business Impact Statement:

III. CONCLUSION:

IV. RECOMMENDED MOTION: TBD based on July 14th BCC meeting.

Attachments:

1. Mixon's 19 Aug 2025
offer to DEP SEC
Lambertl \$5M and
MGT of 50 GSD
2. 6.17.26 Corr to
Okaloosa
3. Email Dr
Jones_Commissioner
Palmer re Parking
4. Edited_Email
correspondence with
Commissioner Palmer



Board of County Commissioners

Paul Nixon, Chairman (District 1)

State of Florida

August 19, 2025

Secretary Alexis A. Lambert
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth
Boulevard M.S. 49
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Madam Secretary:

First and foremost, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to you, your team, and the entire Cabinet for your leadership and vision in supporting the acquisition of this critical property. This future park facility represents a monumental public investment—one that will be treasured for generations to come.

We are writing to formally express Okaloosa County's strong commitment to the long-term stewardship and management of this new 5.7-acre park. The County fully recognizes the ecological, recreational, and economic significance of the site—particularly its vital role in protecting the Destin Harbor.

In alignment with the conservation and public access principles outlined in the Florida Forever Act (Chapter 259, F.S.), Okaloosa County affirms its intent to support and implement best management practices for the park. To that end, the County agrees to assume full responsibility for the day-to-day management, maintenance, and operation of the park and marina, as well as any adjacent state-owned lands. This includes oversight of capital projects, construction procurement, insurance, maintenance, staffing, rule enforcement, utilities, and all other operational components.

Furthermore, the County is committed to collaborating with both the City of Destin and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to advance the shared vision for Norriego Point Park. Should it be requested, we are also prepared to fully manage that existing park facility.

To demonstrate our commitment, Okaloosa County is pledging a minimum direct investment of \$3 million, with an overall contribution exceeding \$5 million. This includes a combination of funding, grants, in-kind services, startup and operational costs, and other associated expenditures needed to successfully launch and sustain the new park.

At the appropriate time, we are ready to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with FDEP, modeled on the existing MOU for Norriego Point Park. For further coordination, please contact Craig Coffey, Deputy County Administrator, at (850) 609-6136.

Thank you again for your partnership and for your continued dedication to preserving Florida's natural resources for the benefit of all.

Sincerely yours...
...willingly His,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paul Nixon", is written over the typed name.

Paul Nixon, Chairman
Board of County Commissioners



ROMANO KOPP LAW, P.A.

P.O. Box 5524
Destin, Florida 32541
Phone: (407) 430-7070
Email: kkopp@romanokopplaw.com

June 17, 2026

VIA EMAIL

Lynn Hoshihara
Okaloosa County Attorney
1940 Lewis Turner Blvd.
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32547

RE: *Public Comment Opportunities on Matters Raised During Commissioner Reports*

Dear Ms. Hoshihara,

I am writing on behalf of the Destin City Council to express concern regarding a recurring practice at meetings of the Board of County Commissioners whereby significant policy matters, proposed government decisions and other controversial issues are first raised during the "Commissioners' Minute" after the final public comment portion of the meeting has concluded.

While the "Commissioners' Minute" serves an important function, the City is concerned that matters constituting "propositions before a board or commission" within the meaning of section 286.0114, Florida Statutes, are increasingly being introduced and discussed at a point in the meeting when members of the public no longer have a reasonable opportunity to be heard on those matters.

Section 286.0114(2), Florida Statutes, provides that members of the public "shall be given a reasonable opportunity to be heard on a proposition before a board or commission." Although the statute permits the opportunity to be heard to occur at a meeting other than the one at which official action is taken, the opportunity must nevertheless occur during the decision-making process and within reasonable proximity in time to the board's consideration of the matter.

When substantive issues that are not included on the agenda are raised for the first time during the Commissioners' Minute after public comment has closed, citizens, affected local governments, and other interested stakeholders may have no meaningful notice that the issue will be discussed and no practical opportunity to provide input before the Board begins its deliberative process. This concern is particularly acute when the subject matter involves significant land use, intergovernmental, budgetary, or policy issues.

The City respectfully requests that substantive matters reasonably anticipated to generate public interest or Board discussion be placed on the published agenda in advance of the meeting, or alternatively that the Board provide an opportunity for public comment after such matters are raised. Doing so would further the transparency objectives embodied in Florida's Government in the Sunshine Law and section 286.0114, while promoting public confidence in the decision-making process.

The City raises this issue in the spirit of ensuring that both governments continue to conduct their affairs in a manner that maximizes public participation and transparency.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Romano Kopp
City Attorney, City of Destin

cc: Dr. Larry Jones, City Manager
Destin City Council and Mayor
Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners
John Hofstad, County Administrator

From: Drew Palmer <dpalmer@myokaloosa.com>

Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 12:32:35

To: Larry Jones <ljones@cityofdestin.com>

Subject: Re: Metting summary

Thank you Larry, this does appear to capture items that were discussed. I look forward to seeing what your council approves.

Thanks,

Drew

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From: Larry Jones <ljones@cityofdestin.com>

Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 12:25:06

To: Drew Palmer <dpalmer@myokaloosa.com>

Subject: Metting summary

Good afternoon, Commissioner. Please review the below and, if you agree that it accurately reflects our meeting today, please acknowledge your agreement.

Summary of Meeting – June 19, 2026

On June 19, 2026, Destin City Council Member Dewey Destin and Okaloosa County Commissioner Drew Palmer met to discuss a collaborative path forward that could lead to the City of Destin serving as the operator and manager of the new state park parcel at Norriego Point.

The discussion resulted in a conceptual framework that would be presented to the respective governing bodies for consideration. The proposed framework includes the following:

- The City of Destin would provide free parking for all Okaloosa County residents at every City-owned parking facility where parking fees are charged.
- The Destin City Council will consider this proposal at its July 6, 2026, meeting.
- If approved by the Destin City Council, Commissioner Palmer will place the proposal on the agenda for consideration by the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners at its next available (July 14, 2026) meeting.

- If approved by both governing bodies, the City and the County will jointly approach the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to determine the most appropriate path forward and work with the necessary agencies to facilitate the City's leasing and managing the new state park.
- The potential use of Okaloosa County Tourist Development Department funding for the park, contingent upon identifying eligible tourism-related expenditures and ensuring compliance with all applicable legal requirements governing Tourist Development Tax funding, was discussed.
- The City and the County will work collaboratively to develop and implement a parking system that provides free parking for all Okaloosa County residents at City-owned parking facilities while ensuring the system is efficient, practical, and financially sustainable.

The proposal represents a collaborative effort to preserve and enhance the new state park while improving public access for all Okaloosa County residents. This framework is conceptual, and any final agreement remains subject to approval by the Destin City Council and the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners prior to any request for approvals from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and other appropriate agencies.

Thanks,

Larry



“Please Note: Florida has a very broad public records law. Most written communications to or from the City of Destin officials are public records available to the public and media upon request. Your e-mail address and communications may therefore be subject to public disclosure.”

From: [Drew Palmer](#)
To: [Larry Jones](#)
Subject: Re: Metting summary
Date: Friday, June 19, 2026 12:32:47 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

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The discussion resulted in a conceptual framework that would be presented to the respective governing bodies for consideration. The proposed framework includes the following:

- **The City of Destin would provide free parking for all Okaloosa County residents at every City-owned parking facility where parking fees are charged.**
Upon execution of a lease or other approved legal mechanism granting the City (Destin) full management rights to the new state park parcel at Norriego Point, the City shall provide free parking to all Okaloosa County residents at all City-owned parking facilities where parking fees are otherwise applicable.
- **The Destin City Council will consider this proposal at its July 6, 2026, meeting.**
- **If approved by the Destin City Council, Commissioner Palmer will place the proposal on the agenda for consideration by the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners at its next available (July 14, 2026) meeting.**
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