

From: Pierce Withers piercewithers@gmail.com 

Subject: Alligator Point Beach Access Point Parking

Date: May 12, 2020 at 10:35 AM

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PW

Good Morning Commissioners,

Thank you for taking time at your Board meeting on May 8th to discuss our recent petition concerning the small beach access points on Alligator Point. We are very grateful to each of you for your willingness to take up this matter on your agenda at your May 19th Board of County Commissioners meeting.

Although we were unable to meet as a community or canvas door-to-door to discuss the petition, almost 200 residents and property owners signed in support of closing our neighborhood beach access points to the general public. We hope this demonstrates the broad-based support in our small community for this initiative. We invite you to review the citizen comments submitted with the petitions which are attached.

Below is a summary of Alligator Point residents and property owners concerns:

1. The Franklin Sheriff's Office lacks the human resources to manage day visitors who park illegally, trespass on private property, litter our beaches and engage in behavior that is unsuitable for a family environment. Sheriff AJ Smith has expressed that the parking areas at these small beach access points should be closed permanently. He also believes that day visitors to Franklin County should be directed to our State parks. The additional patrolling required at these access points contributes to expensive overtime for the County, all while facing massive budget shortfalls due to lost tax revenue.
2. The small beach access points on Alligator Point lack restroom facilities which is a public health issue. Day visitors come to these locations, gather in large groups to party, drink alcohol, smoke marijuana and let their dogs run without leashes. They routinely defecate in our yards and leave trash in areas that are protected sea turtle and shore bird nesting areas. This is a public health issue and threat to our environment, especially as we confront the COVID-19 virus.
3. The small access points were never intended to be County parks. Their purpose is for Alligator Point residents, property owners and guests/vacation renters who do not have beachfront property to access the beach. Bald Point State Park is the only place on Alligator Point with adequate parking, public restrooms and public beaches. Our neighborhood beaches are like the beaches in the Plantation and Sunset Beach on St. George Island as well as subdivisions of St. Teresa Beach. We are simply asking the County to respect the nature of our private beaches in the same manner as other subdivisions.
4. There are many who are excited about the future development of a County park at the old KOA campground property. This would provide an additional safe public park for residents and visitors alike. We look forward to working with you in the future to develop a County park that provides a safe and welcoming destination for everyone.

While we envisioned a parking pass system, we welcome Sheriff Smith's request to permanently close the parking areas. Residents and property owners, their guests and vacation rental guests will continue to enjoy use of the beach by walking, riding bikes, golf carts or being dropped off by car at the beach access points.

With the difficult choices that the Board of County Commissioners will face in the coming days, this is an easy decision to protect the health and safety of everyone while also reducing law enforcement costs. Please close the parking areas at the beach access points on Alligator Point.

We stand ready to answer any questions about our petition, and invite any comments or concerns you may have.

On Behalf of Nearly 200 Alligator Pointers,

Sincerely yours,

Pierce Todd Withers

Alligator Point

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