

Beach to get more parking, boardwalks

By Kelly G. Robertson

The lead article in the August 1, 2006, PNJ proclaimed "Navarre Beach to get more parking, boardwalks." Construction of 12 beach access parking lots and dune walkover boardwalks on Navarre Beach could begin in two months. Hoo-ray for Navarre Beach!

What is wrong with this picture? How is it possible for Navarre Beach to get 12 new beach access parking lots and dune walkovers, while Gulf Breeze gets an expansion to their boat ramps and associated parking lots, and Pensacola Beach stays in the news with increased numbers of public toilet facilities, while Perdido Beach is told that the county has no money for improvements there? Why aren't you writing your county commissioners and demanding at least an equitable position in the doling out of tax dollars to support your beaches? Instead,

If the answers to these questions lie in the creation of the Santa Rosa Island Authority, then why isn't there a (Perdido Key) Island Authority, as suggested by county commissioner Gene Valentino (during the recent election), to look after our interests?

If the answers to these questions lie in the creation of the TIF created for SW Escambia County to fund infrastructure improvements, then why is there no word on those improvements dictated by the neglected PK Neighborhood Plan regarding YOUR public beach access points, or YOUR extensive bike and pedestrian paths, or YOUR public boat ramps, or any of YOUR other promised amenities?

The Pensacola News Journal recently printed two really good articles ("Perdido residents can't get to water", PNJ June 21st, and "Don't let beach access disappear with growth", PNJ June 26th) hi-liting the need for public beach access points on Perdido Key – especially west of the state park where there currently are none. In addition, another important article, written for the PNJ in May, by Amy Sowder, pointed out the lack of lifeguards on our federal (Johnson Beach) and state park facilities – the only currently, and very recently, functional public beaches. These are issues that our commissioners need to be reminded of on a regular basis, especially now that the PD&E (project design and engineering) for the expansion of Perdido Key Drive is in progress.

Fully functional public beach access points west of the state park are a necessity for the increasing population of our island. Our current build out is on the order of 3400 dwelling units, with 7150 units (plus 1000 lodging units) setting the current cap. Doubling our population will put enormous pressures on our beaches to accommodate the growing population. Our public beaches with access are already crowded, so where will we put these people? If purchasing the land necessary to build the access points is not a priority now, how easy will it be when we have full build-out of the island? And if our previous slate of commissioners had their way, increasing the island population to 9116 units, how would three times the current number of units look to our already crowded beaches?

The beaches of Perdido Key are PUBLIC – YOUR BEACHES, and access to those beaches is

an issue that is important not only to those residents and vacationers on the north side of Perdido Key Drive, but also on the south side – those properties that are constantly under the barrage of people looking for a pathway to the beach. Therefore, there is an urgent need for you to maintain contact with your commissioners and let them know a remedy to this issue is available.