

MAY 1, 2013 – WORKSHOP

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida, held a workshop on Wednesday, May 1, 2013, at 9:00 a.m., at the Walton County Courthouse in DeFuniak Springs.

The following Board members were present: Commissioner Kenneth Pridgen, Chairman; Commissioner Sara Comander, Vice-Chair; Commissioner Bill Imfeld; and Commissioner Bill Chapman. Mr. Mark Davis, Interim County Attorney; Mr. Gerry Demers, Interim County Administrator; and Ms. Dede Hinote, Interim Assistant County Administrator, were also present.

Chairman Pridgen called the meeting to order to discuss Morrison Springs.

Mr. Gerry Demers, Interim County Administrator, stated that there is currently no entrance fee charged at Morrison Springs to use the facilities. The county maintains the facilities through the Parks and Recreation Department and Facilities Maintenance Department. Two off duty Sheriff's deputies are also paid \$25/per hour from Memorial Day through Labor Day. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss options for the park and direction in moving forward.

Commissioner Imfeld questioned the current county costs for Morrison Springs. Commissioner Comander stated that the current cost is approximately \$42,000 for maintenance and approximately \$37,000 for the Sheriff's deputies. She explained that the biggest problem is the damage done to the facilities by the visitors and the need to address the vandalism. A solution is needed to lower the cost to the county and possibly provide services such as oxygen tanks to the divers.

Commissioner Chapman questioned if a vendor would provide all services in lieu of the Sheriff's deputies. Commissioner Comander explained that the vendor could sell items to the visitors (such as oxygen to the divers) and provide maintenance to the park. Commissioner Chapman spoke in favor of maintaining the duties that are provided by the Sheriff's Office.

Commissioner Chapman questioned when the vandalism occurs. Mr. Brad Alford, Facilities and Parks Director, explained that it is difficult to determine but since the security cameras have been installed the vandalism had decreased.

Chairman Pridgen suggested reviewing how other parks are managed in the state and determine the best solution.

Ms. Melinda Wickham briefly explained how the park had been run in the past and suggested reviewing how the St. Andrews Park is operated as a solution for Morrison Springs.

Brief discussion ensued regarding vendor operation of the park and the hours of operation to reduce vandalism.

Attorney Mark Davis, County Attorney, explained that permission must be granted by DEP to change the management plan which is part of the current lease agreement.

Commissioner Comander asked Mr. Demers to review the St. Andrews Park and Ponce de Leon Springs management plans. Mr. Demers stated he would review those plans to see what they charge or how the vendors provide service.

Commissioner Comander questioned if they could return the park to the state for management since it has been improved. Attorney Davis stated that they could explore that option.

Brief discussion ensued regarding the grant moneys and the requirements to maintain the park.

Chairman Pridgen asked for public comment.

Ms. Nancy Murphy questioned why Morrison Springs cannot use TDC funds. The Board explained that TDC funds are only used south of the Choctawhatchee Bay.

Mr. Rick Fenlon questioned how some parks provide life guard services, restrooms, parking facilities, etc. Commissioner Comander stated that those services are funded by TDC. Mr. Fenlon felt that Morrison Springs is also tourist related and questioned if they could be added to the TDC. Commissioner Chapman explained that the state mandates that TDC funds cannot be spent north of the Choctawhatchee Bay. Mr. Fenlon felt that a fee should not be charged and there are other ways to fund maintenance to the park.

Ms. Tammy Fenlon spoke in opposition of a vendor and charging a fee for visitors to Morrison Springs.

Attorney Davis stated that there is a condition in the lease agreement to provide a six month notice for termination, and DEP must approve the termination.

Mr. Demers clarified that he would review how other parks in the state operate and determine if the park can pay for itself without charging an entrance fee. He stated he would provide that information to the Board members for review.

Motion by Commissioner Chapman, second by Commissioner Imfeld, to adjourn the meeting at 9:34 a.m.

ATTEST 
Alex Alford, Clerk of Courts

APPROVED 
Kenneth Pridgen, Chairman