

Board of County Commissioners

Agenda Request

Date of Meeting: June 16, 2009

Date Submitted: June 10, 2009

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Benjamin H. Pingree, County Administrator
Timothy P. Barden, Assistant County Administrator
Doug Jones, Director, Public Services Department
Ray Gray, Director, Parks and Recreation Department

Subject: Request Board Approval to Direct County Staff and County Attorney to Prepare and Negotiate a Lease Agreement Between Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners and Heaton Companies for Use of the Existing Boat Ramp and Parking Area at Shell Point, and Authorize the Chairman to Execute the Agreement

Statement of Issue:

This agenda item requests Board approval to direct County Staff and County Attorney to prepare and negotiate a lease agreement between Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners and Heaton Companies for use of the existing boat ramp and parking area at Shell Point, and authorize the Chairman to execute the agreement..

Background:

Heaton Companies acquired the Shell Point Resort roughly 3 years ago, during which time several improvements have been made to include a new boat ramp facility. The boat ramp and dock area were built to accommodate the 35 residential lot owners of the resort as well as future resort customers. As an extra measure of good faith and as a good neighbor, Mr. Heaton allowed all local residents to use this facility when major storms threatened the area.

Approximately 8 months ago the ramp had to be closed due to structural concerns that presented a loss of the liability insurance. Due to the current economic climate, Mr. Heaton is not entertaining the construction of a new ramp.

On June 1, the 2009 Hurricane Season began and local residents have urged the County to provide some source of relief. The number of boat owners in the immediate area would create a major egress problem in light of an approaching storm. This problem is only magnified when the next closest ramp is several miles away and many other residents are also using these same facilities.

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Analysis:

The County is seeking a permanent, long range solution which will involve property ownership and construction of a new ramp and parking area. While this process continues, the need for a temporary solution has been presented to staff to resolve in anticipation and recognition of the Hurricane Season which just began.

The County approached Mr. Heaton requesting to review the damaged facility and evaluate the necessary actions needed to safely re-open the ramp. Mr. Heaton has been very accommodating and has allowed contractors and engineers representing the County's interest to review the facility to determine the extent of any needed repairs. Hydra Engineering, a local engineer through the County's contract with Prebble Rish, has suggested a low cost, safe method (under \$5,000) to put this facility back into safe operation for a period of time. There is sufficient funding in the County Reserve for this expenditure. The balance of the Reserve after this transfer will be \$238,601.

The specific lease terms have not been fully worked out at this time; however staff will be looking for terms that will not require any additional expense outside of the \$5,000 costs previously outlined to make the ramp safe and operational. If there is any significant variation in the expected terms, staff will bring the new lease options to the Board for approval.

With the Board's approval to proceed with a negotiated lease agreement, this ramp could be operational within weeks. Subsequently, staff realizes that this is a short term solution and will continue to seek a long term solution for a boat ramp in the Shell Point area during the terms of this lease agreement.

Options:

1. Approve staff and County Attorney to negotiate and prepare a temporary lease agreement; authorize the Chairman to execute the agreement; authorize staff to proceed with improvements up to \$5,000 on the existing ramp; and authorize the transfer of \$5,000 from the County's reserve.
2. Do not approve staff and County Attorney to negotiate and prepare a temporary lease agreement; do not authorize the Chairman to execute the agreement; do not authorize staff to proceed with improvements up to \$5,000 on the existing ramp; and do not authorize a transfer from the County Reserve.
3. Board Direction.

Recommendation:

Option #1