

Barbie Higginbotham
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
DIXIE COUNTY
CROSS CITY, FLORIDA 32628

Emergency Meeting

April 22, 2024

**To address life, safety, and health concerns
at public parks and County owned properties.**

The Board meetings are audio recorded. The public can hear and participate in the meeting via conference call by dialing 1(917)900-1022 and enter code 32628.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Storey

2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

Mr. Gainey stated the reason for this emergency meeting is in reference to the occurrences this past weekend at Shired Island Park. He stated there was a major influx of people and some of these people went onto private and federal land. He approached the Board for clear direction on what to do at the County parks.

Mr. Gainey also handed out a packet of photos of major hazards in the park. The pictures included piles of metal and exposed wood, even though no electricity is on at the park there are bare wires exposed as well. He stated he spoke to Chief Scott Garner and Mr. Garner told him the County is at a point to be able to go to the park and clean up the hazards. Mr. Gainey recommended getting clear direction from the Board and acting quickly on this because of its liability to the County.

Commissioner Stephenson stated he visited the beach personally and was also shown videos of people driving down past the beach onto the point of Shired Island. He suggested cleaning up the park and leaving it open for people who would like to go in and take pictures and such, but not wide open to vehicle traffic. He recommended blocking off the entrance of the road going down to the beach to vehicles so nobody can get into the park with a vehicle or camper and closing it to camping.

Road Department Supervisor Steven Hutchison agreed but added that if the park is left open the public will still camp.

Mr. Earl Vonley stated there is also a trail on the right side of the park to which the public is gaining access.

Commissioner Osteen who attended the meeting via phone stated he agreed that the County should block the entrance road off and allow only pedestrian traffic until Hurricane Idalia repairs are completed.

Mr. Hutchison recommended using concrete barricades to block the entrance along with some fallen trees and that this would only take a couple hours to complete.

Commissioner Stephenson mentioned that if they barricade the entrance road, they may need to move the porta-potties up to the barricade for pumping access.

Attorney Watson asked if the boat ramp will be closed as well.

Commissioner Hatch answered, No, because of the boat ramp.

Commissioner Hatch asked Commissioner Stephenson if he would be ok with putting some sort of light poles or fence along the side of the County property that butts up to his property.

Commissioner Stephenson states the only question he had was that there is a lease that was written between the County and his mom in around 1990. He said the lease was \$1.00 a year that the County was to pay the Mrs. Stephenson and required the County to provide liability insurance. He wanted to know if this lease was still active. Mr. Gainey stated he would have to check to see.

Attorney Watson made the recommendation from a liability standpoint to close the parks until cleaned up, especially considering that the County just received money to make Shired Island an engineered beach and people are destroying the beach.

Director of Emergency Operations Mr. Darian Brown stated the beach improvements can be started on the engineering side of things right now, but the County can't put the sand back until they get done engineering the beach. As far as the construction of the pavilions is concerned, this hasn't gotten approval yet and it could be a couple months for that.

The Motion to clean up and shut down the Shired Island Park to traffic other than foot traffic with no vehicles or camping until further notice was made by Commissioner Stephenson. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

Mr. Hutchison stated there is a tent down at the park with people living in it and rumor that there are needles and such in the tent and he asked for help from the Sheriff's Department with removal.

The Sheriff's Office representative said they will send an officer with the Road Department to handle this.

Attorney Watson recommended addressing camping at Horseshoe Park as well.

Clerk of Court Barbie Higginbotham stated that parking of the boat trailers at the Horseshoe Park is fine, but asked how the County will be able to prevent camping.

Mr. Hutchison said there is a park attendant down there.

Commissioner Hatch asked how long the park would be closed. Several other commissioners said until further notice.

Chief Deputy Clerk Verna Wilson stated she spoke with the Finance Department, and they said there has never been a check written to the Stephenson's for the \$1.00 a year contract to lease for as long as Finance Director Brenda Royal has been here. She also stated that if it had not been paid it would make it a non-valid contract.

Motion to close the Horseshoe Beach Park with no camping, no tents, only boat ramp use and parking only until further notice made by Commissioner Stephenson. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

Mr. Gainey asked for clarification on the motion. He asked if the County was going to have the Road Department take down the remaining pavilions, and then post signs stating boat ramp use and parking only.

Commissioner Stephenson stated yes, that is correct.

Mr. Garner stated the rebuilding of the pavilions could take around at least six months.

Commissioner Hatch asked Mr. Hutchison if he has looked at Horseshoe Beach Park electrical?

Mr. Hutchison answered that he has and a lot of it has saltwater damage, it's non-reparable.

Commissioner Stephenson recommended looking into how to get the Parks back up and running and presenting it at the next Board meeting.

Mrs. Higginbotham asked if we could go ahead and start on the projects that are through Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and get reimbursed.

Director Brown said the County can't just go in and start these projects and expect FEMA to reimburse them.

Commissioner Stephenson suggested getting a set of portable bathrooms so that when a storm is coming, they can be removed.

Mr. Gainey stated the County has voted and these other items can be looked into and addressed later.

Commissioner Stephenson asked about the status of the Suwannee River flooding.

Director Brown stated it is at flood stage and some of the landings are closed.

Commissioner Wood stated that the attendant at the Hinton Landing Boat Ramp Park told him there are moccasins crawling in the children's playground because of the flooding.

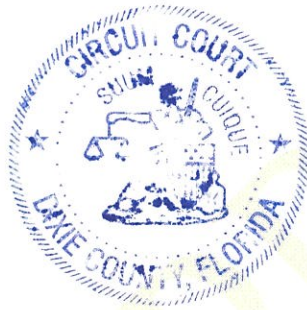
The Motion was made by Commissioner Wood to shut down the playground on Hinton Landing Park. Commissioner Stephenson seconded. Board approved.

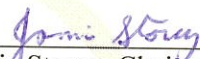
25. ADJOURN

The Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Hatch. Commissioner Wood seconded. Board approved.


BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA

ATTEST:





Jamie Storey, Chairman



Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk-Auditor

PLEASE BE ADVISED that if a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearings, he/ she will need a record of the proceedings, and for such purpose, he/ she will need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

“Persons with disabilities requesting reasonable accommodations to participate in this proceeding should contact (352) 486-4931 (Voice & TDD) or via Florida Relay Service at (800) 955-8771.”

The Board meets the first Thursday of each month at 10:00 AM and the third Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM. Individuals that would like to be placed on the agenda should call Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court, by 4:00 PM on the Friday Preceding the Board meeting, at (352) 498-1200.