

*Memorandum
City of Crystal River*

TO: Mayor Kitchen & Members of City Council

FROM: A. R. Houston, City Manager

RE: Input from Kayak Committee

DATE: June 26, 2009

During the May 26th workshop on parks, Council directed me to form a volunteer committee to garner input from a wide range of viewpoints on the issue of where/if the City should provide kayak launches in city parks. It was my understanding that this was intended to be strictly an input group, with no decision-making authority. For that purpose, and to avoid conflict with Sunshine Law provisions, I determined that there would be no effort to get the group to reach consensus on recommendations, but simply that input would be taken from all parties who elected to participate in the process.

The first meeting of the committee was held on June 18th, and was attended by six (6) individuals whose opinions ranged from maintaining the status quo in terms of the use of Hunter Springs Park by kayakers to prohibiting the launching of kayaks from Hunter Springs Park altogether.

The second meeting of the committee was held on June 25th, and was attended by twelve (12) individuals. This group exhibited the same range of opinions as the first, although more pro-kayak individuals were in attendance than was the case with the first meeting.

In an effort to give Council a sense of the input received, I have listed various issues that were discussed and summarized the different opinions voiced on each issue.

Launching of kayaks within Hunter Springs Park

- Hunter Springs was intended to be a swimming park and no boats of any kind should be allowed to launch there or pull up on its shore.
- Individuals should be allowed to launch their personal kayaks there, but commercial operators should have to use Kings Bay Park.
- A sandy launch should be created behind the restroom pavilion for the exclusive use of kayakers and the current “beach” area should be reserved strictly for swimmers/waders.
- Parks should be “first-come/first-served” for everybody and access to kayakers should not be limited any more than for any other user.
- The old boat slip on the north end of the park would not be feasible as a kayak launch area and should be filled in as originally planned.
- There was general agreement that the City should not allow power boats to pull up on the “beach” area.

Use of Kings Bay Park as the City's exclusive kayak launch

- Kings Bay Park should be the boating-themed City park and serve as the City's kayak launch site; if the configuration of the ramp there results in people waiting to launch, that is no different than boaters waiting to launch at a crowded county ramp.
- The ADA launch being designed for Kings Bay Park will be a good addition for the City and can serve as a good secondary launch site, but it would not be sufficient to handle the volume if it were the City's only launch site.
- Commercial operators should be required to use Kings Bay Park in order to alleviate the crowding at Hunter Springs Park.

Other potential kayak launch sites

- The inactive boat ramp across Highway 19 from City Hall is owned by the City and would make a usable launch site if some arrangement could be made for parking.

Types of kayak launches

- Among those who voiced an opinion, there was agreement that a sandy, sloping area made for the best type of launch and was particularly helpful to those individuals who had mobility/flexibility limitations.
- Concrete ramps were seen as problematic because they become slippery when covered with algae and also can damage kayak hulls.

Members of the committee expressed a willingness to continue working on this project if Council identified a desire for further work to be done.