

DAVID TAGYE

431 NE 13th Street
Crystal River, FL 34423
(352) 464-4256

Ron Kitchen, Mayor
City of Crystal River
123 N.W. Hwy 19
Crystal River, FL 34428

Dear Mr. Mayor,

I'm sure by now you've received plenty of e-mails to keep you busy for a while.

Rather than ranting and raving and complaining, I'd like to give some positive feedback in relation to the Hunter Spring's Park issue at the latest City Council Meeting.

The situation as it stand is 30 feet of "beach" for ALL to enjoy. Currently there is a concrete walkway leading to concrete steps and down to the water of a designated swimming area, so laid out by buoys. Concrete has never been the preferred method to enter a swimming area, so people use the beach. They've used that beach for quite a number of years.

Kayaking has grown into a sport anyone can do, and that sport has grown exponentially over the last few years. However, when did Hunter Springs suddenly become a kayak park as I've heard it called?

Kayakers prefer to enter their kayak in the easiest , most convenient way possible to keep from falling over into the water. A beach is the easiest. The boat ramp at the end of 3rd street is too steep and very slippery with the algae. Constant pressure washing would be needed to keep the algae off. This maintenance ends up very costly.

We Now have to types of users competing for the same 30 feet of beach. But wait there's more. Commercial operators are also using those 30 feet. Pontoon Tour boats come into the beach to pick up their clients. Power boats also park there and swim, play, and use the park. On top of that, adjacent to the beach, there's a very small, narrow path what we'll call the "channel" that boaters of all sizes use to enter the Hunter Spring's area, condos and houses where they might dock.

So we have a conglomeration of users in a tiny area. Everyone is now trying to compete for the same 30 feet of beach. It's just a matter of time before someone gets hurt, whether it is a swimmer into a prop, or a paddle smacking someone, or sunbathers get hit with a kayak or canoe. I've already witnessed some heated "discussions" between competing individuals.

Since most prefer not to use the concrete steps, is it possible to take out those steps and extend the beach? I'm sure the Corp of Engineers as well as SWFMD will need to get involved.

The Crystal River Preserve Park has a kayak launch. It is a wide, long, sandy ramp with handrails etc. which they built just for Kayak and Canoe launching. Since the ramp at 3rd street is not available to power boats, what about redoing that ramp and do something similar as the Preserve Park did?

Another item of interest is the parking and loading zones. A vehicle with a kayak to unload should pull up to the edge of the grass / dirt, and unload their gear in a timely manner then go park in the parking lot. Those with trailers and multiple kayaks tie up the loading zone much longer. The timeliness doesn't always happen and "traffic" gets backed up whether i is trying to use the load zone, or cars just trying to pull through and exit the park.

A commercial operator with ten clients will take up ten + spaces. Multiply this by the number of operators that day. These people are not using the park, rather only using the parking lot and beach. Again, since Hunter Spring's Park is the only freshwater "beach" in the City and / or County, many people come here to use it. Non-kayakers who use the park are left with few parking spaces.

My proposal is this:

If possible, take out the concrete and replace it with beach. This will move the bathers out of the channel so as not to interfere with boat traffic.

Install the rip rap you discussed doing at a recent council meeting. Put up a seawall as on the east side of the beach. This will prevent people from getting into the water near the channel. It will also prevent further erosion.

Build a kayak launch at the end of 3rd street. Make designated trailer parking only spots. This will move the kayakers and commercial operators out of the swimming area and out of the channel area.

Inform all commercial operators the beach is off limits to boats. The buoys designate no boats allowed, so that shouldn't be a problem.

Install a ramp type walkway leading out to a "loading" zone for pontoon boats to pick up their clients off the pier at 3rd street.

So we come to how and who pays for these upgrades to our parks? I propose the City create an "impact fee" or user permit for commercial operators. These companies are making money off services they provide. They use and have the biggest impact to the launch sites, parking areas, park, and pier. It seems only right they should pay for that convenience, not the taxpayers fitting the whole bill for the commercial users. The fees will also help maintain those launch sites. Out of town users will also need to have a permit. Official permits with the designated year would be applied to the commercial vehicles and their trailers. This would then signify they have paid the fee for that year. (Penalties for non-compliance would be imposed – warning fist, then fines). This also would cover their client's cost of parking. This would be less impact to Hunter Spring's Park overall.

There are commercial operators who use Pete's Pier and are charged fees. There's been talk of redoing the boat ramp at Pete's Pier. While the boat ramp belongs to the City, the Parking Lot belongs to Pete's Pier, and they charge for parking. Personally I don't believe a Pete's Pier remodel would solve the problem.

I thank-you for your consideration, and I am very happy to assist in any way I can.

David Tagye

Signature