



**Prebble Q Ramswell**

Positive Change By and For the People. Florida's Future Begins With Us!

# THE RAMSWELL REVIEW

A monthly newsletter from Destin City Councilmember Prebble Q Ramswell

December 29, 2014

## Top stories in this newsletter



▶ Crab Island: Weigh In!



▶ Tackling the Issues

I WANT YOU



FOR FEEDBACK!



▶ Follow Up



What's Ahead...

### ▶ Crab Island: Weigh In!



On January 16th, I will be attending a meeting of various community leaders with Rep. Gaetz to discuss the future of Crab Island. As discussed in council on December 15th, the city is considering a move to acquire jurisdiction of the area. As the NWF Daily News reported, I noted that the perception is that Crab Island is Destin. As a result, we need to take ownership of it and clean it up so we are portraying the image of Destin we want to see.

As we look into the acquisition, I need your input: What do you think should be allowed on Crab Island? Do you like the entrepreneurial spirit and believe anything and everything should be permitted? Do you think we need to return to a more peaceful presence and ban any commercial activity? Or should we have some sort of middle ground?

Send your comments to me at [pramswell@cityofdestin.com](mailto:pramswell@cityofdestin.com). Let's make this a true community vision and effort. Most comments so far have leaned toward no annexation or regulation.

### ▶ Tackling the Issues



Image Courtesy of Dill Beaty/Destin Log  
<http://www.thedestinlog.com/news/cartoon-short-term-vacation-rentals-1.415782?tc=cr>



My first nine months in office have certainly been eventful, but I wouldn't have had it any other way as there is much to be done. I am proud of accomplishments such as tackling inadequate beach clean-up, increasing funding to OCSO for expanded service, and the award of a \$3.6m stormwater grant. But that is just the beginning! As the year comes to a close, I am thrilled to announce several lingering issues that have reached or are near resolution!

For more than a year, the Public Works/Safety Committee repeatedly expressed concern about the recurring dip in Hwy 98WB just west of Big Kahunas due to underground issues. FDOT said no funding was available for a repair, so the new request became one for a Caution Dip sign. I became aware of the situation in October and directed staff to assist on Oct. 6th. The continued response was no funding, so I took it to State Rep. Matt Gaetz on Dec. 18th. Action was immediate. By the morning of the 19th, DOT had sent out drainage engineers to examine the problem and agreed it was severe. They will be placing underground cameras under to determine the exact problem and move on to repair. Thank you Rep. Gaetz and staff for assisting with issue.

Second, I was approached by my mail carrier who had reached a breaking point after her 3rd near head-on collision. The problem was individuals illegally turning left from the side road north of Merlin's into oncoming northbound Airport Rd traffic so that could reach the island opening to turn left. I forwarded the issue to the Public Works committee and, within a week, a right-turn only sign was in place. Thank you City Staff!

Code Enforcement has been at the forefront these past few months, underscored by the stakeholders' input in an October meeting. Several of us on council have been vocal about the need to step-up the enforcement and an online system would be greatly beneficial. The past several weeks, the City Manager has met with the council to determine our desired areas of focus. Additionally, Webb Warren has obtained a new program we will unveil in early 2015 that allows for online reporting and tracking of code enforcement complaints. The system will allow for the monitoring of complaints from start to finish and allow for greater accountability and tracking of code enforcement.

Finally, on Dec. 15th, staff returned with my requested information on how our code addresses short-term rentals and occupancy. Our code contains long-term occupancy restrictions but has none for short-term. Based on complaints and observation, problems such as parking violations and noise go hand-in-hand with the number of occupants. Further, if we set restrictions for long-term rentals, we should do the same for short-term. Lastly, there is a huge safety issue when short-term rentals of single-family homes offer advertised occupancies of 28 people! Frequently, owners are converting porches, laundry rooms and closets into bunkrooms (see picture) in efforts to pack in more renters. Destin Fire Control District concurs: greater number of people = greater number of lives at stake. Council unanimously agreed with my motion for staff to research the issue and return with a suggested ordinance setting limits on short-term occupancy. Let's stop the conversion of single-family homes into mini-hotels that not just disrupt a neighborhood's atmosphere, but also pose a huge safety risk.

### ▶ Community Input

I WANT YOU



FOR FEEDBACK!

#### From Rodney G in response to publication of elected officials agreeing with the Accountability Okaloosa agenda:

I hope the voters actually remember the names in bold who sold out their fellow elected officials to get donations from Gaetz. He only has the power over you that you give him, bolded font cowards. **My Response:** My approval of the agenda does not indicate an endorsement of Rep. Gaetz but an endorsement of the issues Rep. Gaetz proposed based on public input. I chose to sign the accountability document because I concur with the need to move forward with the issues on the agenda. I am in favor of action that will serve to underscore the importance of these issues and potentially lead to their resolution. I saw this as an opportunity for elected officials to work together on important issues suggested by the public, seeking unique and timely solutions that can only come from cooperative effort.

Unfortunately, it evolved in a way that I didn't anticipate nor welcome. As elected officials, we are elected to represent and should represent our communities in an objective and unbiased manner. Healthy discussions are to be welcomed, as is working cooperatively and recognizing we may not always agree. Perhaps my mistake in signing on was a belief that a unified agreement in working on the issues could overcome differences in personalities, strategies and motives. I thought the idea was a great one. The subsequent document Rep. Gaetz asked us to sign did cause me a certain level of discomfort, but I chose to hold to the belief that the mission and goals were what was important, and... who wouldn't want to be held accountable?

I recognize that though some of you may know me personally, most of you do not and I cannot expect that you know my motivations and intentions. My allegiance is to the people of our community. I am committed to doing all I can to serve you with honor, passion, and loyalty. No one should avoid asking questions or making suggestions for fear of retaliation or attack by those who represent them. I will continue to encourage your input and feedback on all the issues so that I may represent you to the best of my ability.

**From Alex:** How about City Council focus on solutions to the problems? Instead of closing the bars at midnight, how about they meter taxis? Taking a cab from AJ's to Main St shouldn't cost \$30, but after midnight it does. It would solve a lot of driving incidents if we created a culture where the city wasn't always working against the locals— maybe even hold bar staff to a higher over-serving standard? **Great ideas— I will address these at the next council meeting.**

### ▶ Follow Up



**YMCA:** Trustee has agreed to vacate the lease, however law allows three weeks for appeals. Swim teams and private citizens stand-by, waiting word on how they can assist. Mattie Kelly is reviewing proposals from those with plans to manage the property.

What's Ahead...

#### Meetings:

City Council: Jan 5th- 6pm; January 19th- 6pm  
Public Works/Safety: Jan 13, 5:30 PM @ City Hall  
Harbor CRA-AC: Jan 14, 5:30 PM @ City Hall  
Local Planning Agency: Jan 15, 5:30 PM @ City Hall  
Town Center CRA-AC: Jan 21, 5:30 PM @ City Hall

Destin Youth Council: Jan 22, 4:00 PM @ City Hall

Airport Compatibility Advisory Committee:  
Jan 22, 10:00 AM @ City Hall

Code Enforcement Board: Jan 22, 5:30 PM @ City Hall

Harbor & Waterways Board: Jan 26, 5:00 PM @ City Hall

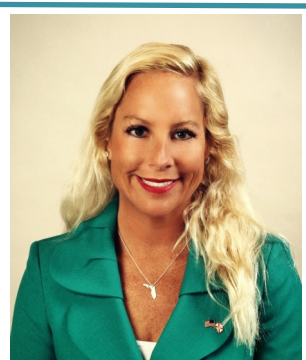
Hello Friends!

Thank you for subscribing to my monthly newsletter, *the Ramswell Review*. It is my goal to improve communication between the city and its citizens, and act as a conduit of information on issues that affect our community and future.

There are many important issues to face in the coming weeks and months and it is important that we are all as educated and informed as possible so that we can make the best decisions for Destin. I value your input and insight and am always available to you. I recognize that we each offer a unique and valuable perspective on the issues and believe everyone in this community's opinion carries weight. I believe in positive change— by and for the people. Florida's future begins with us.

I look forward to a two-way relationship with the community knowing that we all have the same goal of a beautiful, successful city centered on family values.

Best,  
Prebble



**Prebble Q Ramswell**

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*I always welcome your feedback and input. However, please be sure to direct any correspondence related to city business to my city email address [pramswell@cityofdestin.com](mailto:pramswell@cityofdestin.com). All such correspondence shall be considered a public record pursuant to Florida's open records laws.*

*Any views or opinions expressed in this newsletter are my own and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Destin City Council or the views or opinions of any other Councilmember. This newsletter is not an official record nor a transcript of the matters presented to, or the decisions made by, the City Council and should not be interpreted as such.*

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