



Updates from East Milton look promising

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County commissioners heard nothing but good news coming from the East Milton area at Monday's board meeting as they discussed the recently completed Blackwater River Correctional Facility and expansion of the industrial park.

First commissioners ran through an update on the current oil spill.

Public Service Director Tony Gomillion said tar balls have been scarce along portions of Navarre Beach, but have been pouring into Ft. Pickens along the weekend.

"Overall the threat level has been minimal as far as the impact on our beaches and coastline," he said.

Gomillion, who is working closely with the surrounding counties and clean up crews said the crews have been working early morning shifts and night shifts to avoid the blazing summer heat.

"Right now we have off shore skimmers on their way from California to skim off of the Gulf," Gomillion said.

Those skimmers should be here by the end of the week.

Commissioner Bob Cole, who conducted a fly over of Escambia and Santa Rosa County in an Escambia County sheriff's helicopter said he saw the damage from the sky, but like Gomillion stated, it is minimal to the area.

"We're in good shape right now, and we thank the good Lord," Cole said.

After talks of oil came good news on the Blackwater River Correctional Facility.

"We are 100 percent completed," said Greg Johnson, construction services director for the site.

And to celebrate their completion, Johnson introduced the new warden for the facility Mark Henry. Henry has been in the correctional institution business for 36 years, and said this was one of the biggest and best facilities he has seen.

"We will begin reviewing the over 5,000 (job) applications this week," Henry said.

Those 5,000 applicants applied online to fill nearly 350 open positions at the new facility.

The facility would start moving inmates in beginning in July.

Right down the road, the Santa Rosa Industrial Park is looking forward to a 750-space parking lot that underwent controversy at the last commission meeting in May.

"We're putting it to bid on Thursday," county administrator Hunter Walker.

Engineers estimated the project would cost the county under \$200,000 out of pocket after a CDBG

economic development grant helped the county cover the cost of the job.

That \$200,000 cost includes the land clearing the county would have to do in that construction spot across from Industrial Boulevard.

Commissioner Bob Cole asked Cindy Anderson with TEAM Santa Rosa if the trees that would be cleared on the slat of land where the parking lot will be going could be used as marketable trees to save the county money at the May 24 commission meeting. Anderson said they were not.

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