

Phase 2 construction set to begin at Siesta Key

Posted: Monday, July 7, 2014 11:03 am

SARASOTA, Fla. -- It's no longer tourist season on the Suncoast, but parking along Siesta Beach can still be a challenge. That is hopefully being eased with the opening of a new parking lot at the main public access point. But will it help?

Phase One of the Siesta Beach Improvement Project is now completed with the opening of the new parking lot. But when many came to park for the fireworks on opening day, a majority of the spots were already reserved.

Out of the 100 new available parking spots on Siesta Key, 50 were reserved for VIP guests on July 4th. For the past 24 years, the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce heads up the 4th of July fireworks display on Siesta Key Beach, hosting a VIP party in order to raise the \$40,000 needed to make the fireworks happen.

"The VIP's are those that actually paid to put on the fireworks. They paid \$150 for 2 tickets and a reserved parking pass in order to attend," says Debra Lynn-Schmitz of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce.

Frequent beachgoers are concerned reserving spaces for events could happen more often now, defeating the purpose of more parking. "I think now, especially that they've opened it up for the 4th of July and they did that for VIP's, I think people should be worried about them doing that. I mean it's all about the money," says Carolyn Frayne of North Port.

While Sarasota County says they approve reserved parking for certain occasions, other beachgoers say they are just happy there is more available parking.

"It's going to be very convenient for people, for beachgoers, even in the summer," says August Grivis, visiting from Virginia.

Adjacent to the new parking lot, new tennis courts are complete and they are now moving into Phase Two. During this phase, construction will occupy the middle of the park's parking areas. The main entrance will become an exit as well.

And the old restrooms by the tennis courts will be replaced. During that construction, temporary restrooms will be staged on the beach side of the construction boundary.

Signs are in place to direct visitors.



Siesta Parking Phase 2 map

"I'm hearing positive things from the community that yes, it's painful; we know anything is painful when you have to go through some roads that are maybe inconvenienced and so forth, but I think overall people are very pleased."

The Phase Two construction barriers will be put in place this week. For more information on the improvement project you can visit siestabeachinfo.com.