

Parks agreement ending

Commissioners voted to send a letter to Venice City Council members informing them of the county's intent to terminate the current interlocal agreement between the city and the county — regarding parks and recreation services — on Oct. 1, the end of this fiscal year. That 20-year agreement currently is set to automatically renew on March 31, unless one party decides to terminate it by Jan. 31. County officials are seeking a new agreement.

Sarasota County provides parks and recreation services, including maintenance, at Venice beaches and athletic fields and the Venice Community Center.

“The new agreement, similar to a more recent agreement with the city of North Port, would clarify the roles of the city and the county ... and defines obligations relating to capital expenditures, new park locations (and) levels of service, and provide flexibility to meet current and future needs,” Ley wrote in a separate letter to Venice City Manager Isaac Turner.

Venice City Engineer Kathleen Weeden, who attended the county commission meeting, said the city and the county began negotiations last February on an amended agreement.

“We're quite frankly disappointed that we are at this point, with the exercising of the termination of the agreement at this late hour,” Weeden told the county board. “As late as Dec. 13, we had a staff e-mail saying that the agreement would automatically renew” and that that agreement would be amended. “This has been a pretty dramatic change from what we expected.”

Upon hearing the wording Ley suggested be used in the commission's letter, Chair Nora Patterson said, “Since my name is going to go over it, I'd like to soften the language a little bit.”