

Sustainability and safety concerns voiced by the boaters and local law enforcement resulted in The Committee’s unanimous decision to change the Parade route. The improved route was presented at the Punta Gorda Isles Civic Association Board of Directors April meeting, where it was approved by the Board, and has been covered in THE COMMENTATOR every month since September.

Rapidly disappearing viewing areas on the old route have dramatically increased the presence of the spectator fleet of boats to levels heretofore never seen. Spectator boat captains are sometimes inexperienced boaters and are occasionally less than well-behaved, unintentionally disrupting the flow and continuity of the Parade.

All two-way boat traffic has been eliminated, decreasing collision risk and the loss of boater night vision from the lighted displays on approaching vessels. Boaters can’t get lost on the new route. Elimination of 180 degree turns and reduction in 90 degree turns greatly diminishes the disconnect in the turns, reducing the opportunity for large gaps to occur.

Eliminating the double back sections of the Parade route shortens the Parade duration, reduces boater fatigue and is a tremendous benefit to the increasing number of smaller boats without onboard toilet facilities.

The Parade start location has been moved to take advantage of the increased pre-parade dockage available, reducing or eliminating the need for dozens of boats to circle around awaiting the parade start, or difficulties with multiple boats rafted up to a single dock.

The new, boater-friendly, easy to follow route will encourage overall participation, reduce boater turnover, increase the percentage of PGI resident participation and will over time encourage a return of the larger boats. The 60% increase in viewing opportunities will encourage more spectators especially when they will not have to encounter the traffic jams of years past.

2016	2017
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6.0 statute miles	4.5 statute miles
1.6 miles two-way traffic	NO 2 way traffic
14 total 90 degree turns	6 total 90 degree turns
3 total 180 degree turns	NO 180 degree turns
Inadequate pre-parade dockage available	Abundance of dock space available
37 viewing opportunities	59 viewing opportunities
6 viewing opportunities per parade mile	13 viewing opportunities per parade mile
51 residences per parade mile	54 residences per parade mile

Boaters and their crews volunteer tremendous time, energy, capital and effort to create an extraordinary annual Christmas gift to the Community. The Saturday Night Before Christmas Eve Boat Parade is the largest annual event in the Isles, however most spectators are not on the Parade route and 92% of Isles homeowners have no direct access to view the Parade.

The 2017 Route doubles the viewing areas per Parade mile, and increases viewing opportunities from a total of 37 to 59, allowing all spectators not residing along the route a better opportunity to enjoy the event.

The 2017 Parade Route will, over time help to provide the safest possible staging of the event and in view of changing demographics, afford the best opportunity for the sustainability of the event into the future.