

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA
WORKSHOP
2021 State & Federal
Legislative Priorities
October 27, 2020**

The Leon County Board of County Commissioners met for a Workshop on the 2021 State & Federal Legislative Priorities on Tuesday, October 27, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

Present were Chairman Bryan Desloge, Vice-Chairman Rick Minor and Commissioners Mary Ann Lindley, Nick Maddox, Jimbo Jackson, Bill Proctor, and Kristen Dozier. Also present were County Administrator Vincent Long, County Attorney Chasity O'Steen and Clerk to the Board Beryl H. Wood.

Facilitator(s): Andrew Johnson, Assistant to the County Administrator
Nicki Paden, County Administrator Office, Management Analyst
Jeff Sharkey and Taylor Biehl, Capitol Alliance Group
Sarah Vilms and Victoria Cram, Squire Patton Boggs

County Administrator Long introduced the workshop and presented Andrew Johnson to make staff's presentation.

Mr. Johnson shared that the workshop is held annually to offer the Board an opportunity to develop its priorities for the upcoming legislative session. He indicated that the lobbying teams would provide the Board a synopsis of the upcoming state and federal legislative sessions. He shared along with himself that Ms. Paden would then provide an overview of ten legislative appropriation requests, fifteen projects for potential grant funding, five state-level legislative policy issues, and four federal policy issues proposed for the 2021 state and federal legislative sessions including the second session of the 117th Congress.

The State Legislative Policy issues for the consideration by the Commissioners are:

- Protection of the State Workforce
- Local Option High Impact Tourist Development Tax
- Removal of Racially Restrictive Covenants from Recording Documents
- Tobacco 21
- Amtrak Passenger Rail Restoration
- Public Safety on College and University Campuses
- Support Florida Association of Counties Legislative Programs

Four new State Policy Issues have been introduced:

- County Health Department Structure
 - Support Legislation requiring a study to review and identify recommendations for establishing an independent statewide public health agency.
- Monument to Confederate Soldiers from Leon County at the Florida Capitol Complex
 - Support legislation requiring the relocation of the Confederate monument that is currently located at the State of Florida Capitol Complex.
- Establish Florida's Emancipation Day as a State Holiday
 - Support legislation establishing May 20th, Florida's Emancipation Day, as a state holiday.

- Medicaid Expansion
 - Support the expansion of the Medicaid program in Florida to provide coverage eligibility for adults under the age of 65 with incomes up to 138% of federal poverty guidelines.

Table 1: Proposed 2021 Legislative Funding Requests

Request	Amount Request	Project Phase
Backup Generator – Secondary Special Needs Shelter	\$150,000	Capital/Fixed Assets
Backup Generators – Branch Libraries and Community Centers	\$500,000	Capital/Fixed Assets
Leon Works Expo and Junior Apprenticeship	\$50,000	Program Funding
Historic Amtrak Station Repairs and Renovation	\$500,000	Construction
Old Plank Road Drainage Project	\$400,000	Construction
Baum Road Drainage Project	\$375,000	Construction
Fords Arm/Timberlane Tributary Restoration	\$250,000	Construction
Fred George Wetland Restoration	\$300,000	Construction

Dr. Jeffrey Sharkey, Capital Alliance Group, stated that there have been two main issues that the Governor’s office has been concerned with: COVID and the 2020 Presidential Election. Governor DeSantis’s plan for reopening has led to many businesses reopening. He shared COVID-19 numbers have been rising in parts of the state, but the Governor has not indicated if the state will go back to Phase 2 in the future. The Constitutional Amendments that are trending well at the moment include the \$15 minimum wage and the Open Primary Elections.

Commissioner Lindley asked about the financial requirements of the County Health Department Structure. County Administrator Long stated that the need for a designated county health department has been highlighted through this pandemic. There are models in other states that can be useful when determining the structure of county level health departments.

Commissioner Lindley asked if the county would have a referendum on the High Impact Tourism Tax. Andy Johnson stated that the vote needed would be a super majority.

Commissioner Proctor noted that the County Administrator did not need to apologize for the idea of a county level health department. Given the situation, health entities are needed. He asked if the Governor will introduce a penalization of protest bill when session starts.

- Mr. Sharkey has noted that Governor DeSantis has been very outspoken on this issue. Commissioner Proctor stated that the County should have a resolution that rejects the penalization of protesting.

Commissioner Proctor noted that it would be useful to research the need for a parking garage around the Historic Amtrak Station. Additionally, the Board has strongly agreed with the idea of a State Emancipation Day.

Commissioner Minor asked about the 1 to 1 local funding sources listed in the first table. Commissioner Dozier thanked staff for the report. She raised a question regarding the Leon Works program and funding for apprenticeships.

- Mr. Sharkey stated that there are different areas in the budget for training and apprenticeships.
- Commissioner Dozier clarified that she was asking on how to build on the Leon Works program.
- Mr. Sharkey stated that the County works with an association that provides many funding sources.

Commissioner Dozier asked about the Southern Rail Commission in connection to the Amtrak Station and whether the County will follow the state's direction. The state has not joined the Commission and, if the state would, it would be a step forward in passenger train transportation.

She asked County Administrator Long if adding language that would protect the state workforce would be allowed.

- County Administrator Long stated that it would not be a problem. The Board is aware that the State Agencies are not all equal in terms of process. Table 2 is not a list of legislative projects, rather in-progress projects.

Commissioner Dozier suggested pulling Orchid Pond as it was vetoed before and cannot receive funding for a year.

- Mr. Johnson stated that the project has been moved from Table 1 to Table 2.

Commissioner Dozier noted that the Taskforce will ask the Legislature to consider amending statutes to change the construction schedule. She asked if Mr. Sharkey or Mr. Biehl have seen any comment on that amendment and to add a line of agreement on the policy issue. Mr. Sharkey stated that the current Senate President has this issue as one of his priorities, however they will need to see if the new President will continue to identify this issue as a priority.

Commissioner Dozier moved, seconded by Commissioner Proctor, to create an agenda item for the December meeting. The motion carried 7-0.

Commissioner Proctor noted that the Board should pursue the idea of payment in lieu of money it does not receive from the state.

Andy Johnson began his presentation on federal Legislative Policy Issues:

- Federal COVID-19 Relief for Counties
 - Support federal COVID-19 relief legislation that includes flexible funding for county governments that can be used to address lost revenue and support critical local response efforts to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Establish Juneteenth as a Federal Holiday
 - Support legislation establishing Juneteenth (June 19th) as a federal holiday.
- Amtrak Passenger Rail Restoration
- Foreign Trade Zone Application
- Support National Association of Counties (NACo) Legislative Program

Sarah Vilms, Squire Patton Boggs, stated that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin have been the main negotiators for the COVID relief bills. Support bills that were put in place in March expired in September. Senate President Mitch McConnell advised the White House not to come to an agreement prior to the election.

Vicky Cram, Squire Patton Boggs, spoke on what Speaker Pelosi has pushed for in the relief bill regarding state and local governments. After the CARES Act was passed, small jurisdictions

worked with Congress to create a more equitable stimulus bill. The Heroes Act formula is most likely to be in the bill instead of the formula proposed in the SMART Act.

Ms. Vilms spoke on the lame duck session that will occur after the election but before the termination of the 116th Congress. The four issues that will be brought up will be the election results, the COVID relief bill, a tax extenders bill, and a bill coming from Senate and House Committees.

Ms. Cram reported on the outlook for the next Congressional session. The future will be determined by the Presidential election. There is a possibility that the Senate will flip blue. There will be an infrastructure bill, specifically a recovery bill after COVID. A post-election analysis will be given to Andrew Johnson that discusses the budget.

Commissioner Proctor thanked Mr. Johnson for being the liaison for the County. He discussed the importance to keep boots on the ground in Washington D.C.

Commissioner Dozier also thanked the staff. She said that many of these issues should be raised again after the election. She stated there have been many changes due to the pandemic such as broadband in the rural areas.

Commissioner Dozier asked Squire Patton Boggs if it would be noteworthy if the Board supports a bill that NACo has a slightly different perspective such as with decriminalization or declassification of cannabis and expungement (clearing of the criminal record). She also commented on the Opportunity Zone and Empowerment Zone. She inquired about looking at those differences and whether taking such a stance would have meaning with federal policies.

County Administrator Long stated it would generally align to apply with the NACo platform. He pointed out this was a good time to highlight opportunities to actively reach out.

Ms. Vilms shared by added a letter of support from the Board to Congress on whether the County supports a bill that NACo doesn't support is a value and would help strengthen the meaning.

Ms. Cram also added that the way they have worked this in the past with Andy Johnson is that they are flexible if there is an issue the county supports, they jump on it. She stated they are happy to support and it doesn't have to be in your agenda.

Mr. Johnson shared there are times when issues may arise that aren't in NACo's platform, and you can bring up issues at any time to be addressed and can provide a resolution or letter of support.

Commissioner Minor championed the 3% raise for State employees, \$325,000 Appropriation for African-American Heritage Preservation Network, and the CARES ACT as some of the noted successes. Commissioner Minor noted the statement that housing is a part of infrastructure resonated with him. He thanked the staff for its hard work.

- Commissioner Dozier suggested adding a report for apprenticeship program funding, Leon Works, Amtrak Passenger Rail Restoration with the Southern Rail Commission, and the State workforce protections as friendly amendments. Commissioner Minor and Commissioner Proctor approved the friendly amendments.

Commissioner Minor moved, seconded by Commissioner Proctor, to approve Option 1: Approve the 2021 state and federal legislative priorities with an amendment by Commissioner Dozier adding a report for apprenticeship program funding, Leon Works, Amtrak Passenger Rail Restoration with the Southern Rail Commission, and the State workforce protections as friendly amendments. The motion carried 7-0.

Commissioner Dozier moved, seconded by Commissioner Minor, to bring back reports on three primary issues: Opportunity Zone, Empowerment Zone, and Minority Leaders Bill on Cannabis from Congress to be discussed during the December Board meeting or at the County Administrator's discretion before the year concludes. The motion carried 7-0.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business to come before the Board, the workshop was adjourned at 5:03p.m.

LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA

ATTEST:



BY: _____

Gwendolyn Marshall, Clerk of Court
& Comptroller, Leon County, Florida

BY: _____

Rick Minor, Chair
Board of County Commissioners