

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA
Special Meeting
September 7, 2021**

The Leon County Board of County Commissioners met for a Special Meeting in the Board Chambers on September 7, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.

Present were Chair Rick Minor and Commissioners Brian Welch, Nick Maddox, Kristin Dozier, Jimbo Jackson, and Carolyn Cummings. Also present were County Administrator Vince Long, County Attorney Chasity O'Steen, and Clerk to the Board Beryl H. Wood.

Vice Chair Proctor was not in attendance for the Special Meeting.

Chairman Minor called the meeting to order at 6: 00 p.m.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance were provided by Chairman Rick Minor.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

- None

CONSENT:

- None

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD ON NON-AGENDAED ITEMS

3-minute limit per speaker; there will not be any discussion by the Commission. The following citizens submitted comments via online submission:

- Mark A., Paul Russell Road, spoke in opposition of another mask mandate.
- Jules Bailey, 1919 Dawsey Street, spoke in support of vaccinees and reinforcement of the mask mandate for all county employees.
- Jacqueline Barber, 19626 North by Northwest Road, spoke in support of more vaccination sites.
- Ellen Berler, 2761 Fox Hollow Court, spoke in support of the mask mandate being re-instated.
- Jeff Blair, 1803 Old Fort Drive, spoke in support of vaccines and a mask mandate.
- Alica Dahm, 1934 Longview Drive, thanked the Board for making plans to keep citizens in Leon County safe.
- Laura Dunaway, 1616 Talpeco Road, spoke in support of a mask mandate.
- Jodi Franklin, 14992 Grasshopper Trail, offered information to assist with the stop of COVID -19. He stated he had a HVAC Company in Tallahassee that could install devices in the air flow that are proven to kill the virus with 99% affective rate.
- Feng Ji, 2555 Carthage Lane, spoke in support of vaccines and a mask mandate.

- Joan Kanan, 182 NE Villas Court, spoke in support of a county wide mask mandate.
- Necia Little, 1320 N. Duval Street, spoke in support of vaccines and mask mandates for the county.
- Linda Nelson, 3751 Overlook Drive, spoke in support of mask mandates.
- Micah Ramirez, 4417 Westover Drive, county employee raised concerns with the county mandate that all employees are vaccinated.
- Carla Reid, 4483 Sarah Ashley Court, support of a temporary emergency mask mandate.
- Kathleen Spehar, 2414 Dozier Drive, Executive Director, Council on Culture & Arts, spoke in support of mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in the community.
- Zan Walker, 416 Westwood Drive, spoke in support of a mask mandate.
- Chris Zidak, 2785 Summer Meadow Drive, spoke in support of vaccines and mask mandates.

The following citizens provided in-person comments:

- Dr. Rick Kiper, 818 Shannon Street, not in support of mask mandates. He gave information on CDC death counts.
- Drew McLeod, 115 E. Park Avenue, owner of Savor restaurant, discussed the impact of the pandemic and businesses that have been severely affected. He commented on choice and freedoms.
- Whitfield Leland, III, 2035 Creek Hollow Trail, reflected on vaccine hesitancy and encouraged the Board to continue supporting education and outreach efforts. He spoke in support of masking requirements.
- Stanley Sims, 1320 Avondale Way, spoke in support of masks and vaccines.
- Kristina Hunter, 1835 Debra Drive, spoke in opposition to masking requirements.
- Dustin Wells, Pontiac Drive, spoke in opposition to masking requirements.
- Brent Stevens, 7255 Indian Farm Road, spoke in support of parental choice for masking of children in schools.
- Elizabeth Davison, 4833 Fred George Road, spoke in opposition to mask requirements and any future lockdown.
- Bill Boland, 1500 Hartclear Drive, spoke in opposition to masking and vaccination requirements for County employees.

The following citizens provided virtual comments:

- Pamela Chamberlynn, 3711 Shamrock Street, spoke in support of the vaccine, masking and social distancing. She requested that the Board of County Commissioners support the Leon County School Board's mask mandate.
- Sheri Roark, 2717 Kim Willow Towers, spoke in opposition to masking requirements.
- Kim Ross, 1203 Buckingham Drive, spoke in support of vaccines, masking requirements and limiting large gatherings.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Updates Regarding COVID-19, with Presentations from County Staff, and Medical and Public Health Professionals

County Administrator Long gave an overview of the County's COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. He thanked the Board for its continuous direction to meet the needs of the community and efforts that it has taken to protect the citizens.

Mathieu Cavell, Assistant to the County Administrator, provided an overview of the over 500 days of Emergency Operations Center activation, including the vast efforts to address vaccine hesitancy. He shared they are closing the gap.

Alan Rosenzweig, Deputy County Administrator, provided a brief overview of the expenditure of the County's ARPA funding. He commended the County for leading the state in issuing pandemic funding to businesses and citizens.

Shington Lamy, Director, Office of Human Services & Community Partnerships, provided an overview of the County's assistance programs, including Emergency Rental Assistance; partnerships with Big Bend Continuum of Care, the COVID-19 Local Homeless Taskforce and homeless services providers to promote and expand services to the homeless population; the County's partnership with the Health Department, Bond Community Health Center, and Neighborhood Medical Center to provide COVID-19 testing, vaccination and community outreach; and County support of community human services providers.

County Administrator Long provided a detailed overview of the County's COVID mitigation efforts to protect County employees while at work, including requiring all employees to be vaccinated.

Chad Abrams, Chief, Emergency Medical Services, provided an overview on the efforts of the County's EMS team and thanked the Board for its tireless support throughout the pandemic.

Claudia Blackburn, Health Officer for the Florida Department of Health in Leon County, spoke about the development of the local public health workforce and introduced Charmayne Anderson, Biological Scientist at the Leon Department of Health, and leader of the COVID team.

Charmayne Anderson provided an overview of local COVID statistics, testing locations, vaccination statistics, CDC additional vaccine dose recommendations, monoclonal antibody treatment sites, and public health mitigation strategies, including masks, social distancing, and handwashing.

Chasity O'Steen, County Attorney, provided an update on case law related to mask requirements and a change in state law that imposes new restrictions and procedural

requirements when local emergency orders are issued. The County Attorney confirmed that the State of Emergency Executive Order expired on June 26, 2021, and there is no executive order that currently limits the County's ability to adopt local emergency orders.

Commissioner Maddox expressed his support of the County's response to protect the community during the pandemic. He confirmed with the County Attorney that, based on the information received at this meeting, the County has not met the legal standard to enact a mask mandate. He confirmed with the County Administrator that the local health care providers have not requested a countywide mask mandate. He questioned the need for the September 7th special meeting.

Commissioner Jackson thanked all the presenters and the local health care partners for their coordinated response during the pandemic. He stated that any decisions made by the Board should be based on data, science, and medical experts. He reflected on the lack of data to support implementation of a mask mandate. He stressed the importance of the Board's credibility and promoted vaccinations.

Commissioner Cummings confirmed with the County Attorney that if the County instituted a countywide mask mandate, it would have to be renewed every 7 days at a Board meeting and renewed by a majority vote of the Board. She reflected on the legal advice from the County Attorney and the lack of a legal basis for a mask mandate and expressed concern about enforcement of a mask mandate. She expressed her support of mask wearing to slow the spread of the virus; however, the Commissioner stated her opposition to a countywide mask mandate at the current point in time.

Commissioner Dozier stated that it was not her intention to request a mask mandate countywide at this meeting and expressed a need for the Board to meet and be able to discuss current issues. She stated that Alachua County has reaffirmed its mask mandate for the 4th week and confirmed this with the County Attorney. She reflected on the need for the Board to meet before the regularly scheduled September 14th meeting, and she thanked the Chairman for calling the meeting. She stated that the Board could give direction for the County Administrator to require masks in County facilities. She reflected on the need to boost the county vaccination rate. She noted a need for a Mayor/Chair/School Board Superintendent/School Board meeting with the COVID Vaccine Hesitancy Taskforce regarding its direction to address education and vaccine hesitancy in youth and millennials. She questioned if masks could be required for county-sponsored events that are receiving grant funds, even though the event sponsors have already received approval for their submitted COVID safety plans. She reflected on the need for the County Attorney to explore the mask requirement for events and provide an update. She reflected on the dramatic increase in the number of deaths in the County since June and expressed a need for more local data.

Commissioner Dozier made a motion to direct the County Administrator to require masks in all County facilities, and to prepare an agenda item for the September 14th meeting exploring options for a possible mask requirement at events receiving County Tourism Development grant

funds. The motion was seconded by Chairman Minor. She reflected that it would be the Chairman's discretion to facilitate a Mayor/Chair/Superintendent/School Board meeting with the COVID Vaccine Hesitancy Taskforce.

Commissioner Welch stressed the importance of listening to the needs from the local healthcare providers. He stressed that the most important tool against COVID is vaccines and reflected on the need for even more vaccination promotion. He stated his opposition to a mask mandate for indoor public areas, but strongly encouraged mask wearing. He confirmed with the County Administrator that COVID updates will be provided at each upcoming Board meeting.

Commissioner Maddox questioned the County Attorney about Board policy for calling an emergency special Board meeting. He reflected on the impact of requiring masks in County facilities.

County Attorney O'Steen confirmed that the Board Policy states that for matters of extreme emergency, a special Board meeting may be called by the Chair.

Chairman Minor stated that he received a request for the emergency special meeting and initially questioned the need; however, his decision to call a meeting was driven by the County's lagging vaccination rate, the record number of hospitalizations and COVID cases, hospitals exceeding ICU bed capacity, and the number of deaths. He stressed the importance of mask wearing and stated his confidence in the need to call the special meeting.

Commissioner Jackson confirmed with the County Administrator that written statements were received from Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare and Capital Regional Medical Center.

Commissioner Dozier stated that if a County facility mask mandate prevents one person from getting COVID then it would be worthwhile.

Commissioner Cummings noted that the Board is continuously informed on the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

Commissioner Welch stated that he could not support a mask mandate in County facilities at this meeting but would be open to the conversation at the next meeting.

Commissioner Maddox made a substitute motion to request a September 14th agenda item with an analysis on requiring masks in County facilities and evaluating a mask requirement at events receiving Tourism Development grant funds. Commissioner Welch seconded the motion.

Commissioner Maddox moved, seconded by Commissioner Welch, to direct staff to provide a September 14th agenda item with an analysis on requiring masks in county facilities and evaluating a mask requirement at events receiving Tourism Development grant funds.

The motion carried 5-1. (Commission Dozier opposed).

County Administrator Long thanked all staff and the Board for its direction.

Chair Minor gave final remarks. Encouraged following of CDC guidelines for all.

SCHEDULED PUBLIC HEARINGS, 6:00 P.M.

- None

RECEIPT AND FILE

- None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chairman Minor adjourned the meeting at 8:43 p.m.

LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA

ATTEST:



BY: _____
Gwendolyn Marshall, Clerk of Court
& Comptroller, Leon County, Florida

BY: _____
Bill Proctor, Chairman
Board of County Commissioners