

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA  
PUBLIC HEARING MEETING  
September 28, 2021**

The Board of County Commissioners of Leon County, Florida met in regular session at 6:00 p.m. with Chairman Rick Minor presiding. Present were Vice-Chairman Bill Proctor and Commissioners Nick Maddox, Brian Welch, Kristin Dozier, Carolyn Cummings, and Jimbo Jackson. Also present were County Administrator Vincent Long, County Attorney Chasity O'Steen, and Clerk to the Board Beryl H. Wood.

Chairman Minor called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

**Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance**

The Invocation was provided by Pastor Ben Kaempfer of the Downtown Community Church.

The Pledge of Allegiance was provided by Vice-Chairman Proctor.

Chairman Minor requested a motion to allow Commissioner Jackson to participate in the meeting virtually.

*Commissioner Dozier moved, seconded by Commissioner Cummings, to allow Commissioner Jackson to participate in the meeting virtually. The motion carried 6-0. (Commissioner Jackson out of Chambers).*

Commissioner Jackson appeared virtually.

**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 citizen provided a virtual comment:
- William Barker, 2620 Nez Perce Trail, spoke in regard to flooding issues on his property on Buck Point Road and asked for any assistance that could be rendered.
  - Chairman Minor confirmed with County Administrator Long that staff would follow-up with Mr. Barker.

## **SCHEDULED PUBLIC HEARINGS, 6:00 P.M**

### **1. Second and Final Public Hearing for Adoption of the FY 2021/2022 Final Millage Rates and Final Budgets**

Chairman Minor announced the public hearing.

Chairman Minor stated that this was the second and final of the required public hearings on the Leon County budget for FY 2021/2022. Chairman Minor asked that anyone wishing to speak in person should complete a speaker card and submit it to the Clerk. Also, citizens who registered to provide virtual comments will be asked to speak prior to the Commission taking votes on the millage rate and budget.

County Administrator Long read the following into the record:

The proposed aggregate millage rate is 8.8144 mills, which is 0.98% over the aggregate rolled back millage rate of 8.7290 mills. Ad valorem revenues will increase due to an upturn in property values and will be used to support the following: enhanced support for law enforcement and public safety, including additional deputies, technical support personnel, and correctional officers; sustaining an elevated Countywide service delivery; sound fiscal planning to avoid fee increases for fire services, EMS, and solid waste; and continued community investment in our parks, greenways, roads, and sidewalks, and more.

County Administrator Long stated that Commissioners had provided all the necessary guidance during the development of the tentative budget. He offered a brief presentation on the budget, if desired.

Vice-Chairman Proctor stated they have had briefings, workshops, and a previous hearing on the budget, and are well pleased to move forward.

Chairman Minor called for public comment.

- o County Administrator Long announced that there was no public comment.

Chairman Minor asked for and received the following motions:

*1) Vice-Chairman Proctor moved, seconded by Commissioner Cummings, to approve Option #1: Adopt, via Resolution 21-50, the final FY 2021/2022 Countywide millage rate of 8.3144 mills. The motion carried 7-0.*

*2) Commissioner Dozier moved, seconded by Vice-Chairman Proctor, to approve Option #2: Adopt, via Resolution 21-51, the final FY 2021/2022 Countywide budget. The motion carried 7-0.*

3) Commissioner Dozier moved, seconded by Commissioner Maddox, to approve Option #3: Adopt, via Resolution 21-52, the final FY 2021/2022 Emergency Medical Services MSTU millage rate of 0.5000 mills. The motion carried 7-0.

4) Commissioner Dozier moved, seconded by Commissioner Welch, to approve Option #4: Adopt, via Resolution 21-53, the final FY 2021/2022 Emergency Medical Services MSTU budget. The motion carried 7-0.

## **GENERAL BUSINESS**

### **2. Presentation of Community COVID-19 Health Metrics (Claudia Blackburn)**

- County Administrator Long provided an overview on the community COVID-19 health metrics and monitoring. He gave an update on the meeting with local health officials, noting that they nominated Claudia Blackburn to speak on their behalf. The local team of health officials agreed to continue to monitor the data and health care efforts, and that if they collectively saw a need for additional mitigation measures, they would issue recommendations to the County Administrator to report back to the Board.
- Mathieu Cavell, Assistant to the County Administrator, spoke regarding the weekly coordinating conference calls and meetings to address health care capacity, health metrics and data, mitigation measures including vaccinations, and public health communications efforts. He provided an overview of the County's metrics tracking and community transmission risk. He explained that the panel of local public health officials agreed that there was no specific metric(s) that would necessitate a threshold for decision making; however, they agreed that they will continue to evaluate all metrics collectively and to issue recommendations related to additional mitigation should the data indicate such. As previously stated by the County Administrator, the group designated Claudia Blackburn to communicate its recommendations to the County.
- Claudia Blackburn, Health Officer for the Florida Department of Health in Leon County, reiterated the update from the health care partners on future collective recommendations.
- Vice-Chair Proctor asked what the data shared by the group is used for.
  - Mr. Cavell stated that the data is used for the weekly updates to the Board and the operations of Emergency Management as a whole.
  - County Administrator Long clarified that the group was asked if there was any additional trend data to monitor that would trigger them to make recommendations to the Board on mitigation measures. He reiterated that the group had no recommendations at this time.
- Commissioner Jackson reflected on the downward trend of the COVID positivity rate in the last four weeks.
- Commissioner Dozier commended the report and asked for clarity on the reported positivity rate. She reflected that additional mitigation measures need to be made on the front end of a surge and expressed her confidence in knowing that recommendations would be forthcoming should another surge occur.

- Commissioner Cummings commended the report and reflected on the downward trend.
- Commissioner Maddox reflected on the need for tracking COVID variants. He expressed that an early alert could trigger mitigation measures to lessen the impact, and asked Ms. Blackburn for more information on a timeline of future notifications to the Board.
  - Ms. Blackburn confirmed that the CDC and FSU are sequencing specimens and that variants are being tracked. She indicated that she would follow-up with more information in an email.
  - County Administrator Long stated that local health officials and health care providers have confirmed that they are tracking all available metrics, and if they collectively see leading indicators that they will immediately report to the County Administrator to relay to the Board.
- Vice-Chair Proctor reflected on the political environment surrounding the pandemic.
- Commissioner Dozier expressed that the Board invite any recommendations from the local team of experts should it see another surge and/or the spread of another variant of the virus. She commended FSU for its testing lab and for tracking the variants.
  - County Administrator Long confirmed that the Board's direction to receive any recommendations from the group has been reinforced.
- Commissioner Maddox reflected that the County has a 42-day limit on the issuance of a Local Emergency Order.

## **COMMENTS/DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **Items from the County Attorney**

- County Attorney O'Steen provided a status update on the Governor's interpretation that government employers who require employee vaccinations are violating section 381.00316, Florida Statutes, which became effective July 1. She stated that the County received a letter from a Division Director at the Dept. of Health, referencing the statute, and expressing the Dept. of Health's interpretation of the statute, consistent with the Governor's previous public statements, that requiring proof of vaccination from employees violates the statute. The letter referenced the County's vaccination requirement policy and stated that the Dept. of Health is authorized to impose a fine of \$5,000 per individual violation of the statute, and that the County would be subject to fines. The letter also requested the total number of current County employees who are subject to the vaccination requirement. She stated that the County is not in active litigation; therefore, she could not request a shade meeting. She stated that absent any additional direction by the Board, the County intends to proceed with the policy plan to terminate employees who fail to comply with the requirement, effective 12:00 a.m. on October 2nd.
- Chairman Minor reflected on the need to protect the lives and health of Leon County employees and the public, and to ensure the operational readiness of the County, and stated his support of the County Administrator.

- Vice-Chair Proctor stated support of the County Administrator and the County’s employee vaccination policy and asked the County Attorney for her legal opinion. He stated his support of the policy and agreed with the Chairman.
  - County Attorney O’Steen stated that the County’s policy is legal under employment law and is not discriminatory conduct. She advised that she did not believe that section 381.00316, Florida Statutes, applies to the employer/employee context and that the Governor previously indicated that there was never any intent for it to apply in that context. She stated that she believed the County would have a good case, though she cannot guarantee a result.
- Commissioner Dozier stated her support of the employee vaccination policy.
- Commissioner Welch encouraged everyone to get vaccinated. He expressed his support of the County Administrator, and stated that it is appropriate to recommend vaccinations, but expressed that he could not support the County Administrator’s policy to terminate the few employees who do not comply with the requirement.
- Chairman Minor stated that, since there was no motion, the County Administrator and the County Attorney would proceed with the current course of action.

**Items from the County Administrator**

- Expressed his condolences on the passing of James Shaw, County MIS employee, and stated that flags at all County facilities would be flown at half-mast until he is put to rest.

**Commissioner Dozier**

- Expressed sympathy on the loss of James Shaw.
- Commended the Day of Service event, and the grand opening of the upgrades at the Apalachee Regional Park.

**Commissioner Jackson**

- None

**Commissioner Cummings**

- None

**Commissioner Maddox**

- None

**Commissioner Welch**

- Thanked the County Administrator and staff for their work to host the travel baseball tournament at Woodville Park.

**Vice-Chair Proctor**

- Stated that he would not attend the November FAC Legislative Conference in Walton County, as he objected to the use of the confederate flag at the Walton County courthouse.
- Expressed his praise and gratitude for James Shaw and expressed condolences to his family.
- Made a motion for a proclamation honoring Robert and Trudie Perkins, civil rights activists, seconded by Chairman Minor, to be presented at the Dec. 14th meeting.
  - *Vice-Chair Proctor moved, seconded by Chairman Minor, to approve a proclamation recognizing Robert and Trudie Perkins. The motion carried 7-0.*

**Chairman Minor**

- Requested a proclamation recognizing October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month.
  - *Commissioner Welch moved, seconded by Commissioner Cummings, to approve a proclamation recognizing October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The motion carried 7-0.*
- Requested a proclamation recognizing Leon County Volunteer Firefighter Day to be presented at the 24th Annual Firetruck Roundup on Oct 9th.
  - *Commissioner Welch moved, seconded by Commissioner Cummings, to approve a proclamation recognizing Leon County Volunteer Firefighter Day. The motion carried 7-0.*

**RECEIPT AND FILE**

- None

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

**LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA**

ATTEST:



*Bill Proctor*

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bill Proctor, Chairman  
 Board of County Commissioners

*Gwendolyn Marshall*

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