

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
COVID-19 Surge and Ongoing Operations
January 4, 2022**

The Board of County Commissioners of Leon County, Florida, met in special session at 10:00 a.m. with Chairman Bill Proctor presiding. Present were Vice-Chairman Nick Maddox and Commissioners Brian Welch, Kristin Dozier, Carolyn Cummings, Rick Minor, and Jimbo Jackson. Also present were County Administrator Vincent Long, County Attorney Chasity O'Steen, and Clerk to the Board Beryl H. Wood.

Chairman Proctor called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the special meeting.

County Administrator Long welcomed everyone and discussed the reason for today's meeting, which was the community response to COVID-19 and the recent rise in cases. He shared that they would be discussing their long-standing scope of services and range of options to address COVID-19.

Chairman Proctor discussed the surge and why they were gathered for this special meeting. He asserted that as a Board they are charged as the county government to protect the citizens of Leon County.

County Administrator Long gave an overview of the community partners that have been in place since the beginning of the pandemic. He stated that CDC guidelines continue to be followed.

Chairman Proctor welcomed Mayor Dailey, Representative Tant, Tallahassee Community College (TCC) President Jim Murdaugh, Florida A&M University (FAMU) President Larry Robinson, and Florida State University (FSU) President Richard D. McCullough, respectively, as well as other professionals in attendance. Chairman Proctor thanked them for their collaboration and information updates.

County Attorney O'Steen shared how the legal landscape had changed. She stated that there are some constraints, as the County is prohibited from requiring vaccinations and limited in terms of requiring citizens to wear masks in public places. Also, statutory changes have been made to the County's emergency management powers. The State Emergency Management Act outlines the emergency management powers of county and municipal governments, and has created a heightened standard for the powers exercised by local governments. Emergency orders can last for 7 days and are capped at 42 days in duration after a county-approved extension. The statute also states that the Governor can invalidate a county's emergency order if the Governor determines the order limits citizens' individual liberties and freedoms. The County has amended its code for consistency with the state legislation.

Mathieu Cavell, Assistant County Administrator, commented on testing. He shared that he could not overstate the importance of testing early, and how testing that is already in place has seen a greater demand. The County wants to increase its testing footprint in current and upcoming locations to keep others safe.

Claudia Blackburn, Florida Department of Health (DOH), discussed the current increase in COVID cases. The most current data showed 25 new hospital admissions over the last 7 days. Also, 50% of Leon County citizens have had one dose of a COVID vaccine. For the age group of

16 and older, a booster shot is recommended 6 months after the second dose. She encouraged all to get booster shots. The DOH is still encouraging those that are immunocompromised to get vaccinated. Nomi Health is testing at 2955 Municipal Way from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.; Huntington Oaks and FAMU are open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; and CVS and Walgreens are also providing testing. The DOH recommends that those who have been in contact with COVID should stay home for 5 days and wear a mask when isolation has ended. She noted that Omicron appears to be more transmissible.

Kevin Peters, Emergency Management Director, gave an overview on Emergency Management operations and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Leon County previously passed a resolution to adopt the National Incident Management System process and continues to follow this process. Leon County has been able to send help to other counties during their emergencies. He shared that they work closely with the DOH and will continue to do so since the pandemic is ongoing. He commented on the importance of testing and the FEMA process that they follow.

Shington Lamy, Director, Human Services and Community Partnerships, stated that since the start of the pandemic, the County has held over 100 testing events. He stated they have met to assess the testing needs in our community. There were two testing events over the past weekend in partnership with the Bond Community Health Center and Neighborhood Medical Center. In regard to the homeless population, the County has been working with organizations to coordinate and identify the necessary means to prevent outbreaks in homeless shelters. The County has started meeting weekly with these community partners, and are working to find a solution for isolating homeless people who test positive.

Mathieu Cavell provided a communications update on COVID-19. He stated they have all the expertise available coming together to collaborate on information going out into the community. This allows the County to work effectively with health care partners as information changes. He stated that they have leveraged communication channels to inform the public to make sure they keep the community safe.

Temple Robinson, Chief Executive Officer, Bond Community Health Center, Inc., stated that their biggest concern is those that are sitting at home wondering if they have COVID. She encouraged those citizens to get tested. She warned Omicron is widespread, and the volume will make its mark.

Mark O'Bryant, President and Chief Executive Officer, Tallahassee Memorial Hospital, noted that they have seen an influx of people coming to the emergency room to get tested. He encouraged all to use the testing sites instead. The community is experiencing a health care wave as more people are exposed, and these limits care available for other patients. Dr. Dean Watson spoke on the increase in patient population. Thirty-five patients were admitted this morning, and two-thirds of the COVID patient population are not vaccinated. He noted that there has not been a large amount of school age children admitted. Also, the hospital is working with FSU to determine what the variants look like among patients at the hospital, and they have reactivated the COVID team to address this situation.

Alan Keesee, Chief Executive Officer, Capital Regional Medical Center, thanked the health care providers in the county. He reminded all to remain vigilant. He stated they have sufficient equipment to combat COVID although they have struggled with system readiness. He noted that they are ready to serve the community.

Chairman Proctor thanked those who had spoken thus far. He then asked the Chairman of the

School Board, Darryl Jones, and Dr. Michelle Gayle, Assistant Superintendent of Professional & Community Services, how the County can help them keep Leon County's children safe.

Chairman Darryl Jones, Leon County School Board, commented on the reopening of schools. He stated that they are committed to keeping their children in school. He stated that the learning loss has been immense during the last two years. He noted the struggles with teacher shortages. He thanked the DOH and others that have done their due diligence in getting teachers, faculty, and families tested so they can provide instruction and learning in the best way possible.

Chairman Proctor asked what the current policy was for students who are sick to ensure that they can continue learning. When a child has to pivot to online learning, they have been given Chromebooks to access their online classroom.

Dr. Michelle Gayle stated that they have policies in place so that learning can continue for ill students. She noted that following this meeting there will be a press conference at 12:00 p.m. She reminded the Board that this is the first day back to school from the holiday break. She stated they have protocols in place to make sure people are safe, informed, and know what to do as students return. She said that safety comes first, and they want to assure parents that they are ready for a safe start to the second semester of school.

Jim Murdaugh, TCC President, shared that they are in really good shape at TCC. He noted they have testing protocols in place. Additionally, they have made their campus safe for students in the work program who cannot learn remotely and have four alternative plans for the other programs on campus in case they witness an increase in COVID cases.

Kyle Clark, Vice President of Finance & Administration, FSU, spoke on behalf of FSU President Richard D. McCullough, who had to leave the meeting due to a prior commitment. Mr. Clark stated that the testing lab has not closed and has remained open during the winter break. He noted that there was a line out the door for testing as students returned to Tallahassee. They have ordered 10,000 at home tests. He discussed the importance of the N95 masks. The vaccination clinic opens on Wednesday, and students may also receive vaccinations at the DOH. He also noted the use of air purifiers on campus, and that they are doing all they can to mitigate the spread of COVID.

Larry Robinson, FAMU President, spoke on FAMU's preparation for the spring semester. He recalled the coordination with the presidents of other colleges to prepare for this pandemic. On December 27, the college presidents received a letter from the state government about in-person operations. He noted they have tweaked a number of things in their operations plan. They have provided kits with hand sanitizers and KN95 masks to their students. While double occupancy will remain in dorms for the spring semester, they have provided incentives for students to get tested if need be and have encouraged students to get their vaccinations and booster shots.

Rica Calhoun, Chief Compliance and Ethics Officer, FAMU, noted that they are focused on preparation and mitigation efforts. They are preparing by keeping students informed about any changes that may occur. FAMU continues to be vigilant, staying on top of the virus and strategizing mitigation approaches.

Tanya Tatum, MHA, Director of FAMU Student Health Services, noted the FAMU testing site continues to operate. They are seeing an increase with the number of individuals who are being tested. Yesterday, they saw 3,800 individuals alone. They have increased staff to meet demand and will continue to promote vaccinations. They have administered 23,000 vaccine doses to date. In addition, they have encouraged all students returning to school to get tested.

Chairman Proctor gave accolades to FAMU for their leadership in offering testing and vaccinations.

Sheriff Walt McNeil thanked all participants on the call. In relation to the Detention Center, they are following CDC Guidelines. Corizon Health is their medical provider and they have given out 600 vaccinations. Forty people have been infected with COVID. He noted those affected are seen by a doctor every 2-3 hours. He also noted they are seeing no significant illnesses. He thanked his staff and those who have worked with him and his staff during the pandemic.

Chairman Proctor commented on the sensitive nature of families not being able to see loved ones who are currently incarcerated since the beginning of the pandemic.

Mayor John Dailey thanked the health care community for all they have done. He noted that they are following the CDC guidelines at the City and noted there has not been a cancelation of any services.

Chairman Proctor thanked all participants for the information received. He asked that they continue to articulate that testing should be done at testing sites and not at the hospital. He shared that they would remain committed to mitigating this virus. He commented on the capabilities of the leadership gathered and that together they will get through these moments successfully. If there is a need or another outbreak, they will meet again.

Adjourn:

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 11:38 a.m.

ATTEST:



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

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