

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA  
WORKSHOP  
2024 State & Federal Legislative Priorities  
October 24, 2023**

The Leon County Board of County Commissioners met for a Workshop on the 2023 State & Federal Legislative Priorities on Tuesday, October 24, 2023, at 1:49 p.m. in Chambers with Chair Nick Maddox presiding. Present were Vice-Chair Carolyn Cummings and Commissioners David T. O'Keefe, Christian Caban, Brian Welch, Bill Proctor, and Rick Minor. Also present were County Administrator Vincent Long, County Attorney Chasity O'Steen, and Clerk to the Board Beryl H. Wood.

Facilitator(s): Ken Morris, Assistant County Administrator  
Nikki Paden, Assistant to the County Administrator  
Jeff Sharkey and Taylor Biehl, Capitol Alliance Group  
Sarah Vilms and Victoria Cram, Squire Patton Boggs

County Administrator Long briefly introduced the workshop. This workshop item sought the Board's approval of recommended state and federal legislative priorities for the 2024 Florida Legislative Session and the second session of the 118th Congress. He noted this was Nikki Paden's first year serving as the first contact.

Ken Morris, Assistant County Administrator, commented on the update. He explained that each year they bring before the Board a slate of appropriation requests and policy considerations. He stated as always, the Board has the opportunity to identify additional priorities or provide guidance to staff and the lobbying team in anticipation of the upcoming legislation cycle. He shared the appropriation requests are based on the County's Capital Improvement Plan and anticipated programming needs that offer the greatest opportunity to secure state and federal funding. He noted most of the requests would be familiar, as they tend to rollover each year.

Nikki Paden, Assistant to the County Administrator, LCG - Strategic Initiative, presented a brief presentation and introduced the lobbyist team and provided an overview. She shared state legislative issues and federal issues.

New State Legislative Issues:

- Protection of the State Workforce
- Relocation of the Confederate Soldiers Monument at the State Capital
- Establishment of Florida's Emancipation Day as a State Holiday
- Medicaid Expansion
- Amtrak Passenger Rail Restoration
- Concealed Carry of Guns on College and University Campuses
- Public Records Exemption for Election Workers

The 2024 Florida Legislative Session will be held from January 9 through March 8, 2024, with interim committee weeks taking place from September through December 2023. The second session of the 118th U.S. Congress will convene during the first week of January 2024. This workshop item recommends several policy and appropriations priorities for the 2024 state and federal legislative sessions, arranged as follows:

- 6 County projects for legislative appropriation requests in addition to the various projects identified for potential state and/or federal grant funding;
- 10 state-level legislative policy priorities, including support of the FAC 2024 Legislative Priorities, for the 2024 Florida Legislative Session; and
- 7 federal legislative policy priorities, including support of the NACo 2024 Legislative Priorities, for the second session of the 118th United States Congress.

Table #1: Proposed 2024 Legislative and Executive Agency Funding Requests

\* The County has grant agreements in place with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to support several additional septic-to-sewer projects located in Leon County within the Primary Springs Protection Zone.

\*\*The County’s five-year Capital Improvement Program includes projects for the replacement of major stormwater cross-drains that are beyond the realm of maintenance activity due to size, location, and cost. The County will continue to seek grant funding to support these future projects.

*Table # 1: Proposed 2024 Legislative and Executive Agency Funding Requests*

**Request: | Amount: | Project Phase:**

***Projects for Appropriation Requests:***

World Athletics Cross County Championship at Apalachee Regional Park	\$500,000	Event Funding
Leon Works Expo and Junior Apprenticeship	\$50,000	Program Funding
Backup Generators – Branch Libraries and Community Centers	\$500,000	Capital/Fixed Assets
Lake Munson Slough Embankments	\$500,000	Construction
Fords Arm/Timberlane Tributary Restoration \$500,000	\$500,000	Construction
Leon South Regional Water System	\$500,000	Design/Construction

*Projects for Executive Agency Grant Funding:*

Northeast Gateway: Welaunee Boulevard	\$66 million	Construction
Airport Gateway	\$56 million	ROW/Construction
Southside Gateway: Woodville Highway	\$39 million	Construction
North Monroe Gateway	\$4.45 million	Design/Construction
Northwest Connector: Tharpe	\$4 million	PD&E/Design

Street		
Northeast Connector: Bannerman	\$90 million	ROW/Construction
Orange Avenue Widening	\$43.6 million	Design/Construction
Crawfordville Road	TBD	ROW/Construction
Magnolia Drive Trail (Phase 3)	\$7 million	ROW/Construction
Orange/Meridian Placemaking	\$3 million	Design/Land Acquisition
Fairground Beautification and Redevelopment	\$3 million	Design
Capital Cascades Trail (Segment 4)	\$17 million	Construction
Orchard Pond Greenway Trail (Phase II)	\$2.5 million	Construction
Williams Landing Boat Ramp	\$900,000	Design/Construction
Harbinwood Estates Septic-to- Sewer Project	\$32 million	Design/Permit/Acq./Construction
Centerville Trace Septic-to- Sewer Project	\$10.6 million	Design/Permit/Acq./Construction
Springs Protection Projects*	Several	All Phases
Stormwater Preventative Maintenance Projects**	Several	All Phases

### **PROPOSED POLICY REQUESTS 2024 STATE LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

Like most legislation, Leon County’s policy requests are generally incremental in nature, focusing on issues specific to Leon County that are built upon over the course of several legislative sessions. Additionally, staff annually evaluates the trends and issues affecting all County programs and services to identify potential legislative policy priorities. Statewide significant substantive issues range from maintaining the County’s home rule authority to the State’s current fiscal challenges and efforts to further reduce the size and scope of state government.

1. Protection of the State Workforce Issue:

Recognizing that the state employees who live in Leon County are vital to our community, economy, and diversity, protecting the jobs of these workers from privatization, and advocating for fair wages has continuously been a top priority of the Board during the legislative cycle. In addition, following major cuts to state positions in recent years, this is an issue also strongly supported by members of Leon County’s Legislative Delegation.

Action: Support the protection of the state workforce and oppose any reductions to state employee benefits.

2. Establish Florida’s Emancipation Day as a State Holiday Issue:

Emancipation Day in Florida is traditionally celebrated on May 20 to recognize the emancipation of African-American slaves. The Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863; however, it was more than two years later at the end of the Civil War, on May 10, 1865, that Union Brigadier General Edward M. McCook arrived in Tallahassee to take possession of the City from Southern

forces. On May 20, 1865, after official control of the region was transferred to Union forces, General McCook declared the Emancipation Proclamation in effect. At the September 29, 2020, meeting, the Board approved a resolution of support for establishing May 20th, Florida's Emancipation Day.

Action: Support legislation establishing May 20, Florida's Emancipation Day, as a state holiday.

3. Medicaid Expansion Issue:

The Medicaid program was established in 1965 as a federal-state-local partnership to provide health insurance coverage to low-income children and their families, seniors, and people with disabilities. The federal government provides oversight and broad guidelines for Medicaid, such as minimum eligibility and benefit requirements, while states have flexibility within these guidelines in administering the program, often in partnership and with assistance from counties. This flexibility allows states to respond to unforeseen increases in health care needs and costs due to factors such as changing demographics, new medical technology, and ways to deliver care as well as public health emergencies such as Zika and, most recently, COVID-19.

Action: 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 the federal poverty level, as provided in the Affordable Care Act.

4. Amtrak Passenger Rail Restoration Issue:

In August 2005, Amtrak's Sunset Limited passenger rail service for the Gulf Coast region, between New Orleans and Jacksonville through Leon County, was suspended due to the impacts of Hurricane Katrina. Shortly after, Leon County began to engage our local legislative delegation, CSX, FDOT, and others to advocate for the restoration of passenger rail service along the Gulf Coast region.

Action: Support efforts to restore passenger rail service between New Orleans and Jacksonville through Leon County and urge the State of Florida to join the Southern Rail Commission.

5. Public Safety on College and University Campuses Issue:

Gun rights legislation has taken on a prominent role during recent legislative sessions, with a broad variety of bills introduced each year addressing how and where firearms can be carried in Florida, including college and university campuses. In 2015, the Board unanimously approved a resolution supporting Florida State University, Florida A&M University, and Tallahassee Community College in their unified opposition to allowing concealed weapons on university and college campuses. This has also been a top priority of the Board during previous legislative sessions.

Action: Oppose statutory changes to Section 790.06, Florida Statutes, that would allow the concealed carrying of firearms into college or university facilities.

6. Public Records Exemption for Election Workers Issue:

During the September 14, 2021, meeting, Leon County Supervisor of Elections Mark Earley requested the County's support for legislation that would create new exemptions from Florida's public records laws for elections personnel. Supervisor Earley reported that the proposal originated from the Florida State Association of Supervisors of Elections and, in light of the increasing number of physical threats against Supervisors of Elections and their deputies around the country, has been one of the Association's top legislative priorities. Specifically, the proposal seeks an amendment to Section 119.071(4)(d)(2), Florida Statutes, to create a new subparagraph which reads:

*"The home addresses, telephone numbers, and dates of birth of current and former county supervisors of elections, current and former employees of county supervisor of election offices, and current and former poll workers; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of such supervisors of elections and employees of county supervisor of election offices; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such supervisors of elections and employees of county supervisor of election offices are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution."*

The Board supported this policy proposal during the 2022 and 2023 Legislative Sessions and the Supervisor of Elections Office is requesting the Board's continued support for this issue in the 2024 session.

Action: Support a revision to Sec. 119.071(4)(d)(2), F.S., to exempt personally identifying information of elections personnel from public records requests.

#### 7. Congressional Redistricting Plan Issue:

The Florida Legislature is required to apportion new districts for the Florida House of Representatives, Florida Senate, and United States Congress following the United States decennial census. Plans for the redistricting of congressional and state legislative districts must comply with all applicable federal and state requirements, including the "Fair Districts" Constitutional Amendment approved by Florida voters during the 2010 General Election to establish constitutional standards for redistricting. These standards include the prohibition of partisan and racial gerrymandering, and the requirement for districts to be compact, as equal in population as feasible, and to follow existing political and geographical boundaries. Prior to the start of the 2022 Florida Legislative Session, at its December 14, 2021, meeting, the Board adopted a resolution supporting the Florida Legislature's adoption of redistricting plans that adhere to the Fair Districts Amendment and affords minority voters the opportunity to continue electing candidates of their choice.

Action: Support the creation of a remedial congressional redistricting plan in compliance with the "Fair Districts" Amendment which redraws the congressional districts to afford minority voters across the North Florida region the opportunity to continue electing candidates of their choice.

#### 8. Florida Association of Counties (FAC) Issues Issue:

FAC's mission is to help Florida counties serve and represent Floridians by preserving county home rule through advocacy, education, and collaboration. Representing all 67 counties before the Florida Legislature, FAC addresses issues that have broad statewide

appeal such as the opposition of unfunded mandates or cost shifts to counties, growth management, annexation, revenue-sharing, and water management issues.

Action: Support the 2024 FAC legislative program unless specific issues conflict with Leon County's interests.

**PROPOSED POLICY REQUESTS  
119TH UNITED STATES CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION**

- FY 2023 Federal Appropriations and Community Project Funding Request
- Federal Funding for New Sewer Connections
- Amtrak Passenger Rail Restoration
- Federal Cannabis Legislation
- Federal Disaster Housing Stability Act of 2023
- Foreign Trade Zone Application
- National Association of Counties (NACo) Issues

Mrs. Vicki Cram from Squire Patton Boggs commented on the Speaker of the House situation, noting that it was Day 21 without a speaker and that no floor action was taking place. She provided a detailed overview of the current circumstances.

Sarah Vilms from Squire Patton Boggs expressed her honor to be present and discussed the potential of a government shutdown and the use of a continuing resolution (CR). She mentioned being in a waiting pattern and highlighted various programs that could be impacted if a government shutdown occurs.

Dr. Jeff Sharkey from Capital Alliance Group expressed gratitude to the staff, provided an overview, and mentioned ongoing internal meetings. He highlighted a Special Session called by the Governor on November 6, 2023, which will focus on issues like Hurricane Relief from Idalia, Property Insurance, Relief Funding for Students with Disabilities, and Relief for Israel. These topics are anticipated to dominate the agenda during the special session.

Ms. Paden stated that they would keep everyone updated as she receives updates, and reminded the Board that staff was recommending Options #1 and #2.

Commissioner Proctor shared his comments on recreational marijuana and expressed his views on an 8-year limit for elected officials, specifically focusing on County Commissioners.

Mr. Sharkey commented that a comparable approach had been implemented with school board members. He also noted that the Florida Association of Counties (FAC) strongly opposes the proposed 8-year limit for elected officials.

Chair Maddox expressed his stance on home rule for Leon County, stating that they do not support it.

Commissioner Proctor stated that they need to be prepared to file a lawsuit in federal court.

County Attorney O'Steen commented that she needed to conduct research, and she would require direction from the Board to proceed with litigation.

Commissioner Proctor commented on the necessity for mental health and affordable housing, highlighting a lack of funding and stating that they receive no tax benefit despite the federal

government granting them 5 miles on Capital Circle. He also mentioned the John Lewis Voting Rights Act.

Chair Maddox acknowledged Mayor Dailey and thanked him for doing his civic duty with Jury Duty for Leon County.

Commissioner Minor commented on home rule and discussed potential actions or considerations related to it.

Dr. Sharkey expanded on the 8-year term limit, noting that voting rights continue to be an issue. He mentioned the Live Local Act (CS/SB 102), which deals with housing, and shared that the push for these matters is coming significantly from the Development Community.

Commissioner Minor commented on page 5 of the legislative materials, specifically addressing the Human Trafficking proposal. He mentioned discussions with Representative Tant about changes in the contract clause, emphasizing the need for signing an affidavit.

Commissioner O'Keefe mentioned the possibility of a government shutdown and raised concerns about SNAP and WIC funding. He inquired whether these programs would receive back funding and questioned if the County would have the capability to step in if a shutdown occurred.

County Administrator Long stated that yes, there might be assistance, but funding might not be available.

Commissioner O'Keefe commented on mobile homes and inquired about any rule changes. Mrs. Cram shared that they have not yet looked into it but are committed to obtaining information for Ms. Paden to share. Dr. Sharkey mentioned that no action was taken and expressed an intention to look into the matter.

County Administrator Long reminded the Board about the ratification process, emphasizing the need for further analysis before making a decision.

Commissioner Caban expressed gratitude to the staff and highlighted a couple of items. He opposed the proposal involving 5 miles of forest that brought FDOT funding for a State Road 20 lighting study and safety improvements. Additionally, he mentioned his intention to vote against a workshop for public safety on college campuses and expressed reservations about the ownership of homes in mobile home parks.

Vice-Chair Cummings expressed gratitude to the delegation for their analysis. She specifically mentioned two federally approved healthcare centers, Bond Community Health Center and Lincoln Neighborhood Health Centers, and discussed how states have the option to choose the lowest rates. Vice-Chair Cummings noted that Medicaid Expansion is on the list, despite Florida consistently rejecting it each year.

Dr. Sharkey commented on the staff report, highlighting the identification of Medicaid coverage. He brought up the LiveHealth initiative and expressed a wait-and-see approach regarding its progress. In response to a question about actions the Board could take, he suggested advocacy as a means to address healthcare-related issues.

Commissioner Proctor called for the development of a grant administrative team by the County Administrator, emphasizing the necessity for a minority-based lobbyist team. He raised concerns about diversity within the team. Commissioner Proctor mentioned Cheryl Johnson

from the Office of the Clerk of the United States Representative and Coach Tuberville, a United States Senator from Alabama, who advocates for limiting graduate school borrowing. He also commented on the importance of funding to address pollution in the waters and focusing on issues impacting black communities.

Commissioner Minor addressed the mobile home policy, inquiring whether there would be an analysis presented and ratified during the County Commission meeting.

Chair Maddox asked Commissioner O'Keefe whether he would modify his amendment to include Commissioner's suggestion.

Commissioner Proctor expressed his disapproval of pushing people towards homeownership of mobile homes.

Chair Maddox stated that they need to get an analysis from staff for it to come back.

Commissioner O'Keefe suggested the creation of a policy aimed at assisting residents in keeping their homes before investors can explore alternative options to purchase mobile home parks.

Commissioner Caban stated that he wouldn't support the legislative priority related to gun rights and suggested its removal from the vote and that the Board vote on that priority separately.

Commissioner Minor stated he would support Option #1.

Commissioner Welch raised a couple of questions, addressing concerns about the Springs and broadband development issues in certain parts of the County and inquiring about how funds could be obtained to address these issues.

Mrs. Cram commented on broadband funds and how they use mapping. She referenced HB 3567.

Commissioner Welch mentioned a task force associated with OEV that could potentially assist with the issues at hand. County Administrator Long provided comments on the expansion of broadband. Dr. Sharkey addressed rural broadband issues and expressed a commitment to addressing them.

*Commissioner Welch entered Chambers at 2:15 p.m.*

*Commissioner Proctor moved, seconded by Vice-Chair Cummings, the Board approved Options #1 and #2:*

*Option #1: Approve the 2024 state and federal legislative priorities. Amended to take out portion that specifically speaks to gun rights and amend to include agenda item to come back with the mobile home issue with the information requested and amended to update the human trafficking.*

*Option # 2: Provide any additional Board direction on the County's 2024 state and federal legislative priorities.*

*The motion carried 7-0.*



Commissioner O'Keefe moved, seconded by Commissioner Minor, to oppose statutory changes to Section 790.06, Florida Statutes, that would allow the concealed carrying of firearms into college or university facilities. The motion carried 6-1. (Commissioner Caban opposed the motion).

Chair Maddox thanked the State and Federal lobbyist teams.

**Adjourn:**

There being no further business to come before the Board, the workshop was adjourned at 3:28 p.m.

LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA

ATTEST:



*Carolyn D. Cummings*

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
Carolyn D. Cummings, Chair  
Board of County Commissioners

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