



February 11, 2020

Honorable Danny Leeper
Chairman, Nassau County Board of Commissioners
96135 Nassau Pl. Suite 1
Yulee, FL 32097

Dear Mr. Leeper:

The Fernandina Beach City Commission, in the City's 2019/2020 adopted budget, included an additional levy of 0.5 mills for activities associated with land conservation (including, but not limited to, appraisals, acquisition costs, closing costs, etc.) A key facet of the conservation levy was the commitment to validate the levy for future years through a voter referendum. To ensure the integrity and transparency of the original conservation levy, the City Commission strongly maintains the need for such a referendum.

Both the Nassau County School District and the Nassau County Board of County Commissioners have expressed interest in presenting referenda questions to Nassau County voters which will, like the City's effort, seek permission to levy additional taxes. It is not difficult to imagine the likely negative impact of three ballot questions seeking higher taxes in the same election cycle.

To mitigate those anticipated concerns, City officials had preliminary discussions with County officials regarding a combined effort to seek voter approval, especially when the intent of both efforts is to secure funding for land conservation and environmental protection. Those early discussions indicated an informal willingness on behalf of Nassau County officials to develop an official formula for the distribution of funds received from the proposed County levy. Such a formal distribution would allow the City to forego its ballot question, reducing the tax questions to Nassau County voters to only those proposed by the School District and the County.

Recent informal conversations with County officials and staff, however, appear to indicate a lack of support for such a cooperative effort. Since time is becoming critical to pursue a November ballot question by the City, please provide to the City a Memorandum of Understanding, the terms of which would distribute proposed bond revenues related to conservation and environmental activities based upon a jointly-determined formula (population, property values, etc.). The City, in turn, would deposit such revenues provided to the City in the City's Land Conservation Trust Fund, officially restricting the use of such funds for conservation use at the sole discretion of the City of Fernandina Beach City Commission.

Please provide the proposed Memorandum of Understanding to the City no later than February 28, 2020.

The City Commission prefers to pursue conservation funding through a joint County-City effort. The City Commission remains committed, if necessary, to presenting a ballot question as discussed throughout the past several months as its own initiative in November if such a joint effort is not preferred. Given the time and review necessary to pursue a November ballot initiative, City officials must prepare accordingly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Miller', is positioned above the printed name of the Mayor.

John A. Miller
Mayor

Cc: City Commission
T. Bach, City Attorney
M. Mullin, Nassau County Manager/Attorney