

**Nassau County Board of County Commissioners
Regular Session, April 15, 2020, 9:00 A.M.
Commission Chambers, 96135 Nassau Place, Yulee, Florida**

Call to Order.

Commissioners:

Present: Chairman Daniel B. Leeper.

Present via speakerphone: Commissioners Justin Taylor, Aaron C. Bell, Pat Edwards, and Thomas R. Ford.

Other Officials Present: Michael S. Mullin, County Manager/County Attorney, and Taco Pope, Assistant County Manager.

Staff Present: Megan Diehl, Office of Management and Budget Director, and Brenda Linville and Melissa Lucey, Deputy Clerks.

Official Agenda Summary:

Audience Input: Non-Agenda Items

None.

RS200415 - 9:03:28 Commissioner Leeper acknowledged several public comments received relating to the expansion item to discuss the Nassau County Chamber of Commerce's proposal for small businesses. He clarified that the Board of County Commissioners has not previously denied funding for small businesses and that this is the first opportunity for the Board's consideration.

RS200413 - 9:04:42 Mr. Mullin explained that this meeting is being live streamed and encourages anyone who wants to provide any public comments into the record during the meeting to submit an email to comments@nassaucountyfl.com and for the individuals to provide their name and address. The emails will be reviewed and submitted, noting that the comments should be regarding items and expansions related to the agenda, and must be under the authority of the Board of County Commissioners. He advised that if anyone would

like to be called during the meeting to call 904-530-6009 and leave a message with their name, phone number, address and topic of discussion.

CONSENT ITEM(S) :

RS200415 - 9:07:09 Approve the following: **(Tab A)** Resolution extending the State of Emergency in Nassau County, Florida, due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). **(Tab B)** Authorization for the Chairman to sign a letter to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requesting approval of non-congregated sheltering due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Motion: Approve Consent Items Tabs A and B as stated above and authorize the Chairman to sign Resolution 2020-86 regarding Tab A.

Maker: Commissioner Ford

Second: Commissioner Edwards

Action: Aye: Commissioners Leeper, Bell, Edwards, Ford, and Taylor

Follow Up: County Manager, County Attorney, Emergency Operations Center, Health Department

REGISTER:

The Chairman signed the register for the following warrants: Wire Transfer No. 2008815 dated 4-8-20 for a register total of \$37,216.48; and, Warrant Nos. 263137 thru 263210 dated 4-10-20 for a register total of \$153,207.51.

NEW BUSINESS:

RS200415 - 9:07:32 (Tab C) Approve and authorization for the Chairman to sign the Standard Grant Agreement with the State of Florida, Department of Environmental Protection, for grant award totaling \$400,000.00 for the American Beach Well and Septic Tank Phase Out Project (Contract CM2842).

Motion: Approve Tab C as stated above.

Maker: Commissioner Edwards

Second: Commissioner Ford

Action: Aye: Commissioners Leeper, Bell, Edwards, Ford, and Taylor

Follow Up: Contract Management, OMB, Finance, County Manager

RS200415 - 9:08:27 Dr. Eugenia Ngo-Seidel, County's Health Department Director, telephonically provided the COVID-19 update from the Department of Health. She responded to the public comments that were received by Ron Crews addressing citizens in assisted living facilities and nursing homes; Center for Disease Control (CDC) definition for large scale community transmission; and current prediction on Nassau County reaching its peak for confirmed COVID-19 cases.

RS200415 - 9:14:07 Greg Foster, Sheriff's Department and Emergency Management Director, telephonically provided the COVID-19 update from Emergency Management.

EXPANSION ITEMS:

RS200413 - 9:05:57 (1) Discussion of the Chamber's proposal for small business. (2) Discussion of VyStar Credit Union's proposal for small business. (3) Discussion of Reserve Balances. (4) Discussion of funding requests from Micah's Place, Council on Aging, and other non-profit organizations. (5) Continue discussion regarding the Sheriff's request to transfer funds for construction of the Public Safety Training Center (continued from the April 13, 2020 meeting). (6) Overview of services provided from the Building Department, Public Works, and Engineering Services.

Motion: Expand the meeting to consider six (6) items as stated above.

Maker: Commissioner Bell

Second: Commissioner Taylor

Action: Aye: Commissioners Leeper, Bell, Edwards, Ford, and Taylor

Follow Up: County Manager

RS200413 - 9:47:25 Mr. Mullin addressed the public comment that was received from Emily Sammons relating to a dog bite. He advised that Animal Control would be in contact with her today.

RS200413 - 9:47:43 Expansion Item #1, 2, and 3: Discussion of the Chamber's proposal for small business; Vystar Credit Union's proposal for small business; and Reserve balances.

Discussion: Mr. Mullin provided an overview of a proposal received from Regina Duncan, President of Nassau County Chamber of Commerce. He shared his acknowledgement of the financial and emotional impacts COVID-19 has had on local small businesses and constituents; and, shared emails from the following citizens: Theresa Duncan; Tarah Dunlap; Anita Comisky; Marianna Mcintryre; Leigh Palmer; Pam Bell; Nathalie Wu; Laurie Moore; Sherri Mitchell; and, Melanie Grimley expressing their support of the proposal. He stated that local government is prohibited against loaning money; therefore, local government monies used to help small businesses must be in the form of grants. Expansion item 2 and 3 are discussion items to provide local small businesses.

Mr. Mullin advised that staff's discussion with VyStar Credit Union, resulted in two (2) loan options for County contribution to small business owners. Discussion concerning the details included the following points:

1) According to Ms. Duncan, the Chamber identified 3,342 local small businesses. Of these businesses, 2,687 businesses would qualify per VyStar Credit Union qualifications. The Chamber has suggested limiting participation in the program to 40 percent of those qualified, or 1,174 businesses.

a) Vystar qualifications are as followed:

- i. Must have been in business for one year (three year requirement is waived).
- ii. Must provide most recent year's tax returns for the business and all owners.
- iii. Must consist of 2-50 employees, in addition to owners.
- iv. Personal guarantee is required (750 minimum credit score is waived).
- v. Must not be a business excluded from the Emergency Florida Bridge Loan Program.

b) It is proposed that the County provide \$2,500.00, per business, towards VyStar loan forgiveness and interest payments. A fixed interest rate set at 5.99 percent and a \$250.00 processing fee has been proposed. The estimated cost to the County for Option 1 is \$4,561,815.00.

2) The second option would be the 40 percent participation which would reduce the estimated amount of contribution by the County to \$2,844,489.00.

Mr. Mullin expressed his concerns over foreseeable discontent among business owners not chosen in the 40 percent participation rate. He reiterated that local government is not prepared to act as a bank determining qualifications, repayment, etc. Mr. Mullin advised, regardless of the County's contribution, VyStar Credit Union is now prepared to offer 200 loans to Nassau County Business owners at a fixed rate of 5.99 percent, up to \$100,000.00 per each loan with a flexible repayment option; regardless of whether the County participates or not.

Mr. Mullin advised the Board of the limitations and possible uses of reserve funds to assist small business owners.

- 1) Emergency Disaster Reserve (EDR); \$8 million
 - a) The EDR is intended for the use of funding hurricane impacts. Based on previous hurricanes (Irma, Matthew,) the cost of a storm could range from \$6-\$8 million. The National Hurricane Center has predicted an active season with four (4) major hurricanes. The season begins June 1; and according to some estimates, the Pandemic may not be over until the end of July or August at best.
- 2) Reserve for Capital Plan; \$4.6 million
 - a) Reserved and/or dedicated for roads, parks, and other projects, some of which, have been planned for years.
- 3) Reserve for Minimum Fund; \$10.2 million
 - a) It is the Board's policy to reserve and maintain enough funds to operate local county government for 2.5 months. Currently, the County is at the Florida Government Financial Officers Association's standard for a minimum fund balance reserve.
- 4) Reserve for Contingencies; \$1.8 million
 - a) The reserve is difficult to refund. Under the current circumstances, other contingencies and the length of the pandemic is uncertain.
 - b) Examples of immediate needs of fund use include \$30-\$60 thousand for sprayers to clean publically used areas and emergency transport vehicles to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
 - c) Spending is being limited to safeguard funds. Employment vacancies for non-essential positons are

not being filled. Employment attrition is being researched.

Ms. Diehl asserted further information regarding reserve funds. She informed the board that the \$8 million is the EDR was sourced by money recently reimbursed from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of Pandemic Category B expenses. Should any reserves be used for small businesses, the sub cost cannot be recovered and are not eligible for reimbursement. Discussion followed.

Mr. Mullin read into the record a public comment from Jefry Bohn opposing the Chamber's proposal for small businesses.

RS200415 - 10:28:49

Discussion: Mr. Mullin noted that the same concerns that the board members had expressed relating to the small businesses are shared throughout the local government of State of Florida due to the constraints that are in place. Chairman Leeper stated that the most important thing that Nassau County can do would be to become an advocate for small businesses and to identify every program that they are entitled to apply for. Mr. Mullin concurred. He advised that the United States Congress is considering passing an additional Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), specifically Title VI-Coronavirus Relief Fund. He recommended to submit a Resolution to Congressman Rutherford and two (2) Florida Senators urging that they reduce requirements for local units of government from population that exceeds 500,000 to population that exceed 50,000.

Motion: Approve Resolution of the Board of County Commissioners of Nassau County, Florida, urging the United States Congress to amend the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), specifically Title VI-Coronavirus Relief Fund, to reduce requirements for local units of government from population that exceed 500,000 to population that exceed 50,000.

Maker: Commissioner Bell

Second: Commissioner Edwards

Action: Aye: Commissioners Leeper, Bell, Edwards, Ford, and Taylor

Follow Up: County Manager

RS200413 - 9:42:50 Expansion Item #4: Discussion of funding requests from Micah's Place, Council on Aging (COA), and other non-profit organizations.

Discussion: Mr. Mullin stated that staff has daily contact with all of the non-profit organizations servicing the citizens during this difficult time. He provided an update on the County's contribution to COA. He advised that COA will be reaching out to local restaurants to assist with providing food at a fixed rate. He explained that the anticipated cost is \$100,000.00 and it would provide for an additional two (2) months of food for the senior citizens.

Mr. Mullin addressed Micah's Place. He advised that domestic violence calls have increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Majority of their domestic violence program and shelter funding came from their local thrift shop which was closed down and are requesting for funding in the amount of \$20,000.00 to \$25,000.00. Mr. Mullin advised that the additional funding would qualify Micah's Place for additional grant funding. He stated that staff is speaking with the Barnabas Center and other non-profit organization to discuss what their needs are and what the County can do to further assist.

RS200413 - 10:24:53 Commissioner Bell requested to address the non-profit agencies, and pointed out that Nassau County School District is distributing food to children under the age of 18 and Council on Aging is provided food for over the age of 65. He inquired on how the citizens that are between the ages of 19 to 64 were being addressed. Mr. Mullin advised that staff is working with the local food banks and other non-profit organizations on creating a cohesive plan.

Motion: Approve funding request from Micah's Place in the amount of \$25,000.00 in order to cover expenses and provide local match for state and federal funding.

Maker: Commissioner

Second: Commissioner

Action: Aye: Commissioners Leeper, Bell, Edwards, Ford, and Taylor

Follow Up: County Manager, OMB, Finance

RS200413 - 9:41:27 Expansion Item #5: Continue discussion regarding the Sheriff's request to transfer funds for construction of the Public Safety Training Center (continued from the April 13, 2020 meeting).

Discussion: Mr. Mullin advised that staff had received detailed information from the Sheriff's Office. Discussion followed.

Motion: Continue to April 27, 2020 expansion item 5 as stated above in order for Mr. Mullin, Ms. Diehl and Commissioner Edwards to meet with the Sheriff's Office regarding further information.

Maker: Commissioner Edwards

Second: Commissioner Ford

Action: Aye: Commissioners Leeper, Bell, Edwards, Ford, and Taylor

Follow Up: County Manager, Sheriff's Office, OMB, Finance

RS200413 - 9:16:12 Expansion Item #6: Overview of services being provided from the Building Department, Public Works, and Engineering Services.

Discussion: Keith Ellis, Building Official, came forward advising that the Building Department closed their office to the public on March 23, 2020. Since the office has been closed, staff continues to issue permits and new applications for single family residence (SFR). In addition, the Building Inspectors are out in the field performing inspections. He explained that there has been a decrease in the total number of permits and field inspections.

Doug Podiak, Public Works Director, came forward all the departments under Public Works have adapted quickly and efficiently to all the changes that have occurred during COVID-19. He provided an update on all the departments activities. Mr. Mullin commended the Road Department for assisting COA with unloading food from a distributor truck. Mr. Pope acknowledged Mr. Podiak's leadership with working with the Union regarding the Road Department's seven (7) day schedule in order to maintain the roads and ditches for the benefit of the County's citizens. Mr. Pope also commented that the Parks and Recreation Department currently have three (3) new parks that are either being designed or in construction phase. (Nassau Crossing Park on William

Burgess Boulevard; Three Rivers Tributary Park off of Edwards Road; and the Westside Regional Park.)

Mr. Podiak responded to an inquiry that there has not been any significant wear and tear on the boat ramps. He stated that the only item that was redesign the hinge system at the north end boat ramp. Discussion followed regarding any additional activities at the County boat ramps due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Robert Companion, County Engineer, came forward provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding services provided amid the COVID-19 pandemic. He reviewed the departments duties, capital improvement projects; Traffic signal services and maintenance; development services; Stormwater Engineering; and permits and inspections. Discussion followed.

Mr. Companion responded to an inquiry from Commissioner Edwards stating that staff is continuing to monitor the blockage on Boggy Creek.

RS200413 - 10:30:45 Mr. Mullin advised that pursuant to the two (2) Executive Orders from the Emergency Management Plan, the Sheriff's Office had established a checkpoint at the Florida/Georgia border. The deputies are patrolling Interstate 95 to advise residents traveling from New York, Connecticut, and Louisiana of the local executive order of the requirements of the quarantine order and register that is in place. He thanked Gil Langley, President and CEO for the Amelia Island Convention and Visitors Bureau and staff for providing the registration daily log that is checked daily regarding the origin of the visitors, vacation rental and to verify that there is not any violation to the local executive order. Mr. Mullin clarified that part of the requirement also includes that these visitors must contact the Health Department.

INFORMATIONAL ITEM(S) :

RS200415 - (Tab D) Monthly status update on Building Department activities. Informational only.

RS200415 - (Tab E) Monthly status update on Code Enforcement activities. Informational only.

RS200415 - (Tab F) Monthly status update on Engineering activities. Informational only.

RS200415 - (Tab G) Monthly status update on Facilities Maintenance activities. Informational only.

RS200415 - (Tab H) Monthly status update on Road Department activities. Informational only.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

RS200415 - 10:34:35 Commissioner Taylor's Business:

- Thanked County's staff for their hard work.

RS200415 - 10:35:08 Commissioner Ford's Business:

- Thanked County's staff.

RS200415 - 10:35:27 Commissioner Edwards' Business:

- Encourages citizens to support the community by buying local and help fellow citizens that are in need.

RS200415 - 10:35:52 Commissioner Bell's Business:

- Sending prayers to the First Responder, medical staff and Nassau County residents who are currently struggling.

RS200415 - 10:36:13 Commissioner Leeper's Business:

- Echoed his fellow Commissioner's comments.
- Thanked Amelia Island Convention and Visitors Bureau, Clerk's Office and County staff.

There being no further business, the regular session of the Nassau County Board of County Commissioners adjourned at 10:36 a.m.

Daniel B. Leeper, Chairman

Attest:

John A. Crawford, Ex-Officio Clerk