

**Nassau County Board of County Commissioners
Special Session, April 22, 2020, 10:00 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. Also present via speakerphone was Dr. Eugenia Ngo-Seidel, Nassau County Health Department; and Greg Foster, Emergency Management Director.

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

Official Agenda Summary:

SS200422 - 10:06:14 Mr. Mullin advised that if anyone watching this meeting online wished to have their comments read into the record, they can do so by e-mailing their comments to comments@nassaucountyfl.com. If a person wishes to be telephoned during this meeting, they can e-mail their contact information and topic for discussion to the same e-mail address. Voicemails may also be left at 904-530-6009 and the call will be returned during this meeting.

Audience Input:

SS200422 - 10:07:54

None.

EXPANSION ITEMS:

SS200422 - 10:08:26

None.

SS200422 - 10:08:31 Dr. Seidel provided an update regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the State Department of Health's (DOH) COVID-19 Data Dashboard as of 6:00 p.m. on April 21, 2020, the current case count in Nassau County is 46 of which 44 are residents and two are non-residents. A total of ten residents required hospitalization during their illness; however, currently, only four are hospitalized at this time. A total of 1,136 tests have been completed, both public and private, with 1090 negative results and 46 positive results. In response to a question posed by Commissioner Edwards regarding the COVID-19 cases by specific area, Dr. Seidel responded that according to the DOH's Data Dashboard, there are 20 cases in the zip code 32034, between 5 to 9 in 32011, between 5 to 9 cases in 32046, 5 to 9 cases in 32097; and 32009 has less than 5. In response to questions posed by the Board members, Dr. Seidel reported that there was not a breakdown of the 32034 zip code for Amelia Island and off-island residents.

SS200417 - 10:09:18 Director Foster advised that the Nassau County Emergency Management continues to support the DOH. They continue to be in contact with coastal and inland regional partners for the best practices and continue to gather information. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) continues to receive shipments from the State of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); however, the N95 respirator masks are in extremely short supply. Emergency Management continues to work with Fire Rescue to ensure that their first responders are safe and they are in discussions to address private and public recovery.

PRESENTATIONS

SS200422 - 10:15:11 (Tab A) Presentations by the following regarding activities taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Dawn Bostwick, Library Director, provided an update of the online events the library is hosting and virtual services available while the library is closed due to this COVID-19 pandemic. She highlighted the new virtual collection of books, audiobooks, movies, music, television series, and comic books available in their cloud library and with their partnership with PBS Books. The library also has virtual homeschool and homework help through their student and homework

webpages. There is a monthly newsletter that will be sent to the 22,000 emails on files.

- Brady Rigdon, Fire Chief, explained that since January 1, 2020, Fire Rescue has responded to 255 patients with symptoms that were considered possible COVID-19 patients, 80 in March and 41 so far in April. In early March, according to Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines, Dispatch began questioning callers as to symptoms such as fever, breathing problems, and/or cough in order for Fire Rescue to be properly prepared prior to arrival. Chief Rigdon reviewed the Operational Strategies instituted to address the PPE levels 1 through 3 used to protect the troops in the field according to the type call received. He reviewed the internal precautions and screenings used to prevent CIV-19 infections. In closing, he thanked the staff at Dispatch, Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and Fire Rescue headquarters staff and field personnel.
- Valerie Feinberg, Interim Director of the Department of Planning and Economic Opportunity, thanked the Board and staff for working together quickly to put processes into place and IT for allowing the Planning services to continue serving customers online. The Development Review Committee (DRC) is continuing their meetings virtually. Code Enforcement is continuing to respond to complaints. The Planning Department's core functions continue remotely in a timely manner and staff remains in constant contact with applicants. Standard operating procedures are being updated for efficiency and consistency. She provided an overview of special projects slated for Fiscal Year 2019-2020.

CONSENT ITEM(S) :

SS200422 - 10:41:01 (Tab B) Approve a Resolution extending the State of Emergency in Nassau County, Florida, due to COVID-19 through April 29, 2020.

Motion: Approve Tab B as stated above and authorize the Chairman to sign Resolution 2020-88 regarding same.

Maker: Commissioner Taylor

Second: Commissioner Bell

Action: Aye: Commissioners Leeper, Bell, Edwards,

Ford, and Taylor
Follow Up: County Manager

NEW BUSINESS:

SS200422 - 10:45:20 (Tab C) Discussion of County beaches.

Discussion: Chairman Leeper explained that he and Mr. Mullin had a conference call set up with other elected and appointed City of Fernandina Beach officials along with Dr. Seidel in reference to the reopening of the beaches of Nassau County. There was no general consensus as far as the time a reopening may take place. All the Commissioners are receiving e-mails with an equal balance of residents in favor and against reopening the beaches. He pointed out that the Commissioners have to make a decision based upon State and County health officials, Governor's office, and local law enforcement. There has been a concerted effort to open the County and City of Fernandina Beaches at the same time; however, the City decided at their meeting last night to keep their beaches closed at this time. If the County were to open their beaches while the City and State beaches remained closed, there would be an added stress on the County's limited portion of beach making it more difficult to manage and enforce. Chairman Leeper explained that the County Manager's office has suggested a plan which may coincide with the Governor's opening of the State parks.

Chairman Leeper obtained a copy of meeting minutes from a meeting held by officials from Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Monroe Counties. A summary of the group's conversations included a coordinated phased effort which should occur simultaneously for all the beaches from Palm Beach to Monroe Counties. Permitted activities on the beach should be passive in nature such as walking or jogging with the CDC-recommended social distancing of a minimum of 6-feet apart. No beach chairs or equipment, organized activities and athletics, sunbathing or sitting, or gatherings of people from different households are permitted. Chairman Leeper explained that this is what this Board is attempting to do. A coordinated effort with the City and State would be optimum.

Regarding the opening of Jacksonville's beaches, Chairman Leeper played an audio of an interview given by Dr. Deborah Birx, a doctor serving on the President's Coronavirus Task Force, who praised the Florida DOH's dashboard website

which provides case counts and hospitalizations, ages, and deaths of the disease by zip code as well as testing results. Dr. Birx advised that providing the public with accurate information was the key to instilling public trust. Chairman Leeper stressed that getting people back at work and supporting local businesses should be the first step. He thanked Mr. Mullin and his team for putting together a plan for review today.

Mr. Mullin advised that he had approximately 60 e-mails that were received from citizens. The following names were from e-mails in favor of reopening the beach: Tammy Taylor, Sandra Holdan-Legitz, Erin Riddel-Carter, Chris Greco, Bobby Bosshardt, Eric Hatton, John Williams, Trish Jones, Linda Tacy, Kathleen O'Brien, Matthew Leen, Gail Morgan, Jim Williams, Ann Hays, Sandy, Francesco Borghese, Denise Gravitt, Katie Michalski, R.B and Suzanne Cone, Rick and Lisa Dailey, Michael Cully, Sue Owen, Sara Bender, Steve and Kathy Rima, Dick and Cissy Kunkle, Nancy DeRuyter Warren, Sandy Wilcox, Vicki Humphrey, Vincent Villani, Johnnie Waits, Jim Lawrence, Steve Silver, Brooks Andrews, James Robinson, Jane Everts, Brad Nitz, Nancy Bartmess, Nichole Phillips, Raymond and Deborah Price, Kathleen O'Brien, Cathy Greco, and David Howe.

Mr. Mullin read the names of the e-mails or telephone messages received against reopening the beach at this time: Pam Fridrich, Rod McKim, Caren Kapson, Karen Olson, George Haffey, Rod Matthews, Cheryl Quinlivan, Mary Myer, Scott Henry, Alan and Donna Freund, Dan Kiser, Kim Friedman, Deborah Olauson, Mike Coviello. Robert D. Keeling III, a local small business owner, e-mailed that it was time to reopen small businesses. Mac Morriss sent an e-mail in opposition to opening the beaches at this time and also a collection of comments made on his Facebook page.

Mr. Mullin advised that the following were suggestions to use for the beach re-opening:

1. Parking lot at Burney Park and Peters Point open from 6:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m.
2. Scott Road and South End Walkover closed.
3. No horses on beach or horse trailers or trucks larger than pick-up trucks in the parking lots. No camping in the parking lots.
4. Beach hours from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

5. Activities permitted: physical activity including walking, running, exercise and fishing. Swimming and surfing will be addressed at the time lifeguards are available. According to the City of Fernandina Beach, the earliest lifeguards could be made available is May 4, 2020.
6. No commercial activities or group sport activities.
7. No stationary activity such as sunbathing or sitting on the beach.
8. Items not allowed on the beach: blankets, chairs, coolers, umbrellas, tents, or any other item that promotes a stationary presence.
9. Must adhere to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines and no group of ten (10) or more.
10. On-beach driving would remain prohibited.
11. Parking areas on American Beach between Burney Road and Julia Street (Beach Access 106) remain closed.
12. The re-opening should occur:
 - a. When the Governor open the beach areas in Fort Clinch State Park and Amelia Island State Park (beach at south end of island).
 - b. Coordinated with the City of Fernandina Beach, if possible, in order to ensure one approach to the entire beach for the safety of all residents.
 - c. If (a) and (b) above are not accomplished by May 6, 2020 (2 weeks), the County Manager has the authority, after pre-notification to the Board, to open the beaches as set forth herein.
13. The opening of the beaches to be accomplished by order of the County Manager.

Mr. Mullin advised that any recommendation takes time in order to ensure that law enforcement can handle it; the Health Department and Emergency Management are in agreement with the recommendation and how it is going to be controlled. The reopening should occur in coordination with the City of Fernandina Beach and the State Park beaches. If, by May 6, 2020, the City and State have not opened their beaches, then the County beaches will open with these restrictions in place. Discussion followed regarding a potential "softer" opening before May 6, 2020. Mr. Mullin explained that time is needed to obtain the proper beach signage, the Sheriff has to schedule deputies for enforcement, and lifeguards put in place.

Commissioner Edwards shared an e-mail he received from a new small business owner who suggested to not having a

beach opening until there are businesses open to support the influx.

Mr. Mullin thanked Gil Langley, Executive Director of the Tourist Development Council (TDC) for monitoring the resorts and also thanked the non-profits for serving the citizens in need.

Director Foster advised that Brevard County continues to have their beaches open to all with limited activity which has worked well according to their EOC Director.

Public input: Lauren Barber came forward to question the County's decision being based upon the City of Fernandina Beach's actions.

Motion: Set a tentative date of May 6, 2020, or sooner if feasible, to reopen the County beaches from 6:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. with activity restrictions limited to physical activity. Swimming and surfing to be addressed once lifeguards are available. Beaches could reopen sooner should the State and the City of Fernandina Beach change their current positions.

Maker: Commissioner Edwards

Second: Commissioner Taylor

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

Follow Up: County Manager, Sheriff, Facilities Maintenance

SS200422 - 10:41:36 (Tab D) Approve and authorize the Chairman to sign Work Authorization CM2786-WA02 with Florida Government Utility Authority (FGUA) for project management and preconstruction activities related to the American Beach Water and Sewer Expansion Project; and authorize the Chairman to sign associated budget amendment.

Motion: Approve Tab D as stated above and authorize Chairman to sign Resolution 2020-89 regarding same.

Maker: Commissioner Bell

Second: Commissioner Edwards

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

Follow Up: County Manager, Finance, OMB, NAU

SS200422 - 10:41:53 (Tab E) Set workshop session to address the projected budget for the Sheriff's Public Safety Training Center; and authorize the Chairman to sign a budget transfer for expenses related to Phase One of the project, less expenses already incurred.

Discussion: Mr. Mullin and Ms. Diehl reviewed the request noting that the initial phase is for the shooting range which would free up the old Sheriff's Office land on SR200/A1A in order for the County to sell the land or repurpose it.

Motion: Approve budget transfer in the amount of \$1,271,359.00 from Reserves for Capital Plan to the Sheriff for funding for Phase 1 of the Public Safety Training Center shooting range. Set a workshop session at a later time with the Sheriff and his personnel to discuss the Training Center and the general approach going forward.

Maker: Commissioner Edwards

Second: Commissioner Ford

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

Follow Up: Finance, OMB, Sheriff

SS200422 - 11:37:07 Mr. Langley came forward to provide the March occupancy report for the hotels and resorts on Amelia Island which indicated a decline. April occupancy is projected to be much lower. Taxable income will be approximately 90 percent below what was budgeted. He assured the Board that the tourism program is ready to go. He pointed out that the Convention and Visitors Bureau (DVB) has created a way for the small businesses to distribute their goods and services online on a new website <https://www.ameliaislandmarket.com/> consisting of over 40 merchants. He explained that many of the small businesses did not have the technology or funding to set up their own websites. Chairman Leeper thanked the TDC for their financial support of the non-profits helping the employees laid off from work.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

SS200422 - 11:32:01 Commissioner Ford's Business:

- Expressed concern for another spike in the COVID-19 virus if they open the beach and businesses too early.

SS200422 - 11:33:31 Commissioner Bell's Business:

- Keep medical workers and first responders in thoughts and prayers.
- Revisit how other coastal counties are re-opening their beaches.

SS200422 - 11:40:11 Commissioner Taylor's Business:

- Heard that while there are currently fewer cars on the roadways, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) plans to expedite some of their projects. Chairman Leeper and County Manager to contact FDOT for a completion date for the widening of SR200/A1A.

SS200422 - 11:34:17 Commissioner Edwards' Business:

- Thanked to all those on the front lines fighting this COVID-19 virus.
- Encouraged everyone to buy local, buy "to go", and support all the local small businesses that are open.
- Assured Ms. Barber that they are County Commissioners and they take the entire county, including the municipalities, into consideration in their decisions.

SS200422 - 11:41:26 Commissioner Leeper's Business:

- Thanks to employees for their hard work during this pandemic.

There being no further business, the special session of the Nassau County Board of County Commissioners adjourned at 11:42 a.m.

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Daniel B. Leeper, Chairman

Attest:

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John A. Crawford, Ex-Officio Clerk

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