



State of Florida

Legislative Session

2022



2022 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA INTRODUCTION

This document represents the Board's state legislative program for the 2022 Session. While these priorities are intended to guide the County's advocacy efforts in Tallahassee, the list is not exhaustive and issues may arise or evolve that will require Board attention.

The most critical issues are not ranked in order of priority. Commissioners, staff and contract lobbyists will pursue all of the legislative policies approved by the Board and place appropriate priority on the issues given the opportunities that arise during the legislative process. As usual, items of emphasis will include maintaining the County's home rule authority and opposing cost shifts or unfunded mandates.

The state legislative session will begin on January 11, 2022 and is scheduled to conclude on March 11.

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SUMMARY OF LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

SUPPORT AND TRACKING ISSUES

BACKUP MATERIALS

LEE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



KEVIN RUANE
DISTRICT 1



CECIL L. PENDERGRASS
DISTRICT 2



RAY SANDELLI
DISTRICT 3



BRIAN HAMMAN
DISTRICT 4



FRANK MANN
DISTRICT 5

2022 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

PRIORITIES

- 1) **Caloosahatchee River and Estuary Protection – SUPPORT** continued, dedicated state funding for:
 - i. The C-43 Reservoir Construction Project which is critical to the health of the Caloosahatchee Estuary and continued funding by the State is imperative until construction is completed;
 - ii. Completion of the C-43 Water Quality Feasibility Study;
 - iii. Implementation of the “BOMA” water quality pilot project on property purchased jointly by Lee County and the South Florida Water Management District; and
 - iv. Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) budgeting for the South Florida Water Management District to continue progress with Lake Hicpochee Phase II.

- 2) **Big Cypress Basin – SUPPORT** implementation of the legislatively required study to determine hydrological boundaries of the Big Cypress Basin. The study definitively indicates that a sizeable portion of Lee County falls within the watershed and should be included in the Big Cypress Basin sub district of the South Florida Water Management District. Basin expansion will direct millions of dollars paid annually to SFWMD by Lee County taxpayers towards critically needed flood control projects that directly benefit the local area.

- 3) **Emergency Operations Center – SUPPORT** a 45% state funding match for expansion of the Emergency Operation Center. The EOC’s expanded capacity would overcome shortcomings exposed during Hurricane Irma activation by safely accommodating first responder leadership, emergency relief organizations, County departments, municipalities, utility companies, media and other essential agencies. The expansion project will emphasize flexibility and adaptability to accommodate the evolving emergency management demands and address future capacity needs of a county quickly approaching one million residents. (Request \$13,707,160 in State funding with a Lee County match of \$16,426,525.)

- 4) **Tice Street Sidewalk Construction – SUPPORT** the construction of a sidewalk with drainage improvements on Tice Street from Ortiz Avenue to SR 80, sidewalk provides a safe place for students of Tice Elementary to walk that are currently using the road to walk on. (Request \$927,000 in State funding with a Lee County match of \$927,000.)

2022 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The Lee County Board of Commissioners advocates for the preservation of local home rule and opposes any legislation, policies or regulations that would impose unfunded responsibilities upon the County.

SUPPORT ISSUES

Affordable Housing – **SUPPORT** continued funding of state and local affordable housing programs.

Beach Nourishment – **SUPPORT** full funding of the program that will now use newly created statutory criteria for the annual ranking of beach projects for state cost sharing; specifically, criteria that recognizes economic benefits and cost effectiveness, reduction in storm damage, and the ability to leverage federal dollars.

Behavioral Health System – **SUPPORT** increased funding for core mental health and substance abuse services as well as ancillary support and diversion programs.

Biosolids – **SUPPORT** exploratory state programs for funding new state-of-the-art wastewater technologies while maintaining ability to use properly treated biosolids as a fertilizer supplement or soil amendment, subject to regulatory requirements that have been established to protect public health and the environment. Lee County has invested more than \$15 million to create Class AA infrastructure-- the state's highest quality specifications—to better manage human wastewater.

Bob Janes Triage Center – **SUPPORT** continued funding for the Criminal Justice, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Local Matching Grant Program. The services provided by the Bob Janes Triage Center have a proven track record of enhancing public safety and reducing criminal justice expenditures.

Community Action Team – **SUPPORT** funding to maintain a team in Lee County that provides comprehensive community-based services to children aged 11 to 21 with mental illness and behavioral health conditions. Community Action Teams provide a lower cost alternative to state run foster care, juvenile detention and residential treatment programs.

EMS Balance Billing – **OPPOSE** limitations on the ability of county EMS providers to seek reimbursement for out-of-network transports. **SUPPORT** requirements for private insurers to pay local governments for the actual cost of emergency service delivery based on audits of expenditures by the Agency for Health Care Administration.

EMS Regulation – **SUPPORT** maintaining a countywide regulatory system for EMS transport through the current Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (COPCN) process.

Florida Water and Land Conservation Amendment – **SUPPORT** allocating funds for county land conservation and management programs to acquire environmentally sensitive property for water quality improvement projects or storage. Lee County's Conservation 20/20 Program has spent nearly \$400 million to acquire, restore and preserve property.

Homelessness Programs - **SUPPORT** State funding for local homelessness programs, housing for the homeless and the aid groups and statewide agencies that oversee them.

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Library Cooperative Grant – **SUPPORT** robust funding as Lee County is part of the Southwest Florida Library Network cooperative and benefits from staff training programs, courier services and interlibrary loan privileges that allow patrons to borrow materials from other library systems at no cost.

Regional Planning Councils – **SUPPORT** legislation to allow counties to opt out of mandatory membership.

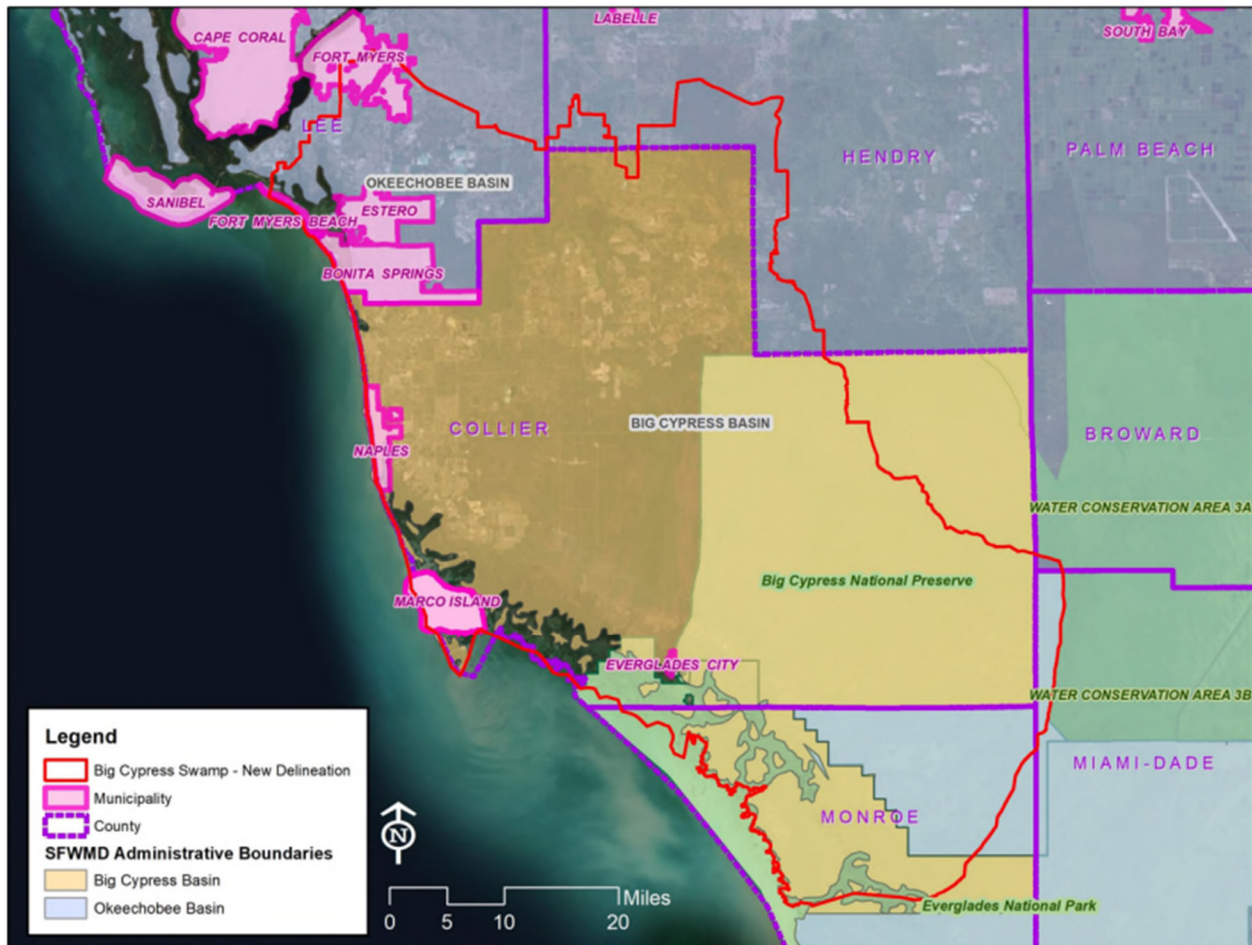
Septic-to-Sewer Conversion – **SUPPORT** continued funding for grant programs through Florida Department of Environmental Protection to cut down on the volume of harmful nutrients that leach into waterways throughout the State.

Smart Horizons Career Online High School Funding – **SUPPORT** a recurring appropriation of \$750,000 to this program that allows adult students to complete a private, accredited high school diploma and career certificate through participating public library systems in order to prepare them for success in the workforce.

VISIT FLORIDA – **SUPPORT** continued funding for Visit Florida, which is a vital partner to Lee County and local business in promoting tourism that bolsters Florida's economic prosperity, employment and international trade.

West Coast Inland Navigation District – **SUPPORT** West Coast Inland Navigation District's (WCIND) one-time state funding request for \$2,000,000 to construct a 4,500 square-foot facility in Sarasota County. The new facility will provide agency-specific public meeting space, office space for employees with room for future growth, and enhance communications and operational ability allowing the District to better serve its member counties and regional partners.

Worker's Compensation for First Responders – **SUPPORT** legislation that provides enhanced funding and services to support COVID-related Worker's Compensation claims for public safety personnel.



Background

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) encompasses the Big Cypress and Okeechobee watershed basins to serve an estimated 8.7 million residents by protecting and managing the water resources of South Florida.

The Big Cypress Basin was established in 1977 and is charged with providing conservation, preservation and enhancement of water resources in partnership with Collier County.

Proposal

The proposed Basin expansion would conform to the scientific boundary recommended in the Big Cypress Basin Boundary Delineation study commissioned by the Florida Legislature in 2020, with the exception that it would include only counties where at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the jurisdiction falls within the watershed.

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Key Provisions

- Governor appoints four Collier County residents and one Lee County resident to the Basin governing board.
- Adopts a more appropriate geographical boundary that is based on the common watershed within the Basin and is scientifically supported by the findings of the Big Cypress Basin Boundary Delineation Study commissioned by the Florida Legislature and conducted by SFWMD.
- Directs ad valorem taxes levied within the counties that comprise the Basin to only be used for projects and flood control operations and maintenance within the counties in which they were collected.

Benefits

- Utilizes scientific data to draw boundaries along hydrographic lines which results in cohesiveness of basin management and allows for better coordination of projects between Lee and Collier Counties.
- Taxes levied on Lee County residents residing within the Big Cypress Basin would remain in Lee County for flood control and water quality projects that directly benefit the area.
- Provides approximately \$4.5 million annually to be utilized in the Lee County portion of the Big Cypress Basin for critically needed water quality and flood control projects.

Contact

For details or additional discussion, please contact:

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Background

The Lee County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is the focal point for coordination of emergency response and recovery activities throughout Lee County. Built in 2012, the current EOC is located on Ortiz Avenue in Fort Myers, FL and consists of 29,082 square feet. When activated for an emergency, the EOC is staffed with key personnel from first responder agencies, emergency relief organizations, County departments, municipalities, utility companies, media and other essential agencies.

The protracted activation during Hurricane Irma stressed the EOC's infrastructure and hampered coordination of the multiple agencies responding post-storm.

Proposal

The proposed expansion of the EOC from 29,000 to 66,000 square feet will greatly enhance the coordination between partner agencies by offering ample collaborative space and a myriad of advanced technologies. Countywide emergency call taking services and the Lee County Department of Transportation's traffic operations will be co-located at the EOC to create a synergistic approach to emergency response. During activation, the EOC's expanded capacity will safely accommodate key personnel from first responder agencies, emergency relief organizations, County departments, municipalities, utility companies, media and other essential agencies.

The facility has been designed to function self-sufficiently for activations of up to seven consecutive days. In order to accommodate the numerous personnel during activation, the new facility will be equipped with state-of-the-art technology, equipment, additional restrooms, showers and sleeping accommodations, an extensive training facility, and additional amenities contributing to the building's efficiency and operational requirements.

During normal operations, the second floor will house three key County entities including Public Safety's Division of Emergency Communications, Lee County Sheriff's Office of Communications Operation, and Lee County's Department of Transportation's Traffic Operations Center. The expansion will also include an updated full-featured AV wall in the current EOC Situation Room to optimize emergency operations and situational awareness during activations.

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Benefits

- Enhances coordination between key partner agencies before, during and after major disasters
- Provides ample collaborative working space and advanced technologies (including full-featured AV walls to optimize situational awareness)
- Creates synergistic daily operations through co-location of Countywide emergency call taking services and the Lee County Department of Transportation's traffic operations
- Provides adequate restrooms, showers and sleeping accommodations during protracted activations
- Flexible and adaptable design accommodates evolving emergency management demands and addresses future capacity needs

Funding

- Requested from the state: \$13,707,160
- Lee County Contribution: \$16,426,525
- Total project cost: \$30,133,685
 - Professional Services: \$1,463,947
 - Pre-Construction Services: 79,988
 - Permits and Impact Fees, etc.: 335,263
 - Construction: 26,254,487
 - Furniture and IT Equipment: 2,000,000

Contact

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Background

The section of Tice Street between Ortiz Avenue and SR 80 provides needed sidewalks for the students that attend Tice Elementary. Since 2013, the Tice Community, Lee County, Florida Department of Transportation, Florida Gulf Coast University and the Lee County Metropolitan Organization have been working in conjunction to plan, design and fund projects in the Tice community that would assist the area with implementation of plans to allow for sustainable community strategies. The proposed sidewalk would tie into SR 80 and Ortiz Avenue projects and provide a continuous and safe environment for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Proposal

Improve student walkways to Tice Elementary. Construct a sidewalk and drainage improvements along 3200 feet on the south side of Tice Street from Ortiz Avenue to SR 80 and 450 feet of sidewalk on the west side of Lynneda Avenue from Tice Street to the existing sidewalk at the School entrance. The sidewalk would create a seamless corridor, connecting residents all the way down to the businesses adjacent the FDOT SR 82 project.

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Benefits

The Tice neighborhood has a grid street network with good residential density. This community faces the highest incidence of bicycle and pedestrian deaths in the County. Approximately 4,200 students live within two miles of the proposed sidewalk areas, with over 450 attending the elementary school. This sidewalk will provide students who are currently using the road, a safe place to walk. This projects also ties into SR 80 and Ortiz Avenue, both of which have sidewalks and provide a continuous and safe environment for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Funding

- Requested from the state: \$927,000
- Lee County contribution: \$927,000
- Total project cost: \$1,854,000

Contact

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