

MARCH 16, 2021

A [Workshop Meeting](#) of the [Board of Lee County Commissioners](#), sitting as the Management & Planning Committee, was held on this date with the following Commissioners present:

Kevin Ruane, Chairman
 Cecil Pendergrass, Vice-Chairman – *Absent*
 Ray Sandelli
 Brian Hamman
 Franklin B. Mann

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

COUNTY MANAGER

County Manager Roger Desjarlais opened the conversation by saying the Workshop topics for today are the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Partnership Update Presentation by Drew Bartlett, Executive Director South Florida Water Management District followed by a short break and then it will move into the FY21-22 Budget Kick-Off (Budget Assumptions & Policy Direction) Presentation by Pete Winton, Assistant County Manager/Chief Financial Officer. Mr. Desjarlais then asked Deputy Manager Dave Harner to introduce the item and to give a little back ground on the topic. Mr. Dave Harner stated that back on October 6, 2020 at the Basin Management Workshop the Board had questions about BOMA and what is happening. Staff then reached out to South Florida Water Management District. Mr. Harner stated that some of the topics being covered by Drew Bartlett, Executive Director South Florida Water Management District this morning will be: Lake Okeechobee, Caloosahatchee Watershed Projects, Lake Hicpochee Storage and Hydrologic Enhancement Project (LHHEP), BOMA Flow Equalization Basin (FEB), Caloosahatchee Reservoir Water Quality Component, Watercourse Maintenance, as well as some major projects that are happening that will benefit SW Florida. Mr. Harner then introduced Mr. Chauncey Goss, Chairman of the South Florida Water Management District. Mr. Goss stated that a lot of people don't realize how big the Water Management District is. It runs from Orlando all the way down to the Keys. There are 1,400 employees and a billion dollar budget. Chairman Goss then said a few nice words about Mr. Bartlett and then turned the meeting over to Mr. Drew Bartlett, Director of the South Florida Water Management District.

PRESENTATION

Topic: South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Partnership Update
Presented by: Drew Bartlett, Executive Director South Florida Water Management District

BOARD DISCUSSION

Drew Bartlett, Executive Director South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) narrated a detailed [PowerPoint Presentation](#) who stated that four days after inauguration Governor DeSantis signed his first executive order on the environment really challenging DEP and the South Florida Water Management Districts with improving water quality and getting the job done. The Governor set forth 29 priority projects to challenge the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) with getting them done. Mr. Bartlett stated that it all starts with basing all decisions in science. Mr. Bartlett stated that if Lake Okeechobee is not managed right then everyone is affected and has a hard time from the estuaries to the everglades. Mr. Bartlett stated that if we don't fix and get better operations with water quality with Lake Okeechobee then the Caloosahatchee Estuary is affected. Mr. Bartlett stated that over the past two fiscal years the State has received over \$50 million from the legislature to start building storage north of the lake. When Lake Okeechobee gets too full it dumps into the Caloosahatchee Estuary and that is what we do not want. He went on to talk about some of the projects going on with Lake Okeechobee.

North of Lake Okeechobee Projects:

- Aquifer Storage and Recovery System
- Kissimmee River and Headwaters
- 24 Dispersed Water Management Projects
- Lakeside Ranch Stormwater Treatment Area
- Brady Ranch Flow Equalization Basin
- Grassy Island Flow Equalization Basin

Mr. Bartlett went on to say that when Lake Okeechobee is too full we need to put it somewhere besides the Caloosahatchee Estuary. South Florida Water Management District is focused on building a massive reservoir south of Lake Okeechobee to take on the extra water. The district is building a component to the west called the A-2 West STA that is a storm water treatment area used to clean the water out of the reservoir and then send it

to the Everglades. The reservoir the Army Corp of Engineers is building is under construction on the storm water treatment area and anticipate the Army Corp of Engineers to break ground on construction of the reservoir this year and the STA will be completed in 2023. He went on to explain the high lake management bands and water shortage management bands. Commissioner Ruane stated that he wants to see us do everything we can to lower the lake and he would like all partners to receive maximum discharges west-south-east. Mr. Bartlett confirmed that SFWMD does send water in the 3 areas Commissioner Ruane discussed. There was additional discussion about harmful effects of moving the water. We need to make sure to take the water out in a healthy way. Commissioner Ruane discussed harmful discharges and expressed his concern about red tide and also solidity dips. Mr. Bartlett stated that he has already communicated with the Army Corp of Engineers to let them know if the solidity dips or the oysters and sea grass are affected we will need to change and back off. Mr. Bartlett went on to say that the Herbert Hoover Dike is being repaired and will be completed in 2022.

He went on to give updates on the Lake Hicpochee Storage and Hydrologic Enhancement Project (LHHEP), BOMA Flow Equalization Basin (FEB), Caloosahatchee Reservoir Water Quality Component, Watercourse Maintenance. Mr. Bartlett stated that it was time to use the BOMA land and add berms and use it like a storm water treatment area. He went on to say they partnering with the county and doing nitrogen research in order to find out the best way to deal with it. Commissioner Mann said that he has waited 10 years to see something happen to BOMA and is glad to hear about the plans. He asked when we could expect to see the work started. Mr. Bartlett said they should break ground in 2022 and it will be a 2-3 year project. The Caloosahatchee Reservoir (C-43) is underway as we speak and is 67% complete. The final completion date is projected for May 2022. He went on to discuss algae bloom issues and the products used to help keep the water clean. Commissioner Hamman had concerns about the alum and if it will create “muck” at the bottom of the lake. Mr. Bartlett stated that is in not as much “muck” as it is sediment and it will settle and needs to be maintained. A crew would have to go in and scrape the bottom of the lake. Commissioner Hamman asked about GS-10 property in Lehigh Acres. This property is intended to bring water in, clean it up and discharge it. Commissioner Hamman suggested making a connection from C-24 to the GS-10 property. The Board just approved a Land Management Plan today so it would have opportunities to be funded. Mr. Bartlett said that it sounds like there might be benefits to looking into it. Director of Natural Resources Roland Ottolini stated that he would like to see the item up for further consideration as well. Commissioner Mann asked for further information on the alum and if it was new to the SFWMD and Mr. Bartlett stated that is not new. However, it had not been used on this large of a scale before. It was agreed that Lake Okeechobee was much too large to use alum as it would be cost prohibitive. Commissioner Mann made the comment that the C-43 would be the one that would actually need it the most. He also inquired as to when C-43 would have water and be completed. Mr. Bartlett said it would be complete in 2024. Mr. Bartlett went on to review the Governor’s Budget for FY21-22:

Governor DeSantis’ Florida Leads Budget – Fiscal Year 2021-2022:

- \$625M Everglades and Water Resources
- \$473M Everglades Restoration (Estuaries)
- \$50M Springs
- \$145M Water Quality
- \$25M Harmful Algae Blooms/Red Tide

Mr. Bartlett finished off the presentation by reviewing the Annual Storage Capacity by Region with a bar graph. Commissioner Mann made a few comments and thanked Mr. Bartlett and Mr. Goss for all the work they have done.

The chairman called for a recess at 2:14 p.m. The meeting resumed at 2:24 p.m. with all Commissioners present except Commissioner Pendergrass who is absent.

Topic: FY21-22 Budget Assumptions & Policy Direction

Presented by: Pete Winton, Assistant County Manager/Chief Financial Officer

BOARD DISCUSSION

Pete Winton, Assistant County Manager/Chief Financial Officer narrated a detailed [PowerPoint Presentation](#) and started off by saying the reason for the work session is to review some of the policies that have put the county in a very healthy financial position. He went on to say that Departmental Fiscal Managers and Department Directors are developing their budgets, last week was the deadline for them to submit their Capital Improvement Plans (CIP). In the presentation Mr. Winton reviewed some of the key fiscal policy guidance that the Board had directed and approved over the last eight years. This has led to the under pinning of the budget development process as we go forward.

Topics Discussed During the Presentation:

- Financial Decisions & Policies
- Financial Stability

- Additional Investment
- Taxable Property Values – Countywide
- Revenue Assumptions
- General Fund (Expense)
- Expense Assumptions: Continuation Budget Only; Growth Increment Funding; Major Maintenance
- Strengths: Revenues Coming Back; COVID-19 Revenue Losses Not As Great As Originally Projected; Debt Profile (debt being paid off); Healthy Reserves
- Challenges: General Fund Debt Repayment; Transit Subsidies (General Fund & Grants); Road Maintenance Costs Increasing; Building Major Maintenance
- Planned Expenditures
- Lee County Taxable Values
- General Fund Projection
- Unincorporated MSTU
- Board Priorities
- Upcoming Workshops

Commissioner Mann inquired about micro surfacing and asked if that was a new word and is it a way of saving money. Deputy Manager Dave Harner addressed the question saying no it is not a new word and yes it is indeed a way of saving money. This type of surfacing is used on roadways that are not high impact such as neighborhood roads. There was additional discussion about road maintenance and sidewalks. Mr. Winton reviewed the Lee County Taxable Values in the General Fund and stated that the FY20-21 outpace the increase of the General Fund and that is why the model is set for a higher tax base increase. He went on to say the taxable values are updated several times a year and the values being reviewed have a five year projection or in some cases it is a seven or eight year projection in the General Fund. Mr. Winton went on to review the Board Priorities and then the Upcoming Workshops and the topics for those scheduled meetings. Commissioner Mann asked that there be a Memorandum of Understanding brought forward for the recreational opportunities for the GS-10 property. Commissioner Sandelli agreed that would be a good idea to move it forward and Commissioner Hamman echoed the sentiments. There was additional discussion about funding for the 20/20 projects. There was additional discussion regarding the stimulus monies paid which created a surplus and enhanced the excess reserves. Commissioner Ruane suggested looking into these reserves for the funding of 20/20 projects. Commissioner Hamman agreed there needs to be a discussion about the excess reserves and how to potentially use those funds or discuss reducing taxes collected from the residents of Lee County. There was additional discussion about not needing to leave 20 percent as excess reserves, the percentage could possibly be 16.5 percent instead. Mr. Winton stated Staff could bring the topic back to the Board for further review and discussion. County Manager Roger Desjarlais stated there are multiple reserve accounts, not just the General Fund. He stated that there needs to be a review to establish if those levels are set at the right level. Then there would need to be a review of millage rate percentages.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 3:21 p.m.

ATTEST:
LINDA DOGGETT, CLERK

By: _____
Deputy Clerk

Chairman, Lee County Commission