

**MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA
FEBRUARY 3, 2021
9:00 A.M.**

Proceedings of a joint meeting of the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) of St. Johns County, Florida, and the School Board of St. Johns County, Florida, held in the auditorium at the County Administration Building, 500 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, Florida.

Proof of publication of the joint meeting was received, having been published in *The St. Augustine Record* on January 28, 2021.

Present for BCC: Jeremiah R. Blocker, District 4, Chair
Henry Dean, District 5, Vice Chair
Christian Whitehurst, District 1
Jeb S. Smith, District 2
Paul M. Waldron, District 3
Hunter S. Conrad, County Administrator
Patrick McCormack, County Attorney
Crystal Smith, Deputy Clerk

School Board: Patrick Canan, District 5, Chair
Bill Mignon, District 3, Vice Chair
Beverly Slough, District 1
Kelly Barrera, District 4
Anthony E. Coleman Sr., District 2

Also present: Tim Forson, St. Johns County School Superintendent; Joy Andrews, Deputy County Administrator of Strategic Affairs; Brad Bradley, Deputy County Administrator Chief of Staff; Frank D. Upchurch III, St. Johns County School Board Attorney; and Sidney F. Ansbacher, St. Johns County School Board Attorney

(02/03/21 - 1 - 9:00 a.m.)
CALL TO ORDER

Blocker called the meeting to order. He provided opening comments regarding remote public participation, the purpose of the joint meeting, and recognized the elected officials in the audience.

(9:03 a.m.) McCormack provided protocol information pertaining to the joint meeting.

(9:04 a.m.) Canan provided comments on the purpose for the joint meeting.

(02/03/21 - 1 - 9:06 a.m.)
ROLL CALL

The clerk called the roll: Commissioners Blocker, Dean, Whitehurst, Waldron, and Smith were present.

The superintendent called the roll: Board members Canan, Mignon, Slough, Barrera, and Coleman were present.

(9:06 a.m.) Canan called the meeting to order for the St. Johns County School Board.

(02/03/21 - 2 - 9:07 a.m.)

INVOCATION

Chaplin Kelly Kemp, St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, led the invocation.

(9:08 a.m.) Commissioner Smith led a prayer for the loss of two Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) officers who lost their lives Tuesday, February 2, 2021, in the line of duty.

(02/03/21 - 2 - 9:08 a.m.)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Sergeant Major Ray Quinn led the Pledge.

(02/03/21 - 2 - 9:10 a.m.)

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

Smith stated he would bring up a discussion item at the end of the meeting, during other business.

(02/03/21 - 2 - 9:10 a.m.)

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Motion by Smith, seconded by Dean, carried 5/0, to approve the Special Meeting Agenda, as submitted.

Yea: Smith, Dean, Waldron, Whitehurst, and Blocker

Nay: None

(02/03/21 - 2 - 9:11 a.m.)

1. SCHOOL SAFETY

Canan spoke on the importance of school safety and the relationship the School Board had with the Sheriff's Office and the Board of County Commissioners. Discussion ensued.

(9:15 a.m.) Sheriff Robert Hardwick introduced his staff in the audience; and stated the Sheriff's Office was committed to communicating with the Board of County Commissioners and the St. Johns County School Board.

(9:19 a.m.) Captain Peggy Tennyson, St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, highlighted school safety topics regarding on-campus safety, transportation, health, school resource officers, crossing guards, and infrastructure.

(9:33 a.m.) Discussion ensued on relationships between students and resource officers; recruiting and retention of crossing guards; looking into a law enforcement academy; mental health; teacher appreciation; challenges in the County, including growth; and maintaining relationships and communication.

(02/03/21 - 2 - 9:57 a.m.)

2. NEW DEVELOPMENT/GROWTH

Forrest Cotton, Growth Management Director, presented details on the growth in the County, via PowerPoint.

(10:01 a.m.) Discussion ensued on challenges with rapid growth, decrease in sales tax revenue due to COVID-19, changes in the southwestern region of the County, the need

for additional schools due to growth, the possibility of students being rezoned to different districts, and the rezoning process.

(10:22 a.m.) Kim Kendall requested that public comment be heard pertaining to Agenda Item 1. *Consensus was given to hear public comment on Agenda Items 1 and 2.*

(10:26 a.m.) Clara Edwards, 381 St. Johns Forest Blvd., St. Johns, spoke on her concerns with traffic on 2209 and 9B; submitted evidence of her personal experiences, *Exhibit A*; and requested school bus services in St Johns Forest.

(10:29 a.m.) Rachael Bennell, 1225 Matengo Circle, Jacksonville, spoke on her concerns with safety and requested school bus services in St Johns Forest.

(10:31 a.m.) Ashley Johnson, 120 S. Arabella Way, Jacksonville, spoke on her concerns with the removal of bus services in her neighborhood and requested the school bus be reinstated in St. Johns Forest.

(10:34 a.m.) Cassandre Lang, 320 St. Johns Forest Blvd., spoke on her concerns with safety and encouraged both Boards to find resources to provide St. Johns Forest with bus transportation for students.

(10:35 a.m.) Pamela Pointon, 1100 Villere Court, St. Johns, spoke on her concerns with safety and requested to reinstate school bus services in St. Johns Forest or reconstruct the roadways.

(10:38 a.m.) Kina Paegert, 108 Crowder Court, St. Johns, spoke on her concerns with safety and requested school bus services for St. Johns County.

(10:41 a.m.) Kim Kendall, 856 Eagle Point Drive, spoke on her concerns with safety; stated the roadway was a County issue and the school board should not be responsible; and submitted photos of S.R. 2209 and 9B, *Exhibit B*.

(10:44 a.m.) Tom Reynolds, 50 Brigantine Court, spoke on school safety and voiced his concerns with the County giving corporate welfare to businesses for economic development.

(10:48 a.m.) Haris Halilovic, 108 Berot Circle, spoke on his concerns with the safety of children and requested the school bus be reinstated in St. Johns Forest.

(10:50 a.m.) Cheryl Swopes, 222 St. Johns Forest Blvd., spoke on her concerns with safety, the rapid growth in the County; and requested both Boards find a solution to address the safety concerns.

(10:53 a.m.) Rachel Frieder, 240 St. Johns Forest Blvd., spoke on her concerns with safety and suggested taking a proactive approach instead of reactive response, and reinstate the school bus in St. Johns Forest.

(10:55 a.m.) Dean recommended the county commission provide funding for bus services. Discussion ensued on finding a solution to address the safety concerns. *Consensus was given from the Board of County Commissioners, to direct staff to work with the School Board and find a solution to school bus transportation.*

(11:08 a.m.) McCormack explained the Board of County Commissioners were not involved in the litigation with the school board.

(02/03/21 - 4 - 11:10 a.m.)

3. REDISTRICTING

McCormack provided information on implementing equivalent districts; and explained during the current calendar year, the Board of County Commissioners would need to adopt a redistricting map.

(11:12 a.m.) Vicki Oakes, Supervisor of Elections, presented details on the redistricting process for the county, via PowerPoint.

(11:21 a.m.) Blocker questioned what impact the census would have on the redistricting process if it was completed in August or September. Oakes explained depending on when the census data was received, the redistricting process could still be completed. McCormack noted the 2011 redistricting process started around the September and October timeframe. Discussion ensued. *Consensus was given to place the redistricting process on a later scheduled meeting for the Board of County Commissioners and School Board.*

(02/03/21 - 4 - 11:24 a.m.)

4. INTERNET CONNECTIVITY IN THE OUTLYING AREAS OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Slough explained her reasoning for placing the item on the agenda; and spoke on the lack of internet connectivity in the southwestern portion of the County.

(11:28 a.m.) Hunter S. Conrad, County Administrator, explained some funds were expended to increase connectivity in certain areas and that steps were being made for an overall county plan for broadband expansion.

(11:29 a.m.) Bruce Patrou, Chief Information Officer for St. Johns County School, explained Hastings and Flagler Estates were the hardest areas to reach with hotspots and stated the difficulty was due to not having hardwire service in those locations.

(11:31 a.m.) *Consensus was given from the Board of County Commissioners to have staff work with the School Board, to address the lack of internet connectivity in certain areas of the county.*

(02/03/21 - 4 - 11:31 a.m.)

5. OPPORTUNITIES FOR A GRADUATION VENUE WITHIN ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Canan spoke on the need for a graduation venue within St. Johns County.

(11:35 a.m.) Smith spoke on utilizing venues that were already established in the County, such as the Convention Center, Amphitheatre, Concert Hall, St. Johns County Fairgrounds, and Agricultural/Equestrian Center. Discussion ensued on the graduation and venue capacities in the County.

(02/03/21 - 4 - 11:46 a.m.)

6. FUTURE/OTHER BUSINESS

Blocker suggested having a joint meeting in the fall; and appointing a Board Commissioner to be a liaison to the School Board.

(11:48 a.m.) Smith explained upon the dissolution of the Town of Hastings, St. Johns County inherited the old Hastings school, and questioned whether the property could be brought back and utilized as an additional school for the School Board.

(11:51 a.m.) Joy Andrews, Deputy County Administrator of Strategic Affairs, presented details on the current lease and the relevant provisions regarding the old Hastings school, *Exhibit A*.

(02/03/21 - 5 - 11:54 a.m.)

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

Kim Kendell, 856 Eagle Point Drive, spoke on ways to implement internet connectivity, including renting hotspots through public libraries, and retrofitting school buses to become hotspots.

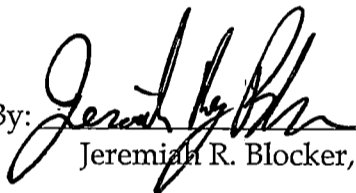
(02/03/21 - 5 - 11:56 a.m.)

ADJOURN


With there being no further business to come before the Boards, Blocker adjourned the meeting at 11:56 a.m.

Approved _____ March 2_____, 2021

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: 
Jeremiah R. Blocker, Chair

ATTEST: BRANDON J. PATTY,
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT & COMPTROLLER

By: 
Deputy Clerk

