

FLAGLER BOCC HEADLINES



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JOE MULLINS

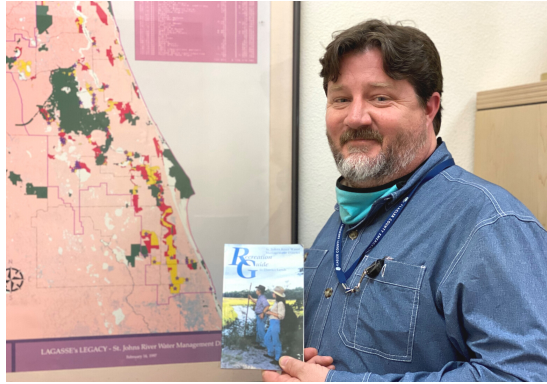
Flagler County Board of County Commissioners newly appointed Chairman representing District 4, which includes the city of Bunnell and everything west of U.S. 1, and is geographically the largest district in Flagler County. He is serving his first term and was elected in November 2018.

BIOGRAPHICAL:

Commissioner Mullins is President and CEO of The Mullins Companies. He is active within the Florida Association of Counties (FAC) on the Federal Policy Committee as well as on the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Policy Committee. He serves on three committees at the National Association of Counties (NACo): Community, Economic and Workforce Development Steering Committee; Rural Action Caucus; and, Membership Standing Committee. Additionally, he serves on the Northeast Florida Regional Council, and several local committees.

OF IMPORTANCE:

"We are surging ahead with our broadband initiative to bring internet access to the underserved areas of Flagler County. This is something that is very important to all of our residents, and its necessity was heightened when so many were thrust into home-schooling and work-at-home situations because of COVID-19. The broadband task force has done an amazing job. I serve on national broadband committees and I know that while most counties across the United States are talking about addressing everyone's need for access to broadband, we are doing something about it here in Flagler County."



LAGASSE'S LEGACY: FLAGLER COUNTY PUBLIC LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGER FOLLOWS IN HIS GRANDFATHER'S FOOTSTEPS

It was the gentle nudge of his grandfather that pointed Michael Lagasse toward a career in Land Management after spending much of his early 20s working on shrimp boats, going to college sporadically, working in the restaurant industry, and surfing whenever he could.

"It's not like we ever had long conversations about what he did, so it was a little bit by example," Lagasse said of his late grandfather, "Papa" Bob Lagasse (1929-2010), who – following a Naval career as a cryptographer, a stint at Cape Canaveral as an agronomist, and a career as a real estate broker – worked as the senior land acquisition agent at the St. Johns River Water Management District from 1989 until 1997.

"He knew of my environmental consciousness," said Michael Lagasse, who was recently promoted to Public Lands and Natural Resource Manager. "He knew I like to live, work, and play outdoors. He was trying to inspire me knowing who I am, so he suggested that I focus on college in an environmental field."

Michael Lagasse pays homage to his grandfather by prominently displaying in his office a poster created for his retirement – titled Lagasse's Legacy – that depicts the properties he purchased within the St. Johns River Water Management District during his tenure. Though most of the 123,635 acres of property the elder Lagasse purchased for the district are outside of Flagler County, he was involved with the acquisition of a portion of the county's Haw Creek Preserve.

"During his time at the St. Johns River Water Management District, there was a bit of misunderstanding about its mission to acquire lands in service of protecting water resources," Michael Lagasse said. "As I understand it, Papa had a unique ability to develop rapport and trust with landowners so that they and the district could agree on mutually beneficial arrangements when approaching a land deal. So many folks feel connected to their property, and are able to see the benefit of selling some of those rights away while keeping their core interests intact on the property – a win-win."

When Michael Lagasse, who was born and raised in St. Augustine, headed off to college he thought ecology would be the focus of his study.

"You know, bugs and bunnies as they say," he quipped. "I got sidetracked by an advisor from my ecological work, and ended up getting a degree focusing on environmental chemistry and pollution control in the Environmental Studies Department from the University of North Carolina at Asheville."

It wasn't a direct route that brought Michael Lagasse to Flagler County but a "nice circle" that landed him here in September 2011. Having worked in environmental consulting, ecotourism, and for the State of North Carolina, and for Alachua County in Florida, his experiences have been varied and useful for his position at Flagler County.

"What I like best is developing capacity to effect change. A lot of our ecosystems – like at Princess Place Preserve – were in need of attention when I was hired," he said. "Now that it's been 10 years, it's rewarding to see the effects of the work that we have spearheaded with the help of our partners."

'TUNE IN' TO MEETINGS

DECEMBER 06: BOCC REGULAR MEETING AT 9 a.m.
DECEMBER 13: BOCC WORKSHOP AT 1 p.m.
DECEMBER 13: LAND ACQUISITION COMMITTEE AT 3:30 p.m.
DECEMBER 13: BOCC REGULAR MEETING AT 5 p.m.

LIVE STREAM

www.youtube.com/flaglercounty/live



COUNTY FORGES AHEAD TO BRING BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS TO ALL

Flagler County moved forward with its broadband initiative to bring internet access to underserved areas with the unanimous vote of the Board of County Commissioners to approve to negotiate a contract with a subsidiary of Charter Communications to build connections over 187 "route miles" in three phases. The negotiated contract will come back before the board at a later date.

The total cost, which is largely funded through grants and financial backing by Charter Communications, is \$7.43 million. Flagler County is committed to funding \$1 million of the project costs through American Rescue Plan funds. While the first phase is fully funded, there is currently a funding gap of \$1.8 million for phases 2 and 3.

"We are focused on moving forward with Phase 1," said Deputy County Administrator Jorge Salinas during his November 15 presentation to the Board. "Flagler County will continue to seek grant opportunities to close the \$1.8 million funding gap for Phase 2 and Phase 3."

Additionally, the county will work with Charter Communications to develop a schedule for the Phase 1 buildout.

Chris Bailey, Director State Government Affairs for Charter Communications, answered questions posed by the board. The company goal, he said, is for there to be ubiquitous broadband.

The likely timeline for completion of the Phase 1 project is the end of 2023, barring circumstances like permitting delays.

'DO DATE' EVENTS

ONGOING: FESTIVAL OF TREES (daily)
Palm Coast Main Branch LIBRARY
2500 Palm Coast Parkway Northwest
386-446-6753 option 1
www.facebook.com/FlaglerCountyPublicLibrary

BREAKERS

'COUNCIL-MANAGER' GOVERNMENT

The Florida City and County Managers Association (FCCMA) recognized Flagler County for 35 years as council-manager form of government in Florida.

"On behalf of FCCMA, we are privileged to present the Flagler County with a certificate celebrating the milestone of your 35th year as a Council-Manager form of government as recognized by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA)," said Michael Grebosz, the organization's secretary-treasurer, during a regular meeting.

He went on to explain that the vast majority of cities and counties in Florida are professionally managed. They are modeled after the structure of corporations where voters are like stockholders that select their councils and commissions similar to a board of directors. Managers and administrators are akin to CEOs in the analogy.

"(It) was created to help separate administration from direct political influence and establish merit-based practices within local government," Grebosz said. "You have your Board of County Commissioners that works together to make decisions and establish policies that are in the best interest of your stakeholders."

INSTRUCTING WILDLAND FIRE TRAINING

Flagler County Prescribed Fire Program Supervisor Michael Orlando last week shared his expertise in the field as one of 15 instructors who taught basic wildland fire training on behalf of the Central Florida Prescribed Fire Council.

"I am very passionate about what I do, and I love teaching others," Orlando said. "We depend on each other so much when we are working together out in the field, so I'm happy to do this."

Twenty-one students from nine different organizations across the state of Florida participated in the training.

The coursework – created and offered through the National Wildfire Coordinating Group – is designed to provide entry-level firefighter skills, and is often required for participation in prescribed burning activities.

"He is definitely an asset to Flagler County," said Public Lands and Natural Resource Manager Michael Lagasse.