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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Flagler County takes a collaborative approach as it presents its 2023 legislative priorities to state delegation

January 30, 2023 – Flagler County took a slightly different approach in presenting its 2023 legislative priorities to the state delegation – Senator Travis Hutson and House Speaker Paul Renner – in that it made the process more collaborative with its municipalities to ensure a unified approach that represents all its residents. Flagler created a single [36-page document](#) that provides countywide appropriations and funding requests, as well as policy priorities.

“As members of the Flagler County Legislative Delegation, Senator Hutson and I remain committed to representing the county’s interests in Tallahassee,” Renner said. “With committee weeks having already begun, we’ve been working closely with local leaders and constituents on identifying and addressing our community’s top priorities, and we look forward to a productive legislative session.”

Hutson and Renner use the backup data provided for each request to advocate for critical infrastructure needs, as well as for the health, safety, and well-being of the community throughout the upcoming legislative session.

“Historically, Flagler County has enjoyed a good working relationship with our Legislative Delegation,” said Chief of Special Projects and Library Director Holly Albanese, who is also the legislative liaison. “They have provided us with continual support for the needs and interests of our residents and businesses and we are extremely appreciative.”

Flagler County’s focus is on issues that will have the highest impact for citizens while fostering collaborative relationships with local municipalities as well as private partners in lobbying for legislative support.

“The ability to maintain home rule and avoid unfunded mandates are central to Flagler County’s federal and state legislative priorities and advocacy needs,” said County Administrator Heidi Petito. “Each year Flagler County works alongside Florida Association of Counties (FAC) and the Florida City and County Management Association (FCMMA) during the Legislative Session to help support all legislative policy statements.”

Andy Dance
District 1

Greg Hansen
District 2

David Sullivan
District 3

Leann Pennington
District 4

Donald O’Brien, Jr.
District 5

A chief concern for Flagler County is maintaining home rule by which, constitutionally, local government can exercise powers to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens.

“Basically, home rule means let the people closest to the issues decide the best solutions,” Petito said. “Flagler County opposes any effort to preempt locally elected officials from making fiscal and public policy decisions on behalf of the citizens they represent.”

While the Board of County Commissioners set the priorities for Flagler County, Albanese tracks the progress of them during the legislative session and works with lobbyists to ensure the county’s voice is heard. The 2023 regular session starts at 10 a.m. March 7, and the final adjournment is no later than 6 p.m. May 5.

“Speaker Renner and I are looking forward to a productive legislative session serving the residents of Flagler County,” Hutson said. “There are many exciting priorities our offices are working on that will benefit both Flagler County and the rest of the state.”

Funding Priorities

1. **Public Health & Safety:** Provide funding to relocate, construct and combine a fire station with fire administration to improve the health and safety conditions for fire personnel and increase efficiencies while minimizing response times. (Flagler County)
2. **Public Health & Safety:** Provide funding to purchase a replacement for the current FireFlight helicopter and equipment necessary to appropriately protect and serve Flagler County. (Flagler County)
3. **Public Health & Safety:** Provide funding to relocate and construct a fire station – replacing 45-year-old Station 22 – to improve the health and safety conditions for fire personnel and increase efficiencies while minimizing response times. (Palm Coast)
4. **Behavioral Health:** Provide funding to construct an integrated stabilization unit and a men’s residential treatment program in Flagler County. (Flagler County)
5. **Infrastructure:** Provide funding or legislative support for transportation projects that will improve access to large land tracts on the west side of Palm Coast. (Palm Coast)
6. **Infrastructure:** Provide funding or legislative support for District 5 FDOT to include Old Kings Road Phase 2 and 3 construction in 5-year Work Plan. (Palm Coast)
7. **Infrastructure:** Provide funding or legislative support for a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) study for the Town Center Boulevard, Old Kings Road, and Royal Palms intersection area. (Palm Coast)
8. **Infrastructure:** Provide local levels of funding to reconstruct the National Registered Historic Bunnell City Hall also known as the Bunnell Coquina City Hall. (Bunnell)
9. **Community Resiliency:** Provide funding for shovel-ready projects to restore beach and dune that will: protect the upland infrastructure including State Road A1A; enhance and protect the environmental habitat; and, restore and maintain the recreational access and use of the beach, an important economic resource for the county along the 18 miles of shoreline suffering from beach and dune erosion because of Hurricane Ian. (Flagler County)
10. **Community Resiliency:** Provide funding to construct three culvert crossings at Blare Drive and Colbert Lane and perform flood map revisions. (Palm Coast)
11. **Community Resiliency:** Provide funding to construct an attenuation basin for the London Waterway. (Palm Coast)
12. **Community Resiliency:** Provide funding for land acquisition and construction of a regional Rapid Infiltration Basin site. (Palm Coast)
13. **Community Resiliency:** Provide funding or grant support for asset management software for the Pretreatment Effluent Pumping (PEP) system. (Palm Coast)
14. **Community Resiliency:** Provide funding, or grant support, to dredge the saltwater canals. (Palm Coast)
15. **Community Resiliency:** Provide funding for beach renourishment programs through partnerships with state agencies and local governments, and to assist with matching FEMA funds to restore and rebuild the Flagler Beach Fishing Pier to new standards by the City Centennial in 2025. (Flagler Beach)

16. Community Resiliency: Create legislation in 2023 to address the heavy budget impacts and unfunded mandates, such as the recycling cost increases, that require local governments to pass this cost onto the citizens. (Flagler Beach)
17. Community Resiliency: Provide additional legislation and funding to support local governments in implementing the protective measures that are identified and recommended in their Vulnerability Assessments and Adaptation Action Plans to mitigate the effects of flooding and sea level rise. (Flagler Beach)
18. Community Resiliency: Provide local levels of funding to complete water treatment and distribution upgrades as identified in adopted Master Utility Plans. (Bunnell)
19. Conservation and Open Space: Provide local levels of funding to acquire land tracts that are within the wildlife corridor and are low priority projects on the Florida Forever list The County intends to pursue less than fee acquisitions such as conservation easements, when possible, as well as other local, state, and federal funding partnerships. (Flagler County)
20. Conservation and Open Space: Support funding to include the unique hardwood tree canopy on Palm Coast Parkway and Old Kings Road in the Flagler County Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program and Florida Forever Funding. (Palm Coast)
21. Conservation and Open Space: Support funding to include the Bulow Creek Relic Dune and Burial Mounds in the Flagler County Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program and Florida Forever Funding. (Palm Coast)

Policy Priorities

1. Support the Legislature Appropriation funding for the Public Library Construction Grant Program.
2. Protect and increase funding for the State of Florida Transportation Disadvantaged Program.
3. Support and protect Florida's Housing Trust Funds.
4. Support affordable and reliable high-speed Internet throughout Florida.
5. Support an amendment to Florida Statute 934.50 to extend the deadline for discontinuing non-approved drones.
6. Support and dedicate state resources for the development and enhancement of county and municipal cybersecurity by providing funding for technical assistance, threat assessments, employee training, infrastructure improvements and data protection.
7. Continue financial support of the SCRAP (Small County Road Assistance Program) and SCOP (Small County Outreach Programs) grant programs to assist small counties in paving Farm-to-Market roads.
8. Support community resiliency grant programs for wastewater, water quality, beach renourishment, flood and sea level rise mitigation and septic-to-sewer conversion projects.
9. Support funding intended for any legislative appropriation projects for land acquisition within Flagler County.
10. Maintain short term vacation rental legislation status quo.
11. Support and continue to advocate for home rule authority.
12. Provide timely reimbursement from the State of Florida for FEMA-obligated projects.

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