

**MANATEE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS MEETING  
BRADENTON AREA CONVENTION CENTER, LONGBOAT KEY ROOM  
One Haben Boulevard  
Palmetto, Florida  
February 2, 2021**

Meeting video link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUlgjuGhS-qV966RU2Z7AtA>

Present were:

Vanessa Baugh, Chairman  
George Kruse, First Vice-Chairman  
Kevin Van Ostenbridge, Second Vice-Chairman, entered later in the meeting  
Reggie Bellamy, Third Vice-Chairman  
Misty Servia  
James A. Satcher III  
Carol Whitmore

Also present were:

Cheri Coryea, County Administrator  
William Clague, County Attorney  
Robin Toth, Deputy Clerk, Clerk of the Circuit Court

**REVISED AGENDA AND SIGN-IN SHEETS**

BC20210202DOC011

5. Agenda Update Memorandum

BC20210202DOC012

Item 2 – Updates on CARES Act Strategies, the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, and Coronavirus Local Strategies Involved with Testing, Local Data, Statistics, and Vaccine Distribution – The following attachments were added to this agenda item:

- The On-going Response to COVID-19 Pandemic – February 2, 2021, COG Presentation
- A written comment submitted through the County’s online Public Comment Form

**CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME**

 City of Anna Maria Mayor Dan Murphy called the Council of Governments meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

 Mayor Murphy led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS**

 Elected Officials and staff at the roundtable introduced themselves. Elected Officials attending by ZOOM were: Town of Longboat Key Mayor Ken Schneier, and Town of Longboat Key Manager Tom Harmer.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

 There were no public comments.

1. **CITY OF ANNA MARIA – HOT TOPICS**

 Mayor Murphy shared three, hot topics in the City of Anna Maria.

City of Anna Maria Pier

 The City Pier was destroyed by Hurricane Irma, but was rebuilt and opened in June 2020 for fishing. A grill and bait shop also opened in December 2020. The Pier is debt free, with only annual maintenance costs, which are covered by the rent collected from the grill and bait

shop. Empty space remains on the Pier from a former, 1,800-square-foot sit-down restaurant. A February 10 public meeting is planned on the Pier to solicit public comment on what to do with the 1,800-square-foot space. Five options would be discussed: a sit-down restaurant, conversion of the space into a special event venue, a retail gift shop, a proposal by Mote Marine to create a quasi-learning lab, and a possible combination of these uses.

### Shrimp Trawler

 Approximately one month ago, a shrimp trawler crashed one-half mile off Anna Maria Beach near Bean Point. The Beach was spread with debris, from Bean Point down to Longboat Key, consisting of pieces of the trawler as well as a fuel spill. The spill was remarkably cleaned up in a period of two days through a great, joint effort between the City and Manatee County Parks and Natural Resources staff. Mayor Murphy commended Manatee County Parks and Natural Resources Director Charlie Hunsicker and County staff for a quick response and resolution.

### Home Rule Power

 Mayor Murphy discussed the powers and struggles of Home Rule as it pertains to vacation rentals. City Ordinance 15-807 regulates vacation rentals by requiring annual vacation rental registrations, safety inspections, and maximum occupancy limitations.

Two bills are pending in the Legislature (House Bill 219, Senate Bill 522), which would preempt any regulations of vacation rentals to the State of Florida and invalidate the City's Ordinance on a going forward basis. The City feels it is critical to preserve their requirements. The State does not have the manpower to assume these regulations. The City's lobbyist has made the vacation rental ordinance top priority. The City's website, [www.homerule.com](http://www.homerule.com) has proven to be an effective tool of information about vacation rentals and contains links to forward comments to the Governor and Legislators.

The City is also working very closely with the Florida League of Cities and the Manasota League, to pursue a unified approach with other coastal barrier island communities impacted by vacation rentals. The City is over 60 percent vacation rental properties. Regulations are needed, and realtors are strong proponents.

 City of Bradenton Vice-Mayor Marianne Barnebey stated short-term rentals and bed and breakfast lodging can affect the very fabric of a community. The government closest to the people should establish and oversee the regulations.

 City of Bradenton Beach Mayor John Chappie stated the Legislators going after Home Rule have changed the character of Manatee County, especially the Island communities, destroyed the type of community and accelerated the decline as a residential tourist community on the Island. He suggested local Officials band together to present a strong position to Legislators on the protection of local regulations.

 By telephone, Longboat Key Town Manager, Tom Harmer stated short-term vacation rentals have also become a struggle in Longboat Key. Longboat Key regularly receives complaints about rentals and enforcing regulations is difficult. This issue is at the top of Longboat Key's legislative priorities.

 Commissioner Whitmore concurred with the comments made.

 By telephone, Glen Gibellina reserved his comments for later in the meeting.

 City of Palmetto Mayor Shirley Groover Bryant stated vacation rentals have also become a serious issue in the City of Palmetto, and they lack Americans with Disabilities (ADA) accommodations. She echoed comments by Mayor Chappie and stated Home Rule protection is critical.

There being no further public comments, Mayor Murphy closed public comments.

BC20210202DOC013

(Enter Commissioner Van Ostenbridge)

2. **UPDATES ON CARES ACT STRATEGIES, THE EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, AND CORONAVIRUS LOCAL STRATEGIES INVOLVED WITH TESTING, LOCAL DATA, STATISTICS AND VACCINE DISTRIBUTION**

 Jacob Saur, Public Safety Director, utilized a slide presentation (with agenda packet) and stated that all of the data included in this presentation is based off the most recent data and information available from the Florida Department of Health (FDOH), Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) databases, and evidence reported directly to Public Safety from local hospitals. He addressed Coronavirus (COVID-19) local strategies involved with testing, local data, statistics, vaccine distribution, key data and indicators, positive cases per date for Manatee County, and daily and seven-day average percent positivity.

Manatee County EMS continues to see long turn-around time at local hospitals and is working with leadership to address any issues. Emergency Medical Services would continue to monitor call volume, hospital capacities and COVID-19 patient counts closely and share this information with hospital partners and health care work groups. Manatee County Operations Center remains at a Level 2 partial activation and will continue to fill any urgent requests from partner organizations for equipment, personnel, and other required resources.

Since September 2020, a significant rise in the number of new cases reported each day has occurred; however, the post-holiday peak may have passed, as data from the past two weeks shows some decline in the number of new positive cases.

Mr. Saur continued with slides regarding the vaccine workgroup and distribution by date, dashboard overview, actions of the Governor's Office, Governor's Executive Order 20-315, successes to date, and vaccination planning and expansion going forward. This week is anticipated to be the busiest to date for vaccination pods and vaccinations given, and vaccinations will be offered at Tom Bennett Park and the Public Safety Center. The number of daily vaccinations continues to rise. The vaccination process continues to improve as the State ships more doses to Manatee County weekly. The County is ready and able to increase this output as more vaccines become available. Two sites were opened simultaneously on January 29, and were able to vaccinate approximately 2,000 people per day. Residents are encouraged to sign up for the vaccine registration pool. Residents 65 and older are randomly selected to be vaccinated as new shipments of vaccine are received. To date, over 100,000 individuals have signed up for the vaccine pool.

In going forward to be vaccinated, people must either provide proof they live in Florida at least part-time, or prove that they are front-line health care workers and provide medical services locally. He recognized everyone involved in the vaccine operations. As the vaccine supply chain strengthens, it is anticipated the private sector (Publix, Walmart, Walgreens, etc.) would take on a larger role in the vaccination process. Until those supply chains stabilize, the County would continue to rely heavily on weekly allotments of vaccines from the State and distribute them throughout the vaccination pods.

 Commissioner Whitmore reported receiving emails on the unfairness of the vaccine registration process. She asked Mr. Saur to explain the process.

 Mr. Saur explained that upon receipt of an allotment of vaccines from FDOH, the Public Health Official team advises how many vaccinations to set for the distribution center. Staff conducts weekly in-house plans to distribute first-time and second-dose vaccinations. Names are selected in random order from the vaccine pool and are scheduled.

 Those counties using Publix have a partnership with Publix from FDOH and the Governor's office, because they are unable to provide vaccinations fast enough. When a Publix vaccine site is set up in Manatee County, those vaccination doses are deducted from the County's weekly allotment to the Tom Bennett Park vaccine site.

Manatee County was one of the first counties to set up a max vaccine site at Tom Bennett Park. Manatee County continues to communicate closely with those counties that have chosen to continue with the State's Share Care System, but the Share Care System appears to be a setback to where Manatee County is today and the success experienced to date with the vaccine waiting pool. The State is not requiring any county to move to the Share Care System at this time. Manatee County continues to encourage residents to sign up through the vaccine waiting pool, and the process continues to improve weekly. Manatee County has chosen to not use the State vaccine registry, and no county in the region has any plans to switch to the State vaccine scheduling system.

 By telephone, Mayor Schneier addressed comments by Commissioner Whitmore regarding the registration system.

 Mr. Saur stated Manatee County's vaccine pool is similar to the sign-up system in Sarasota County.

 By telephone, Glen Gibellina stated there should be filters in the vaccine pool to prioritize permanent residents and taxpayers of Manatee County to receive the vaccine when the County's allotment arrives.

 Karen Stewart, Deputy County Administrator, utilized a slide presentation to present an update on the CARES Act Spending Plan for Phase 3 Extension, the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, and Coronavirus local strategies involved with testing, local data, statistics and vaccine distribution. She reviewed the four main categories in which funding can be used, requirements of the Federal Government in order to use CARES funds, CARES Act guidelines continue to be followed as originally enacted, the process for the CARES Act extension, the County must submit an updated spending plan by February 5, 2021, CARES Act requirements for payment from the fund, costs incurred from March 1, 2020, to December 31, 2021, Phase 3 Extended Spending Plan, Dashboard results show CARES Act Funding of \$6.4 million approved for non-profits, \$30.8 million approved for economic recovery, including \$18.3 million for businesses, \$1.96 million for housing assistance, and \$7.2 million for economic recovery for individuals, which includes food distribution and other human service-type programs after the County spending plan is approved an amendment to the Funding Agreement would be executed, the Treasury allows the Cares Act deadline to be extended to December 21, 2021, but the State is allowing the extension only through June 30, 2021, the deadline extension relates to funds already allocated, and improvements that have been made to the application process.

 Ms. Stewart stated Manatee County intends to spend all of the allocated funding in the CARES Act Spending Plan. Emails would be sent to individuals, who did not complete their application and those who completed their application, but did not qualify.

 Commissioner Van Ostenbridge stated he received concerning comments that Manatee County had \$10 million of unused CARES Funds from Phase 1. People had needs and wanted some of the funds. CARES ACT funding could not be used for overtime salaries.

 Ms. Stewart reiterated Federal Government requirements to receive CARES Act funds.

 City of Bradenton Mayor Gene Brown emphasized that the CARES Act funding was for everyone within the borders of Manatee County.

 Manatee County has worked with the Manatee Chamber of Commerce and the Cities to get the information out.

 Ms. Stewart reviewed highlights of the COVID-19 Relief and Omnibus Spending Package (12/27/20) to be implemented by counties. It is a \$25 billion Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Program, distributed from the Treasury directly to the County. She addressed ERA Program Guidelines, ERA Income Eligibility - Area Median Income, tasks prior to application launch, Outreach and Education will be for the ERA Program and for the CARES Act Program, outreach efforts, and ERA strategies.

 By telephone, Glen Gibellina shared a tenant's perspective on the CARES Act funds.

There being no further public comments, Mayor Murphy closed public comments.

 Commissioner Van Ostenbridge questioned the meaning of a neighborhood influencer.

BC20210202DOC014

3. **BRIEF DISCUSSION OF CHARTER GOVERNMENT**

 County Commissioner At-Large George Kruse presented the request for brief discussion of a Charter form of government for Manatee County, based on a conversation at a recent County Commission meeting (1/12/21). He spoke in support of Charter Government and that he would examine it further. Charter Government is essentially Home Rule. Currently, the State of Florida dictates what can be done regarding vacation rentals, and this is poor policy by the State of Florida. He stated 80 percent of residents in the State of Florida reside in a Charter Government. Manatee County is the second largest county that does not have Charter Government. Charter Government gives the people a voice. Sarasota County has a Charter form of government. His goal is to give a voice to the people. No County charter in the State of Florida takes away municipality rights.

Commissioner Kruse stated he would like to look into forming a starter Charter. If and when the people of Manatee County wanted a change and felt that county government was overstepping its bounds, the Charter would give the citizens the framework to make a change in a timely and efficient manner. A Charter would give citizens a voice to make decisions. Constitutional officers would need to be in support to make it happen. He asked other Officials to share their opinions on Charter Government.

 City of Bradenton Councilman Bill Sanders questioned if Commissioner Kruse was proposing a citizen's review or an exploratory committee for the Charter.

 Commissioner Kruse stated the County Commission would appoint the members of the citizen's review or exploratory committee to draft the initial Charter, public hearings would be conducted, and the question of Charter Government would be placed on the ballot.

 City of Palmetto Councilman Brian Williams voiced concern that a Charter Government would eliminate the rights of the Cities. He suggested an opt-out clause be included if Charter Government did not work for the Cities. Constitutional Officers could support Charter Government, because it would not affect them. He questioned what Charter Government specifically takes away from the Cities, and emphasized that all of the issues must be discussed.

 Commissioner Whitmore indicated willingness to discuss Charter Government.

 City of Bradenton Manager Carl Callahan stated that in the case of a conflict, the local rules of a non-Charter County would prevail; however, in a Charter Government, the County would determine which prevails in the matter of a conflict.

 Commissioner Van Ostenbridge concurred with Mr. Callahan and voiced concern that Charter Government erodes the autonomy of the Cities. He stated he would not support moving forward with a Charter form of Government.

 City of Holmes Beach Vice-Mayor Jim Kihm questioned the need for a Charter Government at this time, as the current form of government is good and is not fractured. He questioned the particular provisions of a Charter Government, what are the Cities being asked to commit to, and agreed with Councilman Williams on the inclusion of an opt-out clause for the Cities.

 Mayor Chappie stated he was not in favor of Charter Government. His big concern is Tallahassee taking away home rule and trusting government. It needs to be made clear that there is good government, the Cities are the grass roots of government, a starter charter would strip the layers of home rule authority and threaten the ability to represent the people at the most basic, local level. For the most part, The Accord has worked. Charter Government appears to be an issue of the unincorporated areas of Manatee County. He would like to see the County exhaust the different types of changes without altering Manatee County's current form of government.

 Mayor Groover-Bryant spoke against Charter Government; it is untimely, inefficient and ineffective; it is very devisive and should not be pushed upon Manatee County. The Council of Governments need to address more important issues.

 Chairman Baugh stated the League of Women Voters wanted Charter Government on the ballot years ago. The Lakewood Ranch community wanted to become their own city, because it did not like County government. Commissioners are hearing increasing unhappiness on County government from citizens in the unincorporated area. She questioned what needs to be done to change the way in which government functions. Manatee County seeks to change the culture of local government, including the way in which things are done and the priorities. She asked the Cities to work together with Manatee County on the needed changes and move forward in order to take better care of the citizens.

 Commissioner Whitmore stated the Lakewood Ranch community voted against becoming a city, because it would have split Lakewood Ranch between two counties, the rules would have changed, and would have resulted in paying taxes to both Manatee County and the city.

 Mayor Gene Brown stated this was not a brief subject, and the Cities would not take lightly to what seems devisive and like a power grab. This is an opportunity to stop the discussion on Charter Government. The County and Cities need to work together and not travel down a road of negativity. He suggested removing the Cities from the Charter Government concept should the County wish to proceed with a Charter form of Government.

 County Commissioner James Satcher commented on statements by Commissioner Kruse on Charter Government and questioned the biggest selling points of Charter Government.

 Mayor Chappie stated Charter Government does not work for the Cities, and Manatee County does not deal with the same issues as the Cities. Newly-elected Commissioners need to listen to the County as a whole.

 Mr. Callahan stated the issue of Charter Government came up years ago and the Cities were just as skeptical back then as they are now.

 By telephone, Glen Gibellina stated the people opposed to Charter Government do not want to be disrupted from their comfort zone.

 By telephone, Lee Whitehurst, Chief of East Manatee Fire Rescue, questioned how Charter Government would affect the independent fire districts.

There being no further public comments, Mayor Murphy closed public comments.

BC20210202DOC015

4. **NEXT MEETING**

 The next Council of Governments meeting is scheduled for May 4, 2021, at 4:00 p.m., in the Longboat Key Room at the Bradenton Convention Center. This meeting would be hosted by the City of Bradenton, with Mayor Brown as Chair.

BC20210202DOC016

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business, Mayor Murphy adjourned the meeting at 5:49 p.m.

Minutes Approved: April 6, 2021