

Mayor Dave Kerner

Thursday, April 8, 2021

8:30am NCNC 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

### **COVID-19 Testing and Vaccinations**

- Burns Road Community Center in Palm Beach Gardens was the most recent vaccine site to open, February 24<sup>th</sup> joining the South Florida Fairgrounds and South County Civic Center as mass vaccination sites throughout the county. As of Wednesday vaccination data, **481,696 PBC** residents have been vaccinated. What is notable is that over 40,000, 85 years and older have been vaccinated.
- Current Executive Orders from Governor DeSantis allow anyone 18 years and older to be vaccinated. Even some 16 and 17 year olds may receive the Pfizer vaccine as well.
- Early on, hospitals were issuing the vaccine, healthcare providers and first responders received the vaccine. And along with our community partners, Florida Department of Health and Health Care District, have been the heroes in the vaccination process.
- We have more than 100 testing sites across the county.

### **New stimulus funding**

- The American Rescue Plan referred to as the APR, passed by Congress in early March provides aid nationally and Palm Beach County should receive about \$290M. We are formulating a fiscal

strategy, similar to what was developed with CARES act funding to assist the community with continued COVID impacts

### **C.A.R.E.S. Act Funding**

- Last April we received \$261M in federal dollars to help the people of PBC
- To date, we have given \$37.2M to help with emergency rent, mortgage and utilities

\*\$38M in emergency food distribution

\*Almost \$79M in restart small business grants for those with 25 or fewer employees

\*And \$679,00 to businesses with more than 25 employees

\*Other categories include: non-profit organizations, cultural programs, broadband enhancements, testing (\$12.5M), non-congregate sheltering

The county just received AAA Bond Ratings from the major agencies which is great news, and no easy feat, especially during a global pandemic.

- We are one of only three counties in the state of Florida to achieve this high honor.
- All of this means Palm Beach County's credit worthiness translates to lower borrowing costs.

### **Infrastructure Sales Tax/One Cent Tax**

- In 2016, you/we, as voters during the General Election agreed to a one cent sales tax increase to help with infrastructure. The surtax is capped at 10 years or \$2.7B, whichever is reached first.

- While 50% goes to the school district, municipalities receive 20% and the county gets 30%. Many projects in these three areas need replacement or repair.
- Parks and pools, walkways, curbs, roads, county buildings and many other things you may see over the next few years are in the midst of work until the pennies stop getting collected.

### **Traffic/Engineering**

- Expect to see some traffic changes and roadwork on Northlake Blvd beginning this year.
  - The county is projected to start work on installing traffic signals and expanding the intersection on Northlake and Seminole Pratt Whitney Road this year.
- (FOR QUESTIONS on SR 7: (Per David Ricks - DOT is in the permit application process with SFWMD for the drainage permit.
- DOT is still fully committed to the project.)

### **Unemployment Rates in PBC**

- Palm Beach County leads the nation and even the state with its lower than average unemployment numbers.
- PBC saw a 4.5% unemployment rate in February, nationally the rate is 6.6% and the Florida's rate is 5.0%.
- This continuing decline in the rate shows PBC is approaching pre-pandemic unemployment levels
- Right now 2,200 jobs open in PBC, where as in April of 2020, less than 400 jobs were available
- Leisure and Hospitality sector had the most job gains in the last month – 1,700 jobs

## **Environment/Natural Areas**

- Out of 31,000 acres of PBC Natural Areas, almost 27,000 of them are located in northern Palm Beach County, north of Northlake Blvd.
- That only includes 16 of the 37 Natural Areas in the county.
- Most of these north county PBC Natural Areas are easily accessible for residents and visitors via parking lot.
- The most recent PBC Natural Area to open to the public is the 13,000 acre Loxahatchee Slough which contains miles of hiking, equestrian and paddle trails – the main entrance is on Beeline Highway, north of PGA Blvd.

## **Legislative Session 2021**

- State lawmakers are about half-way through the 60 day session in Tallahassee.
- Palm Beach County Day kicked off the session – but it was virtual; PBC made our presence known, business community and elected officials participated.
- I was in Tallahassee with Commissioner McKinlay for the first few days to represent PBC on a local level along with your state senators and representatives.
- Continue to push our joint agenda of PBC, League of Cities and business communities, Variety of priorities taken to Tallahassee with PBC in mind: online sales tax, full funding of Sadowski local government housing trust funds and using them for the right purposes of affordable housing.

## **Other Info:**

- Tourism is making a comeback. Spring break filled our hotels to 70% in March, higher than expected.
- County recognizes importance of Affordable/Workforce Housing with a median price of a single-family residence in PBC of \$450,000 according to the Realtors Association in February 2021.
  - Workforce housing, designed for income levels between 60-140% of County's Area Median Income has one project underway in north county on US Hwy 1.
  - And you know business is booming here in north county – doesn't look like it is going to end any time soon. Hopefully economic development incentives can be continued to help draw more businesses here too.

PBC Criminal Justice Commission – Community Forum on Policing in North Palm Beach on April 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:30pm. In person space is limited to 60, but, you can participate virtually as well.