

UNITED IN PUBLIC SERVICE 2020 COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT



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Ladies and Gentlemen of Seminole County,

Public service is an honorable profession. This has never been more true than over the last year. Now, more than ever, local government matters.

COVID-19 struck the nation three-quarters of the way into our fiscal year and significantly upended the way the County does business. The public health emergency and ensuing economic crisis forced a dramatic shift in lifestyle, from wearing masks and adhering to State stay-at-home orders to social distancing and teaching virtual school at the kitchen table.

Seminole County was forced to shift many of its resources from planning for the future to managing the day-to-day impacts of a worldwide pandemic. At the same time, we pursued a tandem priority to maintain the continuity of everyday services we provide to our residents. From public health officials to sanitation workers, roads crews to emergency management personnel, COVID-19 thrust government employees into the spotlight, elevating public awareness of the essential role they play in everyday life and during a time of crisis.

The pervasive nature of the pandemic required us to rapidly adapt and readjust the way in which services are delivered. Minimizing the negative impact of the pandemic on our community and ensuring uninterrupted delivery of public services required quick thinking, creativity, and innovation. Throughout this massive countywide response, we declared a local state of emergency; developed drive-thru testing sites; deployed personal protective equipment; shifted to telework and Zoom meetings; established vaccination protocols; and, most importantly, endeavored to keep our employees safe. All while continuing to fill the potholes, run the landfill, inspect new construction, and deliver clean water.

As COVID-19 continues to test us, the ongoing unprecedented challenges will require us to dig even deeper into our well of resilience. We are encouraged by the early allocation of the COVID-19 vaccine and will continue our efforts to ensure its equitable distribution. Seminole County is well-positioned for success; decades of fiscal discipline has prepared our team for unforeseen events. We will proceed with the confidence that our principles focused on public safety, fiscal management, and service to our community will see us through this difficult time so that we continue to make progress on behalf of our residents.

I would like to thank the Board of County Commissioners for its support and guidance, particularly over the course of this last year. And to our 1,357 County employees - your ingenuity and courage enabled us to overcome historic obstacles; thank you for your incredible dedication and commitment to public service.

Nicole Guillet County Manager



The Coronavirus pandemic required the County's most extensive emergency management response to date, coupled with an extraordinary effort to assist residents and local businesses to rebound and recover.

Seminole County declared a Local State of Emergency on March 2, 2020, and fully activated the Emergency Operations Center 11 days later. In the following weeks, employees coordinated the distribution of scarce personal protective equipment (PPE) to local businesses, frontline workers and first responders; activated the Citizens Information Call Center; managed thousands of requests for rent and mortgage assistance; and set-up 30+ COVID-19 test sites. Dozens of organizations partnered with Seminole County to organize test sites, distribute PPE, provide wellness checks, and deliver quarantine care kits. Local hospitals, faith-based organizations, chambers of commerce, food banks, Seminole County Public Schools, Seminole State College, area hotels, and local malls, along with each of Seminole County's seven cities, played an integral role in supporting COVID-19 response efforts.

CONTINUITY OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

In addition to the direct response to the pandemic itself, Seminole County made the uninterrupted delivery of essential services a priority. Employees were divided into alternating "teams," with many switching to a remote-work model almost overnight. Teams rotated between the office/field and telecommuting to ensure divisions could continue to operate if an employee was exposed to or diagnosed with COVID-19. The County acquired Aeroclave sanitizing units to ensure proper decontamination of Fire and EMS vehicles, as well as other Court and fleet facilities. All public meetings, including the Board of County Commissioner meetings, were performed virtually through October, with "hybrid" in-person and virtual meetings continuing through the remainder of the year.



Social distancing requirements prompted many County service functions to reduce inperson interactions, replacing them with alternative citizen engagement technologies. Video conferencing, remote kiosks, paperless workflow, drop boxes, and curbside assistance were put in place to ensure County staff continued to connect with residents. The Building Division launched virtual building permit inspections, utilizing FaceTime, Skype, and Zoom to perform designated services. Public Works Development Review Engineering initiated digital documentation and file interactions for inspection teams, leading to improved efficiencies for field inspections. Leisure Services developed online platforms to allow for timely resident feedback related to large trail and park projects. Virtual meetings became a daily occurrence for most employees.

SHUTDOWNS AND REOPENINGS

Due to the developing economic crisis, the County suspended water and sewer shutoffs for non-payment in April. As more residents quarantined at home, registrations for auto draft utility bill payments increased by 26%, and requests for permits and related inspections increased by 16% over the previous fiscal year. As quarantine fatigue set in, 380,000 individuals utilized Seminole County trails, a 210% increase over last year.





50% Increase in checkout of e-books



EMERGENCY RESPONSE BY THE NUMBERS*

In response to the surge in COVID-19 cases, on April 1, 2020, Governor Ron DeSantis issued a statewide stay-at-home order. As this crisis continued, Seminole County issued Executive Order 2020-030 on June 29, 2020, requiring the use of facial coverings and employment of social distancing.

Throughout the months-long pandemic, the shutdowns and the reopenings, the Emergency Operations Center team continued to monitor cases, hospitalizations, and death rates, and shared creative and effective messages in order to keep the public informed through various communication platforms. Between March to the end of 2020, the County's Facebook audience increased by 7,104%, and followers on County Instagram, Twitter, and Nextdoor accounts increased by 333%, 25%, and 51%, respectively.

As the response effort moved into 2021, and incorporated the management of vaccination sites, nearly 40,000 individuals registered for COVID-19 text alerts in less than 20 days. The Citizens Information Line answered more than 60,000 phone calls and temporary staff members provided more than 28,000 hours in COVID-19 response support.

THE MOST AMBITIOUS VACCINATION EFFORT IN MODERN HISTORY

The campaign for vaccinations marks an astounding logistical effort nationwide. In addition to the national challenge of vaccine production, availability, storage, and administration, local governments and health departments have had to contend with strained staffing resources, limited public health funding, and the delivery of communications to the public.

The Florida Department of Health-Seminole and County Emergency Operations received a directive from the State on December 22 to open a COVID-19 vaccination site by December 28. Within five days, County and FDOH employees stood up a vaccination site at the Oviedo Mall, and also established a community mobile unit.

As of February 1, nearly 30,000 vaccinations had been administered to individuals within the State's Priority Group 1A, including healthcare workers and residents 65 years-of-age and older. The County's mobile unit visited 19 communities. With more than 75,000 County residents age 65+ alone, the County hopes to see an increase in availability of vaccine doses at the local level so that members of the general public can be vaccinated as quickly as possible.







On March 27, 2020, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, known as the CARES Act, was signed into law. The Act created the Coronavirus Relief Fund, which provides \$150 billion in assistance to state and local governments for disbursement in communities to support small businesses, individuals, and community resources affected by the economic impacts of COVID-19.

The State of Florida received \$8.32 billion in CARES Act funding. Florida counties with a population of at least 500,000 received assistance directly from the United States Treasury Department. Florida local governments with populations less than 500,000, including Seminole County and 54 other Florida counties, received their CARES disbursements through the State of Florida's Department of Emergency Management.

Seminole County was allocated \$82,328,650 in CARES funds and received an initial disbursement of \$20,582,500 from the State on July 1, 2020. A second disbursement of \$16,466,000 was transmitted in September.

Pursuant to the U.S. Treasury, any use of CARES Act funding had to comply with the following criteria:

- Expenditures had to be due to the COVID-19 public health emergency;
- Expenditures could not have been included in any local government or not-for-profit entity's budget as of March 27, 2020; and
- Expenditures had to occur during the period of March 1, 2020 December 30, 2020.

At its June 23, 2020 meeting, the Board of County Commissioners authorized the County's \$82.3 million COVID-19 relief and financial assistance plan. The plan was executed by staff over the following six months, with the program concluding on December 31, 2020. The Board designated funding support to five key areas: small business grants; individual assistance grants; not-for-profit grants; public safety, service, and health support; and special economic recovery initiatives.

Seminole CARES is the largest aid program in the County's history, providing grants to keep small businesses afloat, help residents stay in their homes, and assist not-for-profit agencies with meeting the increased demands for vital services. In less than six months, with no previous administrative infrastructure in place, County staff endeavored to manage the unprecedented task of quickly distributing millions of dollars in relief while navigating stringent and evolving federal rules that complicated the process.

In order to put CARES Act monies in the hands of the people that needed it most, Seminole County contracted with Ernst & Young to implement the Seminole CARES Grant Portal through which small business and individual assistance applicants could request funding. The County coordinated with its seven cities, five Constitutional Officers, and 45 not-for-profit organizations to ensure funding was available to support social distancing mitigation efforts, technology needs, and other initiatives directly related to alleviating the spread and impacts of COVID-19. Funds were provided to Seminole County Public Schools to allow for implementation of additional protective measures and remote technologies for the students and faculty. With Central Florida leading the state in unemployment due to hospitality industry impacts, a marketing campaign was launched to reinvigorate tourism in the region. Funds were also committed to Seminole State College for workforce training initiatives.



SEMINOLE CARES BY THE NUMBERS

\$12.5M SMALL BUSINESS GRANTS:

A one-time grant was administered to qualifying small businesses to supplement payroll, rent, utilities, personal protective equipment, and supplies necessary to ensure a safe re-opening.

2,604 Seminole County small businesses supported

22M INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE **GRANTS AND EVICTION RELIEF:**

The County's individual assistance program was expanded to support Seminole County residents impacted by COVID-19 with rent/mortgage, and utilities. The troubled economy also prompted the County to help struggling renters with eviction relief, a program that has continued into 2021.

5,308 Seminole County individuals and families supported

BETWEEN BOTH PROGRAMS:

- 11,017 applications reviewed in 15 weeks;
- 140,000+ supporting documents analyzed;
- 34,336 applicant calls received;
- **1.7** hours average application review time;
- 136,698 applicant emails obtained; and
- 30,300 dedicated employee hours (March 1 - December 30, 2020).

\$4M ECONOMIC RECOVERY INITIATIVES:

Seminole County joined with education partners, hospitality groups, and local attractions to stimulate workforce training, public safety, and tourism in order to boost the local economy and support the reemployment of dislocated workers. These efforts were in addition to the direct assistance provided to small businesses.

- \$1.5 million allocated to the Central Florida Zoo and Botanical Gardens:
- \$455,000 designated towards Seminole State College for education and workforce development efforts:
- \$1 million apportioned for personal protective equipment and social distancing measures at the Orlando Sanford International Airport, area hotels, and local restaurants and attractions; and
- \$600,000 dedicated towards marketing efforts designed to reinvigorate the local tourism industry.

\$41M PUBLIC SAFETY, SERVICE, AND HEALTH:

The County administered funding to support public safety, service, and health initiatives in response to the pandemic. These expenditures include emergency management response efforts; COVID-19 testing and vaccine administration; payroll expenses related to employees substantially dedicated to mitigating the public health emergency; decontamination devices; social distancing and protective measures for public facilities and operations; and costs associated with personal protective equipment and COVID-19 mitigation efforts.

- \$8.3 million apportioned to Seminole County Public School for PPE, HVAC upgrades, and technology improvements;
- \$5.3 million allocated to the County's seven cities;
- \$4.7 million designated towards Constitutional Officers and the 18th Judicial Branch: and
- \$22.7 million towards County and FDOH COVID-19 response and mitigation efforts.

\$2.9M NOT-FOR-PROFITS:

A one-time grant was administered to 45 qualified local not-for-profit organizations responsible for providing essential services to the community, such as food, shelter, healthcare, and support for the homeless population. CARES funds allowed these not-for-profits to purchase personal protective equipment, remote technology needs, and other supplies necessary to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19.



Considerable County resources were redirected to the pandemic response in 2020, however the County remains committed to its long-range view, and continues to advance major projects and plans that enhance the community and protect our environment.

FIVE POINTS

Phase One of the County's Five Points Master Plan Development, which includes relocation of the Civil Courthouse from downtown Sanford, as well as construction of a central energy plant and parking garage, was awarded to Wharton Smith in October of 2020. This \$65.6 million project will be completed by May of 2023, with funding secured through the future issuance of a \$75 million bond. Efforts to initiate Phase Two, which includes design renovation of the Criminal Justice Center, will begin in the summer of 2021.

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

The five-year update of the water/wastewater/reclaimed water master plan will provide a 20-year forecast that will influence the County's current Water and Sewer Capital Improvement Program. It is scheduled for completion in summer of 2021. Additionally, the County's foundational Solid Waste Master Plan will analyze current operating procedures, consider best management practices, and present a 20-year capital improvement plan. Completion is anticipated in the fall of 2021.

LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE

The County's current Land Development Code covers a range of topics and procedures, from zoning and subdivision regulations to endangered species protection and right-of-way use permitting. The Code regulates land development in the unincorporated portions of the 345-square mile County. In January of 2020, the County kicked-off the Land Development Code revisioning process, a targeted effort to revise components of the current 900-page document to better align with the County's Comprehensive Plan and to modernize certain chapters of the Code, such as parking and zoning. Four Board worksessions and several community meetings have occurred as part of this process. With more to come, this effort is anticipated for completion in summer of 2021.





SUSTAINABILITY MASTER PLAN

Seminole County is committed to environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Last year, the Board directed staff to pursue a proposal for development of an Energy Efficiency and Sustainability Master Plan. This actionable guidance will provide the County with recommendations and strategies on how to best implement a holistic and comprehensive Energy Efficiency and Sustainability Plan for both existing and future County facilities, policies, and projects. The intent is to identify opportunities that will allow the County to become more efficient and self-reliant with respect to energy consumption, conservation, and production. Phase One of this endeavor is expected to commence in early 2021.

TRAILS MASTER PLAN

In response to the desire for additional trail connectivity in the County's urban, suburban, and rural areas, a Trails Master Plan update was launched in 2020. Due to the pandemic, the manner in which public input was collected was modified to ensure safe participation. An interactive online platform was developed that included video presentations; a preference and needs survey; and an interactive countywide map that allowed residents to provide feedback directly in their area of concern. This efficient way of collecting public input will allow completion of the master plan in 2021.

ROLLING HILLS MASTER PLAN

In August 2018, the Board of County Commissioners purchased Rolling Hills, the 98-acre former golf course located in the unincorporated Longwood area. Since that time, Seminole County has worked with neighborhood residents on the redevelopment project, which commenced just as the County began to contend with the pandemic. In order to ensure resident participation during a time when in-person meetings were limited, an online platform was developed, bringing the process to residents. Interactive designs, virtual property tours, and 3D renderings were created, allowing residents to virtually experience the plans for the park and provide their input. The platform was viewed thousands of times and provided residents the opportunity to provide feedback and, ultimately, an approved master plan. This year the County will award the contract for project design and engineering of Phase 1 of the master plan. Completion of the first phase is anticipated in summer of 2022.

CONTINUED PROGRESS & ACHIEVEMENTS

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

- Development Services, in conjunction with the Clerk's Office, implemented the electronic submission of Notice of Commencements, saving customers a physical trip to the Clerk's Office for recording and certifying.
- Emergency Communications implemented a Pre-Alert system to improve Fire/EMS response times.
- Traffic Engineering began testing Connected Vehicle equipment, which will allow for the exchange of information amongst vehicles, drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians with the goal of reducing congestion, improving multimodal movement, and enhancing safety.
- The County website was redesigned and remediated by Information Services to ensure ADA compliance.
- Leisure Services implemented the Seminole County Arts and Cultural Grant program, directly connecting funding opportunities with the County's arts and culture community.
- The JD Edwards Enterprise Resource Planning Program was established. This joint initiative between the County and Clerk's Office lays the foundation for several improvements, including automation of employee timecards, electronic general ledger transactions, and enterprise reporting.
- Organizational Excellence enhanced employee training and support programs, including Employee Succession Planning, Leadership Development, and Diversity programs.
- The Board-appointed US Census Complete Count Committee and County Community Relations spearheaded the effort to maximize citizen outreach, leading Seminole County to the highest census response rate in Florida.

ACCOLADES AND AWARDS

- Seminole County was selected by Stacker.com and Niche.com as the Best County to Call Home in Florida.
- The Southeast Regional Water Treatment Plant received the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's "2019 Plant Operations Excellence Award" for outstanding operations.
- Extension Services was recognized by the Florida Association of 4-H Agents, the Florida Extension Association of Family and Consumer Science, the Florida Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals, and UF/IFAS Extension Administration for programming, creative contributions, and outreach.

FACILITY ENHANCEMENTS

- Facilities completed renovations of the East Branch Public Library. Similar renovations in the Northwest Branch Public Library are currently in-progress.
- Environmental Services completed Phase One of the Landfill Gas Collection System expansion. This project allows for the capture of additional landfill gases for beneficial reuse. Phase Two is scheduled to conclude in spring of 2021.
- To ensure ADA accessibility, the Parks Division replaced playground equipment at Greenwood Lakes Park as well as the existing piers at Sylvan and Red Bug Lake Parks.
- Solid Waste Management constructed a new scale house at the Osceola Road Landfill, resulting in a decrease of customer wait time.

2020 BY THE NUMBERS





While budget development for FY2020/21 was underway, the County began its response to the COVID-19 crisis, capsizing the ongoing planning process. A revised \$250 million General Fund budget was proposed in May, eliminating more than \$14 million in initial planned expenses to offset projected losses in non-ad valorem revenue resulting from the pandemic-induced economic shutdown.

In an effort to ensure the FY2020/21 budget was structurally balanced, and in anticipation of additional economic impacts in the fiscal years following the onset of the Coronavirus crisis, the Board employed various mitigation strategies, including freezing existing positions and deferring new position requests; reducing funding for fleet replacement and facilities maintenance; postponing several large parks, natural lands, libraries, animal services and technology improvement projects; and reducing roads, traffic, facilities, information services, and leisure services budgets.

- The FY2020/21 Adopted Budget totals \$904 million, inclusive of \$637 million in operating funds; \$226.7 million in reserves; and \$40.5 million in interfund transfers;
- Critical Public Safety, Water, Sewer, and Solid Waste Services account for 65% of the operating budget;
- Taxable values increased countywide for the eighth consecutive year, averaging 6.8% annual growth over the past five years; and
- The Unincorporated County millage rate of 7.7507 (countywide, roads, fire) remains one of the lowest unincorporated rates in the region. The average Unincorporated homesteaded residence ad valorem tax bill is \$2,528 (includes School and Water Management District taxes).





With design progressing, construction on Fire Station 39 is scheduled to commence in 2021, serving the expanding needs of northwest Seminole County. This 12,000 square-foot station is expected to open in early 2022. Relocation of Fire Station 11 is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2021. This joint venture between Seminole County and the City of Altamonte Springs is the first of its kind in Seminole County.

In 2020, the Fire Department initiated the deployment of drones to fire emergencies and other incidents. These "eyes in the sky" serve as an essential tool, equipping firefighters with the latest technology while adding complementary capabilities to the existing resources. Drones provide enhanced reconnaissance during structure firefighting, wildland firefighting, rescue missions, hazardous material mitigation, and disaster response in a cost-effective manner.

Last year, the EMS/Fire/Rescue Division responded to 41,447 calls for service, and \$419,335,901 in property and goods were saved. As part of the Fire Department outreach program, 371 smoke alarms were installed through a partnership with the Red Cross and more than 750 people were trained in hands-only CPR.



INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE

The voter-approved One Cent Infrastructure Sales Tax allowed the County to complete \$56.7 million in projects last year. In addition to executing multiple construction projects, the County also focused on improving efficiencies in delivery of the program. Seminole County Public Works standardized the validation and prioritization of Penny Sales Tax projects, which involved the inclusion of all projects identified in the County's Transportation and Stormwater Master Plans. The Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation process was also modified, grouping projects that are in close proximity so they can be bid as one job, an improvement that resulted in more efficient construction while decreasing impacts to the traveling public and saving taxpayer dollars.

Last year, Penny Sales Tax projects provided a significant investment in infrastructure, including:

- 96 lane miles of roadway resurfacing, including:
 - Amherst Subdivision
 - Dodd Road
 - Maitland Avenue
 - Markham Woods Road
 - Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
 - Mikler Road
 - N. Ronald Reagan Blvd/CR 427
 - Sunrise Subdivision
 - Trailwood Estates Subdivision
- 66 construction projects completed, including:
 - Alton Drive stormwater pond modifications
 - Carrigan Avenue sidewalks
 - East Altamonte sidewalks, Phase Two
 - Lake Howell High School turn lane addition
 - Markham Woods Road gravity wall rehabilitation
 - Raven Avenue sidewalks
 - Seminole Drive/Curtis Drive/Glocca Morra sidewalks
 - State Road 434 and 436 mast arm upgrades
 - Turn lane additions, extensions, and intersection improvements at four Lake Mary locations

- 24 bridge projects completed, including:
 - Econlockhatchee River/CR 419 bridge repair
 - Lake Howell Road bridge repair
 - Lockwood Blvd. bridge repair
 - McCullouch Road bridge repair
 - Red Bug Lake Road bridge repair
 - Rinehart Road bridge repair
 - Weathersfield/Little Wekiva bridge repair
- 5,867 countywide stormwater pipes lined





The provision of sufficient attainable housing is an ongoing, multifaceted challenge that impacts the entire nation, crossing multiple income levels.

In an effort to address the impediments to affordable housing in our community, Seminole County participated in a Regional Affordable Housing initiative with Orange County, Osceola County, and the City of Orlando. This two-year effort concluded that there is no "one model" solution; many approaches with multiple policies and programs will be necessary to advance an effective affordable housing agenda.

Building on the regional collaboration, the Board of County Commissioners actively embarked on the development of an Attainable Housing Strategic Plan that employs proven housing solutions for the residents of Seminole County. Following a series of worksessions, the Board approved an action plan involving both short-and-long-term objectives, including:

- Development of a Community Land Trust Ordinance to create opportunities to establish homes and the land upon which the home is constructed;
- Creation of an Affordable Housing Trust Fund to provide incentives to developers and nonprofit organizations for the expansion of workforce housing;
- Authorization of Accessory Dwelling Units in all single-family residential zoning districts and establishment of impact fee rates specific to these units;
- Establishment of a Land Bank Program; and
- Extension of the "affordability period" of any affordable and workforce housing.

These objectives strive to create, diversify, and preserve affordable housing so that it is attainable for current and future Seminole County residents.



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