

Open Letter from Leaders of Flagler County and its Municipalities

In emergency situations or times of uncertainty, it is imperative that communities bring together their subject matter experts to advise and contribute to a centralized emergency manager who is responsible for making decisions, facilitating all the responding agencies and coordinating resolutions for the challenge at hand. We trust these professionals to make decisions for the safety and welfare of us all. They are, unquestionably, working in the best interest of the community they serve and maintain a high-altitude view of the operation free from emotion.

Like many counties in the United States, we have a local emergency program and manager with a qualified team of support staff. An *emergency manager* is a person who is appointed and is a subject matter expert who is charged with making recommendations and providing the needed direction for the safety of the community. One of the most essential functions of an emergency manager is the ability to clearly and effectively disseminate information and conduct messaging unique and appropriate for each event.

We are in the midst of a global pandemic. In unprecedented times, it is imperative that we respond in a manner that is responsible to the people we represent. Subject matter experts have planned mission assignments, work with state and federal partners for logistical supplies and disseminate factual, timely information for proper response from the Governor's Office and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Subject matter experts work diligently with the Florida and Flagler branches of the Department of Health to ensure medical processes are in place to protect the community's most vulnerable. They have built relationships with many stakeholders who are drawn into this process not because they have to, but because it's the right thing to do. They must have the autonomy to determine, in concert with stakeholders, what a credible plan will be for the community and how it should look over time. This concept is relatively simple — when disseminating information for a disaster, whether pandemic, hurricane, wildfire or mass shooting, we need to be as responsible with the information as we can be.

It is critical that leaders at all levels support subject matter experts to allow them to make the difficult decisions necessary to lead us through the recovery process. As such, we are calling for the unity, calm and courage we know exists in Flagler County. Moreover, we are asking for an adopted unified policy that would clearly articulate the included steps, measures and practices that preclude placing our first responders or the community at large at greater levels of risk. We feel these policies will create the credible path forward, free from unnecessary distractions.

In today's lightning fast social media environment, where information travels in mere seconds, it is more important now than ever to have a clear adopted policy that will provide opportunity for our subject matter experts to take decisive and credible actions within the adopted context of any particular incident.

As leaders of these first responders, we have a higher responsibility than just making policy. We appoint leaders who in turn hire the professionals to perform the most difficult task of public service: protecting lives. We cannot stand at a podium, say one thing and then reverse the intent of our subject matter experts by pushing contrary agendas.

In closing, the signers of this letter are united and will work together to bring forward one recommended policy beneficial to all governments and in the best interest of the communities we serve. As another hurricane season is upon us, it is more important now than ever that we institute every policy at our disposal to ensure the safety of our first responders. Once adopted, this policy will provide a clear understanding for everyone and will be respected by everyone from policymakers to front line workers. Moving forward, we will all be held to the same standard in times of emergency in our community.

It is our sincere and austere hope you will join us in this unprecedented moment.

Your Mayors

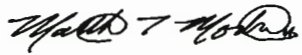
Your City Managers

Your First Responders /
Emergency Managers

Your Health Professionals



Milissa Holland
Mayor of Palm Coast



Matthew Morton
City Manager of Palm Coast



Jerry Forte
Fire Chief of Palm Coast



Bob Snyder
Administrator of FDOH-Flagler



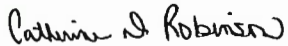
Linda Provencher
Mayor of Flagler Beach



Larry Newsom
City Manager of Flagler Beach



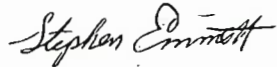
Jonathan Lord
Emergency Manager of Flagler County



Catherine Robinson
Mayor of Bunnell



Alvin Jackson
City Manager of Bunnell



Stephen Emmett
Mayor of Beverly Beach



Jerry Cameron
County Administrator of Flagler



David C. Sullivan
County Board of County
Commissioner, Chair



Leslie Babonis
Mayor of Marineland

