



**Rick Staly, Sheriff**  
**FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

*"An honor to serve, a duty to protect."*

Honorable Donald O'Brien, Jr., Chair  
Flagler County Board of County Commissioners  
1769 East Moody Blvd., Bldg. 2  
Bunnell, FL 32110

June 25, 2019

Dear Chairman O'Brien and Commissioners:

As you know Florida Statute § 125.01(c) requires the Board of County Commissioners to provide and maintain county buildings for Constitutional Officers. On multiple occasions the Florida Attorney General's Office has opined that the county is under a duty to provide office space at no charge to county constitutional officers. For example, in AGO 078-135, the Attorney General stated that the County Commission is "required to provide necessary office space for all county offices." Similarly, in AGO 079-107 found that Florida's Constitution requires *"that the county, through its board of county commissioners as the governing body of the county, must supply offices in the county seat to county officers for the conduct of county business."*

Accordingly, the law of Florida is very clear. It is this County Commission's responsibility to provide the Sheriff's Office with the necessary space to serve the community. And while I appreciate the long-term vision of the Board to build new district offices in both Palm Coast and Bunnell and to build a new training center that will be used initially as a temporary CSI and evidence storage facility, the current short-term arrangement for our space needs is totally inadequate and likely not in compliance with Florida law and the AGO opinions.

Despite a resilient team that delivered significant crime reductions in a dysfunctional setting future law enforcement services to the community and initiatives are being compromised because of inadequate space. The current temporary arrangement is not even remotely adequate and my employees cannot continue to operate in these working conditions. Action must be taken swiftly to resolve a better interim solution. The County cannot continue to "kick the can down the road."

So that you and the Board have a better understanding of how service to the community is being impaired by our current space arrangement, I thought it might be helpful to describe some of the specific challenges we are currently facing on a daily basis.

Thirteen months ago, the Sheriff's Office went from occupying 35,000 square feet of space to under 6,000 – an 82% reduction in workspace - when we had to evacuate the Operations Center over employee health concerns. Most of my employees landed throughout three floors in the courthouse, intertwined with other non-law enforcement court and other constitutional operations that we were all told would be a temporary 90-day situation. This creates service disruptions to the public, which becomes more significant with each passing month.

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Now in our thirteenth month we have reached a crisis level. This situation could significantly compromise the safety of our community. For example, we are unable to implement programs designed to further reduce crime and enhance community safety such as a Real Time Crime Center. Without the space to implement the RTCC we are in limbo and the community loses out on a valuable crime fighting initiative being used throughout the country. *This is NOT providing necessary space for Sheriff's operations as required by law.*

There is no secure and isolated space for a cybercrime unit, which includes investigations into child pornography and online frauds that target our citizens and children. These types of investigations require one-hundred percent security and have very strict access requirements. *Again, this is not providing necessary space.*

Currently, 17 detectives and two service dogs assigned to our Investigative Services Division are jammed into a space designed for 11 people. Because many of our investigations are confidential, the overcrowded conditions require our detectives to leave and search for private areas to discuss cases or interview victims. There is no interview room easily available for interviewing witnesses and suspects. As a result, we are at the mercy of other law enforcement agencies loaning us interview rooms "as available" to conduct investigative interviews. When space is available, interviewees must be transported to a remote location, often resulting in a substantial delay. This delay can mean the difference between gaining a voluntary confession and a suspect deciding not to talk. A confession can be the difference between solving a case quickly and getting the victim justice or an investigation that lags on and potentially never results in an arrest. The office of the Chief of the Investigations Division is embedded in the operations of another agency, making it almost impossible for him to have a confidential conversation regarding a case with his detectives. *This again is not providing necessary space.*

The Sheriff's temporary Evidence Section is bursting at the seams. The smell of marijuana confiscated during drug busts permeates the Detention and Inmate Video Visitation building and the space available to log and store evidence is woefully insufficient. This situation could clearly compromise critical cases despite our best efforts. On April 1, 2019, the Commission voted to build a training center on Justice Lane in Bunnell that would initially be used as a temporary CSI/Evidence complex. At the time of the vote the county indicated the facility would be built in about three months; but to date the land has not even been cleared for construction. This situation cannot continue.

The Sheriff's Record's Unit and Public Service Office are crammed together in a space originally designed for one person on the ground floor of the courthouse. *This is not providing necessary space for Sheriff's operations.*



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The employees of our human resources, finance and legal section have been provided space in the offices of Court Administration and the Clerk of Court. However, human resources, finance and legal also handle extremely sensitive and confidential information of employees and the agency. These divisions, being interspersed in the offices of other agencies, has made it very difficult for employees to do their work while also maintaining the utmost confidentiality dictated by their responsibilities. *Again, this is not providing necessary space as required by law for the Sheriff's Office.*

I do not recommend a new expensive lease of temporary office space as that is not in the best interest of our taxpayers. But, we are at a crisis point and this situation can no longer be allowed to continue with no resolution in sight. It is time to take real action with a realistic temporary and cost effective solution that can be implemented quickly until the new District Office is built. This situation demands action. A solution needs to be implemented by the Board of County Commissioners now for the safety of our community and to provide appropriate working conditions for the employees that serve and protect our community!

Sincerely,



**RICK STALY**  
Sheriff

RS/sg

C: Mr. Cameron, County Administrator  
All FCSO employees