



Leon County

Board of County Commissioners

301 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32301
(850) 606-5302 www.leoncountyfl.gov

YOUR TURN

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CONTACT: Mathieu Cavell

Community and Media Relations
(850) 606-5300

2020 Year in Review: Serving, Shaping and Safeguarding Our Community

Each year it is a great honor to present the Leon County Annual Report to the community on behalf of the hard-working men and women of your county government. This year's annual report reflects our organization-wide response to the pandemic, the uninterrupted provision of essential services, and the adaptation, innovation, and unrelenting commitment of County employees over the past year.

In 2020, we faced the most abrupt and serious threat to lives and livelihoods ever experienced. This has been a time that continues to challenge people and organizations everywhere, but not all in the same way.

For Leon County, the coronavirus demanded we perform at our best with our most extensive emergency activation ever. Our teams have worked to increase countywide testing and contact tracing, distribute more than a million items of PPE to frontline workers, care for the homeless, create hospital surge plans, and provide hundreds of thousands of masks to families and businesses while sharing creative and effective public health messages that were seen millions of times, even on the national level. Through all this and more, the County has led an unprecedented, targeted, and highly coordinated response effort to help local businesses, nonprofits, and families rebound and recover.

The County's 2020 Annual Report demonstrates the importance of having a clear vision and a culture built upon our core values and practices. Because of this and despite the unprecedented challenges we faced, we were able to realize real progress in 2020, produce results, and deliver on our ambitious targets and bold goals for the organization and the community.

Although we may have done it differently in some cases, our dedicated employees continued to set the standard each day in EMS, Public Works and Parks, libraries, and so many other essential services, helping more than 3,500 veterans claim \$20 million in benefits they deserve, responding to more than 45,000 calls for life-saving care, and serving more than a million library patrons both online and in-person.

In 2020 we also launched the Leon CARES program with over \$50 million in federal funds for those impacted most due to the virus, creating grant programs to keep our small businesses alive, to help our citizens in need stay in their homes and pay their utility bills, to provide more than three million meals to the food insecure and to assist human services agencies meet increased demands for their vital services. To date, Leon CARES has received more than 4,000 applications for assistance and has awarded \$3.4 million to nearly a thousand households, local businesses and agencies.

While addressing urgent needs of the citizens we serve, we also stayed focused on enhancing our quality of life and protecting our environment as we continued removing hundreds of septic tanks in southern Leon County, and during the pandemic's stay-at-home orders, we completed a long-awaited project to alleviate chronic

flooding on Meridian Road, and opened five new parks for all to enjoy. And while the coronavirus silenced many signature and community events, our continued commitment to being a vibrant place to live and visit was recognized for the second year in a row by Southern Living Magazine naming us one of the South's Best Communities.

We also continued initiatives to bring people together, even when we had to be apart, engaging thousands of citizens through the 2020 Census "Make It Count" campaign, the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Tallahassee lunch-counter sit-ins and our award-winning library lecture series - which were conducted virtually.

Yes, 2020 has been a challenging time and it's been a time when Leon County answered the challenge earning a dozen more national awards for best practices and efficiency in public service. And despite enormous revenue losses associated with the pandemic, due to continued fiscal stewardship, in 2020, the County balanced a \$17 million shortfall with no increase in taxes rates or fees, keeping our county among the most affordable places to live.

Throughout this crisis, and after, we at Leon County will remain committed to listening to the people we serve, addressing the challenges we face together, and striving every day to set the standard in public service. Find the complete report and video at LeonCountyFL.gov/AnnualReport .

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vince Long became County Administrator on July 1, 2011, and has worked for Leon County since 1995. He can be reached at (850) 606-5300 or LongV@LeonCountyFL.gov.

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