1. Pasco Board of County Commissioners, June 8, 2021, 10am at the Historic Pasco County Courthouse, Boardroom, 2nd floor 37918 Meridian Avenue, Dade City, FL 33525. Here’s [more](http://www.fivay.org/court_house.html) about the Historic Courthouse itself, designed by architect Edward Columbus Hosford and built in 1909 in the Classical Revival style common in municipal buildings of the time.



The meeting was a hybrid meeting, as Pasco had just begun allowing in-person meetings. I arrived at 9:30 but had to wait downstairs. Due to COVID, they were only seating up to 18 spectators and needed to make sure anyone actually speaking or presenting was allowed a seat, but I was finally allowed up. Present were Mike Moore (District 2/my own district), Kathryn Starkey (District 3), Nikki Alvarez-Sowles (County Clerk and Comptroller), Ron Oakley (District 1/Chair), Jeffrey Steinsnyder (City Attorney), Christina Fitzpatrick (District 4 via Zoom), Jack Mariano (District 5), Dan Biles (County Administrator). I’m attaching a PDF of the Agenda. The Historic Courthouse is a beautiful building, and everyone was very respectful of the process and well-mannered. As a personal aside, I was surprised by the lack of security or metal detectors/bag searches and the lack of wearing masks, given that this was a government building. I had recently served Jury Duty up the block in the new Courthouse and security had been tight, so I assumed it would also be here. We began with an invocation prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance and then Public Comments, either in-person, via Webex or via email (which were read out loud into the record).

1. One of the hot issues revealed in the Public Comments was the ordinance that allows short term rentals in Pasco County. A woman from District 4 called in via Webex wanting the ordinance allowing short term rentals in Pasco County to be removed, because companies like AirBnB are making residential neighborhoods into motel districts and not contributing to quality of life for homeowners in those areas. I can already tell that this will be a huge problem for a county like Pasco, which in a way is divided into a residential, suburban portion in the east/center and a more beachy, fishing/golfing, snowbird-oriented portion toward the west. The snowbird west would most likely support a more rental-friendly policy that allows for maximum usage of the recreational amenities, while those who are long-term owners and more suburban would be more likely to want stable communities without strangers (and the associated increase in trash, noise, etc.) impacting their lifestyle. Driving out AirBnB and their like would also hamper private owners earning rental income from their properties.

After the Public Comments, Commissioner Moore moved to open up meetings to “live, in-person only” public comments and open up the audience seating to normal levels and this motion was passed. Apparently, COVID is over in Pasco County!

Then the BCC moved onto the Consent Agenda, which entailed a number of items (71 of them), which had been previously discussed and only needed to be approved en masse. Many of these items were budget-related, but one was C69, a “Budget Amendment recognizing additional revenue within the Grants Fund-Public Services Branch, Library Services Department, Appropriation of Funds for the State Aid to Libraries Grand in the amount of $117,250.” All of these Consent Agenda items was passed in a single vote, and I was happy to see that something library-related actually happened while I was there at my first Pasco BCC meeting.

Next they moved on to the Regular Agenda. In R-72, the Clerk/Comptroller had the PFM Asset Management people talk about the state of Pasco’s Investment Portfolio, which amounts to $1.5Billion in managed assets and showed some decent stability and growth, considering the pandemic and interest rates. R-73 concerned the establishment of a Northeast Pasco Rural Advisory Committee of 13 members which will advise on planning and development in District 1.

R-75 was fascinating and took up a large chunk of time, because it consisted of an updated Revenue Business Plan for the County, taking into account not the 8% tax base growth that was anticipated, but a 10.8% growth in tax supported revenue. How would all this additional income, $25.7 million to be exact, be best spent? There was a lengthy presentation that fleshed out all the different departments and additional FTEs and benefits that would be supported by this windfall, half of which is obligated to go to the Sheriff’s Office. Two different new fire stations would be opened, as well as a Fire training school and new construction of facilities, salary increases, and improved IT for current administrative offices. While it was upsetting to hear that the opioid crisis has resulted in a huge increase of caseloads for the County Medical Examiner and they must receive some relief from this budget increase, I was delighted to hear that some funds would be set aside for the Library Master Plan as well as a “proposed capital investment.” [The current Master Plan estimate is $175,000](https://civicclerk.blob.core.windows.net/stream/pascocofl/a2830770-d76a-4a26-83c0-66d1e6f693f3.pdf?sv=2015-12-11&sr=b&sig=XUyvJIWVGW6KBpJbu18%2Bm0oGCYIHixOsWE1iSRinlw4%3D&st=2021-06-07T17%3A12%3A49Z&se=2022-06-07T17%3A17%3A49Z&sp=r&rscc=no-cache&rsct=application%2Fpdf), according to the Library Advisory Board meeting on April 13, 2021. The 2015 Pasco Government Facilities Master Plan is [here](https://www.pascocountyfl.net/DocumentCenter/View/21845/Pasco-Co-Government-Facilities-MP-Final-FEB2015?bidId=). I have five written notebook pages filled with details of this budgetary discussion, but this also led to an interesting discussion about the impact that adding new home development to our existing grid would have on the long-term residents.

From this meeting, I would summarize the challenges put to the Pasco BCC as:

1. Managing the planning, development and growth of Pasco County
2. Balancing the desire to attract further growth to the County with the need to protect those already living here from excessive fees and infrastructure spending needed support that growth. The comment was made, “Do we continue to charge low or no fees to attract more business and development, or do we start now to make new growth pay for itself?”
3. Rectifying the opposing factions of owner/residents and vacationers/visitors within the County
4. Pasco Library Services fall under the Public Services Branch of Pasco County. The Pasco County Library System (PCLS) was established in 1980 “[by Ordinance, Chapter 58, Article II.](https://www.pascolibraries.org/about-us/35-years-old/)” The three cities of Dade City, New Port Richey and Zephyrhills already had their own city libraries and Hudson, Holiday and Land O’ Lakes had volunteer libraries. In 1986 after a $10 million bond was passed by the County voters and additional funding was received from the Federal government, these became the roots of the six original branches of the Pasco system, followed by the Zephyrhills branch in 2000 and the New River branch construction in 1991. According to the 2015 Pasco Facilities Master Plan, the Mission/Function of Library Services is “Attract and satisfy customers through outstanding and responsive customer service, excellent selection of materials and resources, and an environment that encourages personal and community betterment.” According to the 2018-2021 Pasco County Libraries Strategic Plan, the libraries’ Vision is “The Pasco County Library Cooperative will enrich our community by being an essential resource for discovery, connection, enjoyment, and creation.”
5. What is the basis of taxation for your local public library? According to [OpenGov.com](https://stories.opengov.com/pascocountyfl/published/GVUt1pMTC), Pasco Library Services had a 2020 Budget of about $9.7million, of which about two-thirds is spent on personnel and another $1.5million on operating expenses. Pasco County Libraries are funded through property taxes and in 2020, County residents paid a [tax millage rate of .0096 for the 2019D Bonds Libraries Projects.](https://www.pascocountyfl.net/DocumentCenter/View/54395/Summary-of-Millage-Rates)  Additionally, it appears that large portion of the funding for Pasco Libraries comes from Library Impact Fees on new residential construction, as well as a debt service fund “[Libraries GO Bond Debt Service.](https://www.fitchratings.com/research/us-public-finance/fitch-rates-pasco-county-fl-84mm-ser-2021b-go-bonds-aa-outlook-stable-26-05-2021)” Having lived through the Great Recession in Florida recently, I now believe that dependence on property tax revenue and new construction is a double-edged sword. In times of population growth and expansion, the library wins support for updates and improvements and has adequate staffing. However, when the bubble bursts, as it has done and some experts are forecasting will happen again in the near future, the essential services that the library provides its community are put at serious risk. There needs to be a more stable, consistent foundation of support for libraries in my opinion, especially since the times the community might need it most, during an economic recession when jobs and services are cut and housing becomes uncertain, would be just the time the library’s available revenues are also cut. The lack of library availability adds to the misery the community is already experiencing in a bad financial environment.
6. According to [Florida Library Data and Statistics, the 2018-19 Revenue for Pasco County Public Library](https://fldoswebumbracoprod.blob.core.windows.net/media/703827/table-04-revenue-fy2018-19.pdf) Cooperative was $8.1million, 96.89% of which was from Local Funds. Our per capita funding was $15.34/person or $8,090,659 operating income/527,122 service area population. Our service area population is the 12th largest in the state of Florida, and we have the 15th largest budget and receive 0% funding from the Federal government.
7. The seven different branch [Friends of the Library groups at the Pasco County Libraries](https://www.pascolibraries.org/supporters/friends-of-the-library/) manages gifts and donations to the branches and runs a Friends bookstore. They also include a link to support the Friends of the Libraries through your Amazon.com purchases through smile.amazon.com. Other than that, there doesn’t seem to be too much going on with regards to the Friends page of the Pasco Libraries site, and the most recent Friends Meeting Minutes are from September of 2019, so either they haven’t had a meeting or they haven’t updated the site. According to the minutes of the Pasco Library Advisory Board/Library Cooperative Board meeting on April 13, 2021, the Friends are working on a Cookbook and accepting recipes to include, and bumper stickers provided by the Friends will be sent to Board members as part of an advocacy initiative.

<https://www.pascolibraries.org/about-us/strategic-plan/>

<https://civicclerk.blob.core.windows.net/stream/pascocofl/a2830770-d76a-4a26-83c0-66d1e6f693f3.pdf?sv=2015-12-11&sr=b&sig=XUyvJIWVGW6KBpJbu18%2Bm0oGCYIHixOsWE1iSRinlw4%3D&st=2021-06-07T17%3A12%3A49Z&se=2022-06-07T17%3A17%3A49Z&sp=r&rscc=no-cache&rsct=application%2Fpdf>

<https://www.pascolibraries.org/about-us/35-years-old/>

<https://www.pascolibraries.org/supporters/friends-of-the-library/>

<https://www.fitchratings.com/research/us-public-finance/fitch-rates-pasco-county-fl-84mm-ser-2021b-go-bonds-aa-outlook-stable-26-05-2021>

<https://stories.opengov.com/pascocountyfl/published/GVUt1pMTC>

<https://www.pascocountyfl.net/DocumentCenter/View/54395/Summary-of-Millage-Rates>

<https://www.pascocountyfl.net/DocumentCenter/View/21845/Pasco-Co-Government-Facilities-MP-Final-FEB2015?bidId=>

<https://pascocountyfl.net/DocumentCenter/View/3803/LDC-Section-13025-Library-Impact-Fee?bidId=>

<https://fldoswebumbracoprod.blob.core.windows.net/media/703827/table-04-revenue-fy2018-19.pdf>

Here’s a table full of Pasco County-related pamphlets in the County Courthouse, including I Love My Library buttons – Cute!

