

DeSantis protest prompts arrest of community advocate

Dan Scanlan
Jacksonville Florida Times-Union
USA TODAY NETWORK

Gov. Ron DeSantis had to make new arrangements for his Tuesday morning news conference in Jacksonville after a handful of people protested and refused to leave the Duval County Department of Health building.

Northside Coalition of Jacksonville community leader Ben Frazier was detained by officers after being warned he was trespassing if he wouldn't leave as asked. He was handcuffed and escorted from his motorized wheelchair to a patrol vehicle.

The news briefing had been planned for 10:15 a.m. with DeSantis, Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Ladapo, Agency for Health Care Administration Secretary Simone Marsteller and Florida Division of Emergency Management Director Kevin Guthrie.

Additional officers were called to the briefing location at the Health Department on North Davis Street after Frazier decried DeSantis' stance on COVID-19 measures and said he's been missing in action for the last month.

While Frazier and a few other protesters argued the event was public and in a public building, the governor's staff said it was private and for credentialed media only. After being warned, Frazier was taken away in handcuffs while others were yelling and demanding his rights.

He was later issued a notice to appear in court later on a trespassing charge and released, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office said.

DeSantis was not actually present as organizers moved the briefing to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement facility nearby in Jacksonville's LaVilla neighborhood. When questioned about the protest at the relocated news conference over an hour later, he



Community advocate Ben Frazier is handcuffed and arrested after being warned if he didn't leave he was trespassing at Gov. Ron DeSantis' scheduled news conference Tuesday in Jacksonville. DAN SCANLAN/FLORIDA TIMES-UNION

said he knew nothing about it. But state lawmakers did issue statements later.

Rep. Angie Nixon, D-Jacksonville, said Frazier's detention shows that "the people come last" in Florida.

"The governor runs and hides when the people demand to be a priority," her statement said. "... Public service is the people's business, and the governor must answer for his failings. There's nothing private about America witnessing the suffering that Floridians have endured because of Governor DeSantis' people-last strategy. The treatment of Mr. Ben Frazier, a disabled civil-rights activist and member of my community, was shameful and appalling."

The leader-designate of the House Democratic Caucus, Rep. Ramon Alexander, added that the "hypocrisy" of the governor's "Free State of Florida" was on full display in Jacksonville.

"It's only free if you agree with him, and you can only attend his events if you are a cheerleader for his political ambitions," Alexander said. "You're free to catch the virus in Florida, but don't you dare question the governor's policies."

In the governor's first news conference Monday since the omicron variant surged across Florida, he was critical of vaccines while pushing for more monoclonal treatments.

"With omicron, you know, the vaccinations are not preventing infection," DeSantis said at Broward Health Medical Center.

But since the beginning of nationwide vaccine rollouts, doctors and scientists have emphasized that although the virus can infect inoculated people, they offer the best protection against severe illness and death, even for those who catch the heavily mutated omicron

variant. Those with booster shots are the most protected, authorities say.

Ladapo tweeted on Monday that "Direct access to early treatment is essential to saving lives — it is not an option nor should it be barricaded by bureaucracy."

He and DeSantis are calling for new "guidelines" about who should get tested to reduce the culture of testing.

Studies have shown that two of the three approved drugs for coronavirus antibody treatment — including the ones DeSantis wants — do little to counter the effects of the omicron variant, first reported in South Africa. The third approved treatment, manufactured by the London-based pharmaceutical giant GlaxoKlineSmith, is effective but is in short supply.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced on Dec. 23 it would pause shipments of Regeneron's and Eli Lilly's COVID-19 treatments after the Food and Drug Administration said they were likely ineffective against omicron.

But on Thursday, HHS reversed course, acknowledging that delta still accounts for a sizable share of infections in some parts of the country.

DeSantis' previous last public appearance was Dec. 17 to tell the public his administration's plan to fight the virus. In the week leading up to that day, Florida added an average of about 5,300 new infections. In the past seven days, the number of new infections have skyrocketed to nearly 52,000, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows.

As case counts spiked over the holidays, DeSantis offered no public statements or guidance on combating the disease. He did not explain on Monday his public absence over the holidays.

This report contains information from the Palm Beach Post.

Martin County - Growth Management
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The Stuart News
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Wednesday, January 5, 2022

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

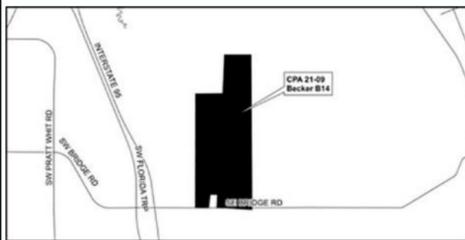
The Martin County Local Planning Agency will conduct public hearings on January 20, 2022, beginning at 7:00 P.M., or as soon thereafter as the items may be heard, to review the following items:

1. Comprehensive Plan Amendment 21-08, Becker B14, a request to amend Chapter 2, Overall Goals and Definitions, Chapter 4, Future Land Use Element; Chapter 10, Sanitary Sewer Element and Chapter 11, Potable Water Element of the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan to create a new future land use designation, Rural Lifestyle.
2. Comprehensive Plan Amendment 21-09, Becker B14 a Future Land Use Map change from Agriculture (allowing a maximum of one unit per 20 acres) to Rural Lifestyle (allowing a maximum of one unit per five acres) on ±1,493.91 acres located north of SE Bridge Rd. and approximately one mile east of Interstate 95.

All interested persons are invited to attend and be heard. The meeting will be held in the Commission Chambers on the first floor of the Martin County Administrative Center, 2401 S.E. Monterey Road, Stuart, Florida. Written comments may be mailed to: Paul Schilling, Director, Martin County Growth Management Department, 2401 S.E. Monterey Road, Stuart, Florida 34996. Copies of the items will be available from the Growth Management Department. For more information, contact Clyde Dulin, Comprehensive Planning Administrator, at (772) 288-5495 or cdulin@martin.fl.us.

Persons with disabilities who need an accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding are entitled, at no cost, to the provision of certain assistance. This does not include transportation to and from the meeting. Please contact the Office of the ADA Coordinator at (772) 320-3131, or the Office of the County Administrator at (772) 288-5400, or in writing to 2401 SE Monterey Road, Stuart, FL, 34996, no later than three days before the hearing date. Persons using a TTY device, please call 711 Florida Relay Services.

If any person decides to appeal any decision made with respect to any matter considered at the meetings or hearings of any board, committee, agency, council, or advisory group, that person will need a record of the proceedings and, for such purpose, may need to insure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record should include the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.



Test

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the site would reopen at noon. But it didn't.

Aviles said she had been feeling sick for five days, but finally decided to be tested when she started feeling worse. She couldn't find any other testing sites open that day, she said.

Later in the afternoon, a sign was posted saying the site was closed for the day. Allied Health, the company that operates the free testing site, couldn't be reached for comment about the closure, whether it was because of short staffing or because of limited test supply.

Pharmacies such as CVS and Walgreens sell at-home testing kits, but since the holidays, many stores

have been sold out. Both companies have temporarily stopped selling the kits online.

Both pharmacies offer in-person lab tests, but require appointments. In most cases, appointment-based tests are unavailable for days.

On Tuesday, the state Health Department in St. Lucie County said it would distribute 5,000 take-home COVID-19 tests to residents at several county libraries starting Wednesday.

For those searching for quick results, waiting days isn't an option.

"I'm trying to make sure I don't infect anyone else," said Mike Stringham, 41. Stringham said he and his family looked for tests Monday and Tuesday morning, but had no luck at local pharmacies or clinics.

Some locations were booking appointments a week in advance, he said. Stringham waited in line for more than an hour to be tested at the Martin County Fairgrounds, where hundreds of people sat in line in their cars, Tuesday, waiting to be tested.

The Martin County site, operated by Dynix Diagnostix, offers free, walk-up PCR and rapid tests 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. Site manager James Haney said people should anticipate having to wait a while.

"If they get here at 8 o'clock in the morning, it's 20 minutes. If they get here (at noon), it's about an hour and a half, two hours," Haney said.

Because of the lack of appointments and shortage of at-home tests, using kits, walk-up first-come first-served sites such as the Martin County Fairgrounds have been slammed with hundreds of people every day for the past several weeks. Haney said 300-400 people are getting tested there every day.

"I heard that there was a shortage of self tests, so I was like, 'Well, I guess I should jump in this god-awful line,'" said Duke Snyder, 54.

Snyder said he wasn't feeling sick, but decided to get tested because he was exposed to someone who tested positive. He waited in line for at least an hour.

Some people, though, were grateful to be tested tests at all.

"I think they're doing a great job here," said Tamara Litterick, 46, who waited for about two hours. "They're going as quick as they can. There's just a lot of people."

She spent 90 minutes searching for an appointment Tuesday morning, but couldn't find an available time slot until Thursday. Her son was feeling sick, so she didn't want to wait any longer.

Thomas Weber is a Digital Now Reporter at TCPalm. You can reach him at thomas.weber@tcpalm.com or 813-545-9113. Follow him on Facebook and Twitter.



Dynix Diagnostix COVID-19 technician Aaliyah Hatcher registers people seeking free COVID tests Tuesday at the Martin County Fairgrounds in Stuart. LEAH VOSS/TCPALM

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

Notice is hereby given that the Board of County Commissioners of Martin County will conduct a public hearing on January 25, 2022 beginning at 9:00 AM., or as soon thereafter as the following item may be heard, to review the following item:

AN ORDINANCE OF MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA, AMENDING CHAPTER 5, ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES, GENERAL ORDINANCES, AND ARTICLE 12, COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT CODE, LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, MARTIN COUNTY CODE, PROVIDING FOR APPLICABILITY, CONFLICTING PROVISIONS, SEVERABILITY, FILING WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, CODIFICATION AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

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