



Office of Policy and Budgetary Affairs

MEMORANDUM

TO:	Honorable Chairman Jose "Pepe" Diaz and Members, Board of County Commissioners	DATE:	February 16, 2022
FROM:	Jennifer Moon, Chief  Office of Policy and Budgetary Affairs	SUBJECT:	Fiscal Impact of Expanding the County Seat

This memorandum has been prepared in response to the request made at the February 9, 2022, meeting of the Chairman's Council of Policy (CCOP) regarding the fiscal impact associated with expanding the county seat beyond the limits of the City of Miami. At that meeting, the CCOP forwarded item 2A (Legistar No. 220225) to the full Board with a favorable recommendation. This item, sponsored by Commissioner Joe A. Martinez, would expand the geographical area of the county seat of Miami-Dade County beyond the corporate limits of the City of Miami to include all incorporated and unincorporated areas of Miami-Dade County within the Urban Development Boundary (UDB). During the deliberations, members of the CCOP raised a concern about the potential fiscal impact of expanding the boundaries of the county seat, particularly when analyzed concurrently with the implementation of the five elected Constitutional Officers.

As outlined and delineated in the State Constitution and in Florida Statutes, *"there shall be a county seat at which shall be located the principal offices and permanent records of all county officers. The county seat may not be moved except as provided by general law. Branch offices for the conduct of county business may be established elsewhere in the county by resolution of the governing body of the county in the manner prescribed by law."* When counties were established, some had municipalities, which were often named county seats. Counties that were established without defined population centers went without a county seat for a year or more. In counties without a county seat, county courts and other local government business was held at the residences of community leaders or at churches. When Miami-Dade County was first established, the county seat was at Indian Key in the Florida Keys. Then in 1844, the County seat was first moved to Miami. In 1888, the county seat was moved to Juno, near present-day Juno Beach, before returning to Miami in 1899.

The history of the County seat dates back to a time when government services were provided in central location, preferably close to a majority of the population. The delivery of governmental services has

significantly changed over the last century with many more portals through which people doing business in Miami-Dade County and other jurisdictions may access their government. As the population has grown and become more widely dispersed, the need to decentralize locations and develop alternative access points has become stronger. Over time, residents have voted to tax themselves to build regional government centers closer to their homes such as South Dade Government Center, Joseph Caleb Government Center and the future North Dade Government Center. Additionally, the County has also chosen to locate certain County functions in areas outside of the current county seat, including facilities such as the Permitting and Inspection Center and the Pet Adoption and Protection Center.

On its own, this resolution, as written today, does not have a fiscal impact. Should the Board of County Commissioners adopt the resolution, there would be no immediate need for changes to service delivery or the physical locations of the current County officers. Once Amendment 10 is implemented, having the incorporated and unincorporated areas within the UDB serve as the county seat would allow the offices currently located in the City of Miami – the Clerk, the Property Appraiser and the Tax Collector – to relocate their main offices outside of the current county seat, but will also enable the use of existing facilities by the Supervisor of Elections and the Sheriff come January 2025. It is impossible to calculate the potential fiscal impact without knowing what decisions will be made by the Constitutional Officers who will be elected in 2024.

As stated in a previous report from my office regarding the implementation of Amendment 10, a status quo implementation would have a minimal impact on service delivery and an insignificant fiscal impact. Furthermore, any one of the elected Officers may choose to entirely relocate their principal offices and permanent records with or without changes to the County seat. The fiscal impact of the decision would vary based on which Officer(s) choose(s) to move, where they decide to relocate and how much investment is required at the new facility or facilities. Likely, the new Constitutional Officers will seek to broaden their access in the community, investing in both virtual platforms and branch offices throughout geographic Miami-Dade County.

My team and I appreciate the trust you and the rest of the Board have placed in us as the Board navigates the implementation of the Constitutional Officers. Should you have any questions, please contact us at 305-375-5350.

cc: Honorable Daniella Levine Cava, Mayor
Geri Bonzon-Keenan, County Attorney
Gerald Sanchez, First Assistant County Attorney
Jess McCarty, Executive Assistant County Attorney
Yinka Majekodunmi, Commission Auditor
Melissa Adames, Clerk of the Board
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