

Campbell and Rapp elected to commission; Kirouac faces runoff in November Change not expected in unofficial results

By KIM MOODY
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — Venus was not included in the precinct reports as of press time Tuesday night. By Wednesday, the Highlands County Supervisor of Elections website showed all of the 25 precincts had reported. However, the vote-by-mail ballots are not yet fully counted.



CAMPBELL

Supervisor of Elections Penny Ogg said the results of the election are not yet official. Some of the mail-in ballot voters

have to be contacted because of things like missing signatures or signatures that do not



RAPP

match. Ogg said the voters will be contacted "by any means" such as text, mail or phone to "cure" the ballots.

Ogg said there are not many to be cured and she does not expect them to change the outcome of



KIROUAC

any races. After the mail-in ballots are counted, a manual audit will be done and the final official total will be given on Thursday, Aug. 27.

Highlands County has 63,651 registered voters per the Supervisor of



KASZUBOWSKI

Elections Office. In total, 21,236 ballots were cast for a voter turnout of 33.36%. The unofficial results of Tuesday's

voting are: **State Representative District 55** In Highlands



TUCK

County, Ned Hancock-R, had 44.36% with 6,185 votes and Kaylee Tuck-R, had 55.64% with 7,757 votes. The county race had a total of 13,942 votes.

In the district

RESULTS | 10A

Florida resident COVID-19 deaths surpass 10,000

By MARC VALERO
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — More than 10,000 Florida residents have now died from COVID-19 after an additional 117 virus fatalities were reported Thursday by the Florida Department of Health.

With three more deaths listed in the latest update, Highlands County now has a total of 50 deaths attributed to COVID-19.

The total state resident death toll from the virus is now 10,049.

The number of deaths in the other Heartland counties are: Hardee — eight, DeSoto — 21, Okeechobee — 12, Glades — three and Hendry — 39.

Statewide, there was an additional 4,555 coronavirus cases reported since the Wednesday update for a total of 588,602 cases over the course of the pandemic.

Highlands County added 19 cases for a total of 1,679. The Highlands cases have ranged in those age 0 to 99 with a median age of 47. Those infected have been 47% male and 53% female.

Currently, Highlands has 37 hospitalized due to COVID-19. The number of those hospitalized is decreasing. On Saturday there were 51 hospitalized due to the virus.

The previous day's testing data shows statewide from 68,393 tests there was a positive rate of 6.73%. In Highlands, with 206 tested, there was a positive rate of 9.22%.

Locally, AdventHealth and the Health Department are working together to provide free drive-through testing, for Highlands County residents only.

Reservations are required. Call 863-386-5690 Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Fridays 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for the following test dates:

- Lakeshore Mall (near Sears on the north end) at 901 U.S. 27 S., Sebring from 8-10 a.m. Aug. 25.

UPDATE | 10A



MARC VALERO/STAFF

Superintendent Brenda Longshore and The School Board of Highlands County at Wednesday's special school board meeting on starting the team sports programs.

Prepped to play School Board approves sports start date

By MARC VALERO
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — County high school sports teams will start practicing soon and preparing for competitions with The School Board of Highlands County approving the county's sports task force's recommendation to start practices on Aug. 31

At Wednesday's special School Board meeting, District Director of Safety and Security Michael Haley noted that the Florida High School Athletic Association recommended allowing fall sports practices to start on Aug. 24.

The Highlands County Athletic Task Force met Monday and discussed the district's preparations for fall sports, he said. The Task Force proposed starting a week later on Aug. 31 to give more time to see how things are going in the schools and see if there are any positive cases, he said. It would allow an extra week to get things going on the ball fields.

Haley said the competition start dates would be Sept. 12 for bowling, cross country, swimming and volleyball; Sept. 18 for varsity football, which would provide three weeks of practice with pads. Then junior varsity football would start a week later on Thursday, Sept. 24.

All coaches will be required to complete the National Federation of State High School Associations course, COVID-19 for Coaches and Administrators, he said.

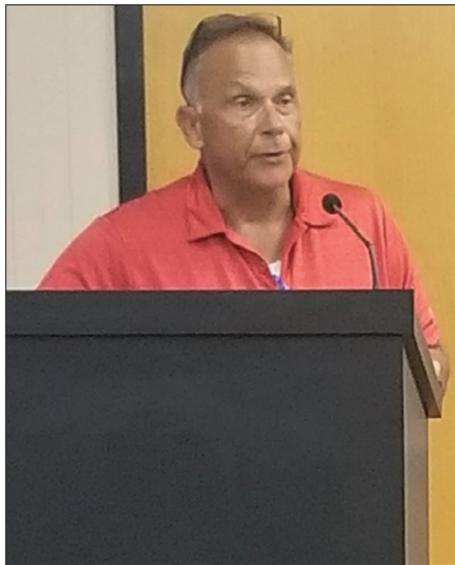
Haley noted the number of possible competitions based on the Aug. 31 start date: football — eight games if no bye week, volleyball — 12 to 14 matches, bowling — nine to 10 matches (depending on east coast), golf — eight to nine matches, cross country — seven to eight meets, and swimming and diving — eight to nine meets.

The Highlands County Athletic Task Force will have another meeting to discuss other considerations and challenges with the opening up of fall sports, Haley said.

The decisions to be considered include: the capacity for spectators, masks (if they will be required), temperature checks, social distancing of athletes, seating design for spectators, packaged food at concessions, seating for transportation and locker rooms.

Some school districts would not allow Highlands to travel to their county because they are only playing in-house in their areas.

"So we might not even have enough teams



MARC VALERO/STAFF

District Director of Safety and Security Michael Haley speaks about starting the team sports programs at Wednesday's special meeting of the School Board of Highlands County.



FILE PHOTO

Avon Park's Hunter Vanderpool tackles Hardee's Myron Refoure during a game last season.

TEAM | 10A



COURTESY PHOTO/HIGHLANDS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSION

Michelle Gresham of Avon Park Lakes takes issue with statements made by Commissioner Arlene Tuck ranking hand-washing above masks as effective COVID-19 prevention during Tuesday's Board of County Commission meeting.

Talking about masks

Commissioners agree to revisit mask question at each meeting

By PHIL ATTINGER
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — After discussion Tuesday, the Board of County Commission went along with requests to revisit the question of a mask mandate.

By a non-unanimous consensus, commissioners agreed that they could discuss the issue along with each regular meeting's report from Emergency Manager LaTosha Reiss about the state of COVID-19 infections in the county.

They did not agree to have a new hearing on a mandate, unless Reiss' report and that discussion called for it.

County residents Michelle Gresham and Margaret Hamilton both spoke in favor of reopening the matter.

When Hamilton came to the podium, wearing a mask, she asked if commissioners could hear her. Commissioner Arlene Tuck, grinning, said she couldn't.

"I'm sorry. Can you hear me now?" Hamilton then belted into the microphone and through the house speakers.

The sharply increased volume caused Commissioner Ron Handley, several yards away to put his hand to his left ear.

"No. You just sound muffled," Tuck answered.

"Well, it's going to be muffled," Hamilton said, then asked again, softer, if people could hear her.

Hamilton reminded commissioners that when they voted

MASKS | 10A



Classifieds.....B3-6
Comics.....B7-10
Lottery.....A2

Obituaries.....A7
Sports.....B1
TV Listings.....A11

Viewpoints.....A6
Weather.....A12

Good morning To
Betty Cougill
Thanks for reading!



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