Levy County Board of County Commissioners
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To: The Board of County Commissioners
From: Mary-Ellen Harper, County Manager
Date: November 17, 2026
Subject: Advertisements and Public Notices on County Website

Commissioners,

Florida law allows counties to publish legally required advertisements and public notices on a publicly accessible county website instead of publishing those notices in a newspaper, provided the requirements of § 50.0311, Florida Statutes, are satisfied.

Because Levy County has a population of less than 160,000, the Board must first conduct a properly noticed public hearing and determine that residents have sufficient access to the Internet by broadband service such that publication of advertisements and public notices on the County's publicly accessible website would not unreasonably restrict public access.

The public hearing necessary for the Board to consider making this determination is scheduled for **November 17, 2026**.

The primary statutory requirements are summarized below.

1. Website Publication Must Be Less Expensive – § 50.0311(3)

Publication on the County website must cost less than publication in a newspaper.

During Fiscal Year 2026, Levy County paid approximately $8,915.73 to publish legal notices in newspapers. There is no additional publication charge associated with posting notices on the County's existing website.

Accordingly, website publication would result in a direct annual cost savings to the County based on current publication expenses.

Commissioners
Charlie Kennedy, Vice Chair, District 1
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Desiree Mills, District 3
Tim Hodge, Chair, District 4
Johnny Hiers, District 5

2. Public Hearing and Determination of Sufficient Internet Access – § 50.0311(4)

Because Levy County's population is below the statutory threshold, the Board must conduct a public hearing, which must itself be properly noticed in a newspaper, and determine that residents have sufficient access to the Internet so that publication of legal notices on the County website will not unreasonably restrict public access.

The required public hearing was noticed for November 17, 2026.

The statute does not establish a specific percentage or other numerical standard for determining what constitutes "sufficient access", however available Census data indicates that approximately 80.8% of Levy County households have a broadband Internet subscription. In addition, public Internet access is available through local libraries and other public facilities.

3. Searchable Notices and Publication Date – § 50.0311(2)

Legal notices published on the County website must be searchable and must identify the date on which each notice was first published.

Staff will need to ensure that the County's website and legal-notice page meet these requirements before transitioning from newspaper publication.

4. Annual Notice to Residents and Property Owners – § 50.0311(6)

At least once each year, the County must publish notice in a newspaper of general circulation or another publication that is mailed or delivered to all residents and property owners.

The annual notice must advise residents and property owners that they may register their name and address or email address to receive legally required advertisements and public notices from the County by first-class mail or email.

Therefore, transitioning legal notices to the County website would substantially reduce newspaper publication requirements but would not completely eliminate the need for newspaper or other qualifying publication costs.

5. Registry for Mailed or Emailed Notices – § 50.0311(6)

The County must maintain a registry of individuals who request to receive legal notices by first-class mail or email. At least once annually, the County must publish a notice in a newspaper of general circulation or another publication mailed or delivered to all residents and property owners, informing them that they may receive such notices by registering their name and mailing address or email address with the County.

Staff will need to establish an administrative process for maintaining the registry and distributing notices to registered individuals.

6. Website Placement – § 50.0311(7)

A link to the County's legal notices must be conspicuously placed on the County website homepage or on a page that is directly linked from the homepage.

Staff can establish a dedicated Legal Notices webpage and provide a prominent link from the County homepage.

7. Public Bid Advertisements – § 50.0311(9)

When a public bid advertisement is published on the County website pursuant to this statute, the County must provide a method for accepting electronic bids.

The County should ensure that its electronic procurement procedures satisfy this requirement before publishing bid advertisements exclusively through the County website.

Potential Board Action

Following the November 17, 2026 public hearing, if the Board determines that Levy County residents have sufficient Internet access and that website publication will not unreasonably restrict public access to legal notices, the Board may consider adopting a resolution authorizing legally required advertisements and public notices to be published on the County's publicly accessible website in accordance with § 50.0311, Florida Statutes.

If approved, staff would then implement the required website, registry, annual notification, recordkeeping, and electronic procurement procedures before transitioning applicable legal notices from newspaper publication to the County website.

Summary

The primary benefit of utilizing § 50.0311 is the reduction of recurring newspaper publication expenses while continuing to provide public access to legally required notices. Based on Fiscal Year 2026 expenditures, the County currently spends approximately $8,915.73 annually on newspaper notices.

The November 17 public hearing will provide the Board an opportunity to consider public input and determine whether Levy County residents have sufficient Internet access to satisfy the statutory requirement. If the Board makes that determination, it may then authorize implementation of website publication in accordance with the remaining statutory.