

Humid  
Partly cloudy through Friday. A 30% chance of rain. Lows in low 70s. Highs in low to mid 90s. Data, 2-A.

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## Ordinance would reduce circuit clerk's budget powers

By CHARLES PATTON  
Pasco Times Staff Writer

DADE CITY — A proposed ordinance strengthening the powers of Pasco County Administrator Richard Kelton and reducing the authority of Circuit Clerk Miller Newton was introduced Tuesday night by County Commission Chairman Mike Olson.

The ordinance, if approved next week, would strip Newton of much of his budget formulating powers and compilation of the agenda for commission meetings. It also would prohibit all county officials from interfering with county employees who are under the direct supervision of the administrator.

NEWTON IS regarded by some county officials as dabbling in the policy-making authority of the commission. Olson's proposed ordinance is seen in some quarters as an attempt to curb Newton's alleged intrusion in commission business.

The feud over who controls county government — the commission or the clerk's office — came to a head last week when Newton conducted press conferences to reveal statistics in a proposed "baseline" budget for 1975-76.

Nons of the commissioners had been told of the budget figures until Tuesday night, although the commission is responsible for approving the spending plan.

Newton publicly apologized for his actions Tuesday night.

"There apparently has been some confusion as a result of the manner in which I presented the budget," Newton said. "For that, I am sorry."

Newton declined lengthy comment on the commission's move Tuesday night. He said he had not seen the ordinance until he read it at the commission meeting and needed more time to study the proposal before discussing it.

Newton said he plans to consult with his attorney to determine if the ordinance is in conflict with state statutes setting forth the duties of the clerk.

HE SAID he is especially concerned about the budget, since state statutes require the circuit clerk to prepare the baseline document for the commission's consideration.

The new ordinance would require the administrator to "prepare and submit to the Board of County Commissioners for its consideration and adoption an annual operating bud-

get, a capital budget and a capital program."

The administrator also would be responsible for establishing schedules and procedures to be followed by all county departments, offices and agencies in connection with the budget. He would also supervise and administer all phases of the budgetary process.

In preparation of this year's baseline budget, the clerk gave each department head maximum totals they could request in the document. Newton said the figures were based on spending patterns during the current year and an inflation factor.

"I do not want to get into a fight with anyone," Newton said when asked for his reaction to the proposed ordinance.

KELTON SAID the action came as a surprise to him. But he noted he had recommended as one of the conditions for his taking the job that the commission consider adoption of the state administrator statute as part of the county's administrator ordinance.

County Atty. Peter Dunbar said the ordinance closely follows that state statute.

Kelton said the time frame of implementation of the duties outlined in the new ordinance might present some problems.

"We're right in the middle of the budgeting process, and it would be difficult for someone to just step in now," he said.

Kelton assumed his duties June 1. The budget preparation process began several weeks before.

OLSON tried to have the ordinance approved as an emergency measure Tuesday night. His only immediate support came from Commissioner Robert K. Rees.

Commissioners William Hamilton and Curtis Law, while not expressing opposition to the move, said they wanted at least a week to study the proposed ordinance.

Commissioner Mathew Prahasky Jr. was out of town.

Hamilton cautioned that the commission once before had given sweeping powers to its administrator and later was forced to reverse some decisions.

"I just want to make sure we're not making the same mistake again," Hamilton said.

Law said the magnitude of the ordinance is such he believes it should be studied carefully.

"I'm not going to vote for anything I haven't had time to study," he said.

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