From: Scott, Brian

Sent: Thursday, November 6, 2025 2:39 PM

**To:** Clerk Board Records

**Subject:** FW: Support for UF/IFAS Extension in Pinellas County

From: Dave Himmelfarb

Sent: Thursday, November 6, 2025 12:54 PM

To: Scherer, Chris; Scott, Brian; Nowicki, Vince; Eggers, Dave; Latvala, Christopher; Peters, Kathleen;

Robinson-Flowers, Rene

Subject: Support for UF/IFAS Extension in Pinellas County

### This Message Is From an External Sender

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## Dear Commissioners,

I was dismayed to find out that the contract between Pinellas County Government and the University of Florida/IFAS is in jeopardy. As the Faculty Director of the Eckerd College Community Farm, Environmental studies professor, and private resident of Pinellas County, I have benefited tremendously from the services and expertise provided by UF/IFAS extension over the past 12 years that I have lived and worked here. Our programs at the EC Farm are explicitly liberal arts in nature, meaning that we do not provide agronomic or technical education and frequently rely on the agronomic and ecological expertise of our county UF/IFAS colleagues. Pinellas UF/IFAS Extension has been a valued partner in supplementing our coursework in Environmental Studies at Eckerd, assisting myself and numerous colleagues with our classes such as Gardening for Sustainability, Food & Sustainability, Green Design, and more. A loss of local extension programming would diminish the educational opportunities we are able to offer our students. Additionally on our campus farm and in my home garden, I have often had cause to consult our local UF/IFAS extension regarding soil and pest issues and found their input invaluable. As you likely know, Florida has many microclimates and so hyper-local knowledge is paramount for sustainable food production. So much would be lost if Pinellas County Government did not renew its MOU with UF/IFAS. On behalf of my students, colleagues, and friends and neighbors, I strongly encourage you to continue to support UF/IFAS in Pinellas County. Thank you for taking the time to consider my perspective.

Sincerely,

Dr. Dave Himmelfarb

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Dave Himmelfarb, PhD

Home: 819 11th Ave, St Petersburg

Instructor/Internship Coordinator Environmental Studies

Faculty Director, EC Community Farm

727.221.6794 he / him Book an appointment

Eckerd College 4200 54th Avenue South St. Petersburg, Florida 33711

**Environmental Studies Internship Website** 

**EC Community Farm Instagram** 





ECKERD COLLEGE



November 6, 2025

Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners 315 Court Street Clearwater, FL 33756

Chair Scott,

I am writing to express support for the programming offered by the University of Florida IFAS Pinellas County Extension Program.

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program (TBEP) is one of 28 federally-recognized National Estuary Programs, an independent special district of the state of Florida, and an intergovernmental partnership whose mission is to build partnerships to restore and protect Tampa Bay. Pinellas County has been a key partner and regional leader since the Program's inception in 1991. As such, the County has pledged, through a binding <a href="Interlocal Agreement">Interlocal Agreement</a>, to help achieve the science-based goals and priorities of <a href="Charting the Course: The Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan">Charting the Course: The Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan</a> for Tampa Bay (CCMP).

The CCMP identifies numerous activities to ensure that Tampa Bay remains a vibrant part of the region's environmental and economic landscape, as well as those parties responsible for its proper and effective implementation. According to the CCMP, the UF IFAS Extension supports several priority actions, including reducing nitrogen runoff from urban landscapes (SW-1), expanding adoption of best management practices for commercial and urban agriculture (SW-8), developing education to reduce fertilizer use where reclaimed water is applied through the Florida Friendly™ Landscaping Program (WW-1), promoting education about plastic pollution prevention through the Florida Microplastic Awareness Project and the Florida Water Stewardship Program (COC-4), continuing public education campaigns to reduce pet waste in the bay watershed (PH-4), offering training and support to volunteers in specific creekside neighborhoods (BH-9), reducing user conflicts and managing recreational uses of the bay (PA-1), and enhancing community understanding of the impacts of sea level rise on coastal habitats (CC-1).

In short, Pinellas County Extension has been an impactful program, providing benefits to the residents of our region and addressing core actions outlined in the CCMP. We look forward to continuing work with Pinellas County to ensure that progress is made to improve water quality, habitats, and quality of life throughout the Tampa Bay watershed. Please do not hesitate to contact me by phone (727) 893-2765 or email (esherwood@tbep.org), if you have any questions about ways to achieve our shared goals.

Sincerely,

Ed Sherwood Executive Director

Chard D Shemerd



An Equal Opportunity Employer

# Southwest Florida Water Management District

2379 Broad Street, Brooksville, Florida 34604-6899 (352) 796-7211 or 1-800-423-1476 (FL only) WaterMatters.org

Bartow Office 170 Century Boulevard Bartow, Florida 33830-7700 (863) 534-1448 or

1-800-492-7862 (FL only)

78 Sarasota Center Boulevard Sarasota, Florida 34240-9770 (941) 377-3722 or 1-800-320-3503 (FL only)

Sarasota Office

Tampa Office 7601 U.S. 301 North Tampa, Florida 33637-6759 (813) 985-7481 or 1-800-836-0797 (FL only)

John R. Mitten

Chair, Hernando, Marion

Jack Bispham Vice Chair, Manatee

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Jim Turner Charlotte, Sarasota Nancy Watkins Hillsborough, Pinellas

Brian J. Armstrong, P.G. Executive Director November 3, 2025

The Honorable Brian Scott, Chair Pinellas County Board of Commissioners District 2 315 Court Street Clearwater, Florida 33756

Subject: UF/IFAS Extension Pinellas County Contract Renewal

Dear Chair Scott:

The University of Florida Institute of Food of Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) is a long-standing partner of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District). We understand the Commission is holding a workshop November 13 to discuss the Pinellas County Extension's contract renewal and we are writing to express our support for the Extension.

On the statewide level, UF/IFAS provides critical research, guidance and programs on residential lawn and landscape efficiencies as well as agricultural water use and water quality. At the local level, the Extension offices provide hands-on water resources education, services, workshops and materials to residents and key stakeholders. Many of these services are provided by volunteers, thus reducing costs.

Moreover, with the influx of new residents over the past five years and the potential for water shortage orders due to dry conditions, providing boots on the ground education on water conservation and water quality is more critical than ever. Our research shows that residents in our region are increasingly uninformed on basic water conservation and fertilization practices. Programs such as Florida-Friendly Landscaping focus on helping residents protect Florida's natural resources by conserving water, reducing pollution and supporting wildlife through sustainable landscaping practices. In addition, the Pinellas County IFAS irrigation evaluations have been valuable tools to help homeowners save money on their water bills while enabling Pinellas County to reduce wasteful water use.

The District strongly supports the UF/IFAS Extension Pinellas County office as an important local resource to the public for water resources education and urges the Pinellas County Commission to continue its funding of the program.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Armstrong, P.G.

**Executive Director** 

cc: Mr. Barry Burton, Pinellas County Administrator

Comments

From: Pinellas County Clerk of Court <noreply@mypinellasclerk.gov>

Sent: Sunday, November 9, 2025 4:49 PM

**To:** BCC Agenda Comments

Subject: NEW BCC AGENDA COMMENT

Topic UF/IFAS

BCC Agenda Date 10-16-2025

Agenda Item Number 16

Citizen Name Ian Rollitt

Phone +117279022063

Email rollittian@gmail.com

Address 650 2nd Avenue North

Safety Harbor, FL 34695

The Memorandum of Understanding Between UF/IFAS and Pinellas County is up for renewal. The Extension Staff budget has already been approved in Pinellas County Annual Budget. Florida Master Gardener Volunteers assist UF/IFAS Extension Agents by providing research based horticulture education to Florida residents. The Vision of UF is to be the most trusted resource for horticulture education in Florida. The MGV Program extends the vision of UF/IFAS by protecting and sustaining natural resources. Master Gardener Volunteers volunteer around 48,000 hours which at the rate of \$31,61 is around \$1,500,000 per annum

Around 54,000 consultations are made each year Value around \$2 million The return on investment is around \$4.6 Million I oppose reducing the

funding to UF/IFAS as proposed by Commissioner Scherer.

Your Stand on the Issue Oppose

From: Chaney, Coleen

Sent: Monday, November 10, 2025 8:38 AM

**To:** Clerk Board Records

**Subject:** FW: UF/IFAS Extension Offices

From: Scott, Brian

Sent: Monday, November 10, 2025 8:04 AM

To: Chaney, Coleen

Subject: FW: UF/IFAS Extension Offices

From: Lisa Kocis < <a href="mailto:lisakocis@yahoo.com">lisakocis@yahoo.com</a> Sent: Sunday, November 9, 2025 3:21 PM
To: Scott, Brian < <a href="mailto:lisakocis@yahoo.com">lisakocis@yahoo.com</a> Sent: Sunday, November 9, 2025 3:21 PM
To: Scott, Brian < <a href="mailto:lisakocis@yahoo.com">lisakocis@yahoo.com</a> Sent: Sunday, November 9, 2025 3:21 PM
To: Scott, Brian < <a href="mailto:lisakocis@yahoo.com">lisakocis@yahoo.com</a> Sent: Sunday, November 9, 2025 3:21 PM
To: Scott, Brian < <a href="mailto:lisakocis@yahoo.com">lisakocis@yahoo.com</a> Sunday, November 9, 2025 3:21 PM
To: Scott, Brian < <a href="mailto:lisakocis@yahoo.com">lisakocis@yahoo.com</a> Sunday, November 9, 2025 3:21 PM
To: Scott, Brian < <a href="mailto:lisakocis@yahoo.com">lisakocis@yahoo.com</a> Sunday, November 9, 2025 3:21 PM
To: Scott, Brian < <a href="mailto:lisakocis@yahoo.com">lisakocis@yahoo.com</a> Sunday Sun

#### This Message Is From an External Sender

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This message came from outside your organization.

#### Dear Commissioner Scott,

I am writing as a resident/citizen of Pinellas County and as a Certified Pinellas County Master Gardener trainee. I am urging you to support the UF/IFAS extension offices in Pinellas County. The extension offices and help desks offer valuable services to Pinellas County residents, homeowners, businesses, and communities in this most urban county. With very little "wild" spaces left in Pinellas County, the extension offices and Master Gardeners work diligently to educate our residents about the huge impact homeowners and HOAs can have on helping our wildlife and pollinators survive and thrive in our home and community landscapes, preserving our water supply, and our dwindling shorelines.

As a Master Gardener trainee, I have volunteered over 150 hours in the last five months, at our county parks; helping to eradicate invasive species, promoting best practices in water conservation efforts and Florida Friendly landscape design in my townhome community, as well as helping to maintain the Florida Botanical Gardens, a popular visitor's destination in Pinellas County. All my endeavors are possible because of the training I received through the Pinellas Extension Office under the guidance of the agents there.

We have over a hundred Pinellas County Master Gardeners who are engaging in many, many hours of community work for free, saving the county approximately a million dollars a year, a fiscally worthwhile service to support I thank you for your dedication and service to the citizens of Pinellas County and hope you will support the county extension offices and the positive impacts the offices have had on our citizens, communities, and businesses throughout the years. Regards

Lisa M. Kocis 9209 Seminole Blvd. Seminole, FL 33772 847-571-0807 lisakocis@yahoo.com

From: Chaney, Coleen

Sent: Monday, November 10, 2025 8:43 AM

**To:** Clerk Board Records

**Subject:** FW: Funding Extension Service

From: Scott, Brian

Sent: Monday, November 10, 2025 8:05 AM

To: Chaney, Coleen

Subject: FW: Funding Extension Service

From: Pat Dieterich < pat.dieterich1949@gmail.com >

Sent: Saturday, November 8, 2025 2:28 PM

**To:** Scherer, Chris <<u>cscherer@pinellas.gov</u>>; Scott, Brian <<u>brscott@pinellas.gov</u>>; Nowicki, Vince <<u>vnowicki@pinellas.gov</u>>; deggars@pinellas.gov; Latvala, Christopher <<u>clatvala@pinellas.gov</u>>; Peters, Kathleen <<u>kpeters@pinellas.gov</u>>; Robinson-

Flowers, Rene < <a href="mailto:rflowers@pinellas.gov">rflowers@pinellas.gov</a>>
<a href="mailto:Subject: Funding Extension Service">Subject: Funding Extension Service</a>

#### This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender

**Report Suspicious** 

You have not previously corresponded with this sender.

As a full-time resident of Pinellas County since 1980, a Master Gardener since 2002, and an active volunteer at the Florida Botanical Gardens, I ask you to vote to continue full funding for the Extension Service and the IFAS outreach programs. While Pinellas may not be the commercial agricultural center it once was, the fact that myriad things grow here is undeniable. I have witnessed the joy of a child learning what to plant to attract butterflies, the satisfaction of a homeowner understanding Florida Friendly landscaping, and the wonder of a citizen recognizing a pest and possible approaches to deal with it. I urge you to continue funding to allow these and many, many other positive benefits to continue. We *must* be well-informed stewards of our environment.

Sincerely, Pat Dieterich To: Pinellas County Commissioners October 31, 2025

From: Carol Zieres

Address: 9 Fernbrooke Dr, Safety Harbor, FL 34695

**Dear County Commissioners:** 

I am writing this letter as a concerned resident of Pinellas County and a Master Gardener Volunteer of the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Services (UF-IFAS). I have been a Master Gardener Volunteer with the Pinellas County Extension Office since December 2020 and have served over 887 volunteer hours during my five years in this program.

I am deeply concerned about the proposed cuts that the Commissioners are contemplating to "defund" the Pinellas County Master Gardener program. Before any such decision is made, the Commission should be made fully aware of the impact that this program has on the health and well-being of not only the residents of Pinellas County, but also the impact on the economy and on environmental preservation in one of the most densely populated of the 67 counties in Florida.

As a Master Gardener Volunteer coordinator for the monthly North Pinellas County Plant Clinic, I can personally attest to the fact that this program provides unparalleled value in terms of free education and professional advice to patrons of all ages who frequent the information desk during the Folly Faires at Folly Farm Nature Preserve in Safety Harbor. We typically employ 3 to 4 Master Gardeners at the help desk who answer questions ranging from landscaping problems to identification of plant diseases offering helpful advice and science-based solutions. The Master Gardeners are the trusted "bridge" between science and everyday life in the community. Children of all ages come to Folly Farm with their parents and often stop by the Plant Clinic, which also exhibits a display table for the "Plant of the Month" and the Pollinator Pathway highlighting the importance of attracting pollinators in the home landscape. Master Gardener volunteers are also requested by Pinellas County Schools and the Sheriff's Youth Ranch to teach children the basics of gardening; for example, how does our food get from farm to table, etc.

The power of the Master Gardener Volunteer program cannot be underestimated. It is the largest volunteer program in the nation with a monetary value estimated at \$11 million dollars. With the growing food insecurity in this country, the Master Gardener Volunteer program is even more relevant in today's economy to help promote community gardens, donate and grow food for food banks, especially in underprivileged or unincorporated areas. Pinellas County also has a high volume of tourists that visit our parks and beaches year-round. The Master Gardener volunteers add value to the 17 County parks, four

environmental preserves, the Florida Botanical Gardens and many municipal and neighborhood parks in terms of beautification, preservation, and removal of invasive plants to help parklands thrive and attract birds and other wildlife that tourists have come to enjoy. Lastly, with Pinellas County's 588 miles of coastline, Master Gardener Volunteers are often called upon for beach renourishment projects after severe weather events such as Hurricanes Helene and Milton, again providing free and valuable consultation to businesses and residents, help that would be otherwise unavailable.

In short, Pinellas County Master Gardener Volunteers come from all walks of life, retired engineers, schoolteachers, Army officers, plant nursery owners, medical professionals, tree arborists, landscape architects, etc. So much talent exists in this county-wide program, why would the County Commissioners dismiss this talented group of men and women who so willingly give of themselves and tirelessly give back to this community and have enriched the lives of so many people? Please vote with your conscience and immediately allocate funding to defray the administrative costs of the Pinellas County UF-IFAS Extension Program.

Sincerely,

Carol L. Zieres
Master Gardener Volunteer, Class of 2020

From: Chaney, Coleen

Sent: Monday, November 10, 2025 11:13 AM

**To:** Clerk Board Records

**Subject:** FW: Letter in Support of UF/IFAS Ext Contract Renewal **Attachments:** Letter to the Pinellas County Commission - Copy.docx

From: Scott, Brian

Sent: Monday, November 10, 2025 11:09 AM

To: Chaney, Coleen

Subject: FW: Letter in Support of UF/IFAS Ext Contract Renewal

From: Carol Zieres < <a href="mailto:com">carolzieres@gmail.com</a> Sent: Monday, November 10, 2025 11:04 AM To: Scott, Brian <a href="mailto:brscott@pinellas.gov">brscott@pinellas.gov</a>

Subject: Fwd: Letter in Support of UF/IFAS Ext Contract Renewal

## This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender

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You have not previously corresponded with this sender.

Dear Commissioner Scott,

I am sending you my letter asking for your vote in support of the existing UF/IFAS Extension Office contract that is under consideration for renewal.

Sincerely, Carol Zieres Master Gardener Volunteer for UF/IFAS Safety Harbor, FL

From: Pinellas County Clerk of Court <noreply@mypinellasclerk.gov>

Sent: Friday, November 14, 2025 6:53 AM

To: **BCC Agenda Comments** 

**Subject: NEW BCC AGENDA COMMENT** 

Topic **Extension Service** 

**BCC Agenda Date** 11-18-2025

25-1698A Agenda Item Number

Citizen Name **Bruce Turley** 

Phone +117273019677

Email bktnursery@gmail.com

1991 67th Ave S Address

Saint Petersburg, Florida 33712-5960

Please EXTEND the MOU for the UF/IFAS Extension Service. This is an

invaluable service through our land grant university and is a necessary Comments service for the citizens of Pinellas County including our commercial and

home extension service and connection to UF

From: Pinellas County Clerk of Court <noreply@mypinellasclerk.gov>

Sent: Sunday, November 16, 2025 7:20 AM

**To:** BCC Agenda Comments

**Subject:** NEW BCC AGENDA COMMENT

Topic UF IFAS classes

BCC Agenda Date 11-18-2025

Agenda Item Number

Citizen Name Rachel Ross

Phone

**Email** 

Address 33756

I recently attended a free class on water conservation and throughly

Comments appreciated it! I learned so much and these are really important to our

community. Please keep funding these classes.

Topic

From: Pinellas County Clerk of Court <noreply@mypinellasclerk.gov>

Sent: Monday, November 17, 2025 4:04 PM

**To:** BCC Agenda Comments

Subject: NEW BCC AGENDA COMMENT

Memorandum of Understanding between Pinellas County and the

University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences for salary

and fringe.

BCC Agenda Date 11-18-2025

Agenda Item Number 38

Citizen Name Sarah Nappier

Phone +16362530150

Email sarahnappier@gmail.com

Address 1219 Bermuda Street

Clearwater, Florida 33755

I write this comment as a Pinellas County resident and as a graduate of the Florida Waters Stewardship Program, an educational program offered through the UF-IFAS Pinellas County Extension. Although I already held a Bachelor of Science degree from Eckerd, this course taught

me more than I could have ever expected about Florida's water

resources, the issues surrounding sustainable water use, how to protect

our water resources, and so much more. I have since used that

knowledge and experience over the last four years to bolster my career in the environmental field, while also disseminating what I have learned through volunteer work and countless community education/outreach opportunities, including building a community demonstration rain garden

in Gulfport. This program, and the education and outreach the UF-IFAS

Extension at large provides the community is so invaluable and I

encourage the commissioners to recognize it's significance to the County and it's residents. Every program and every class has a ripple effect into the community, helping to make the County a more environmentally-friendly place to live, despite it's many challenges as an urbanized system. What the Extension offers is not duplicative efforts, and without it there would be a major gap in education and resources for our residents, which would not easily be picked up by other local groups or agencies. Please recognize how vital the UF-IFAS partnership, please renew the 5 year MOU, and please keep funding these positions and services. I truly believe Pinellas County is stronger with the UF-IFAS

Comments

Extension.

Support

Comments

From: Pinellas County Clerk of Court <noreply@mypinellasclerk.gov>

Sent: Monday, November 17, 2025 2:40 PM

**To:** BCC Agenda Comments

Subject: NEW BCC AGENDA COMMENT

Topic UF/IFAS

BCC Agenda Date 11-18-2025

Agenda Item Number 25-1698A

Citizen Name Ellen Mahany

Phone +117274102424

Email nbrdogs3@outlook.com

Address 11669 83rd Ave.

Seminole, FL 33772

I do recognize that each board member takes their responsibility to make the best decision seriously. For this reason, I am including a quote from the UF/IFAS website about the help our county extension service receives from its relationship with UF/IFAS: "The wide breadth of educational programming offered in each county responds to the local needs of residents, schools, regulatory agencies, community organizations and

industry." Accepting our financial responsibility to continue this

partnership assures residents of Pinellas County indispensable expertise to help us with the mounting problems in our rapidly growing urban area.

Thank you.

From: Pinellas County Clerk of Court <noreply@mypinellasclerk.gov>

Sent: Monday, November 17, 2025 3:32 PM

**To:** BCC Agenda Comments

Subject: NEW BCC AGENDA COMMENT

Topic MOU - UF IFAS

BCC Agenda Date 11-18-2025

Agenda Item Number

Comments

Citizen Name Lisa Kothe

Phone +1+17277766982

Email lisakothe@gmail.com

Address 111 Crestwood Dr

111 Crestwood Dr, FL 34695

Please consider approving the five year contract between the county and

UF to provide extension services to our residents. The cost outweighs the

benefits of educating our residents on Florida Friendly Landscaping,

water conservation, pesticide use, 4H, Master Gardener Volunteers, and

the expertise of UF through the extension office.

From: Pinellas County Clerk of Court <noreply@mypinellasclerk.gov>

Sent: Monday, November 17, 2025 4:55 PM

**To:** BCC Agenda Comments

Subject: NEW BCC AGENDA COMMENT

Memorandum of Understanding between Pinellas County and the

University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences for salary

and fringe

BCC Agenda Date 11-18-2025

Agenda Item Number 25-1698A

Citizen Name Zach Westfall

Phone

Topic

Email

Address

Please support the Memorandum of Understanding with IFAS as they

Comments provide integral information and outreach to our community and

stakeholders. Thank you