

Eres, Christian L

From: Scott, Brian
Sent: Friday, September 12, 2025 2:31 PM
To: BCC Agenda Comments
Subject: FW: Pinellas County Budget

From: gerald strain <insite52001@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, September 12, 2025 2:04 PM
To: Scott, Brian <brscott@pinellas.gov>
Subject: Pinellas County Budget

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Dear Commissioner Scott,
Thank you for leading us with an eye to the future.
I ask you to keep Creative Pinellas in the budget for the fiscal year starting in October 2025.
Thank you!
Gerald Strain
Sent from my iPhone

Eres, Christian L

From: Scott, Brian
Sent: Friday, September 12, 2025 10:39 AM
To: BCC Agenda Comments
Subject: FW: Reconsider defunding Creative Pinellas

From: Katie Klopfenstein <kklopfen@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, September 12, 2025 10:02 AM
To: Scott, Brian <brscott@pinellas.gov>
Subject: Reconsider defunding Creative Pinellas

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Mr. Scott -

I was stunned when I read about the County Commission's 5-2 vote to defund Creative Pinellas. I am writing to ask you, as a member of the Tourist Development Council, to reconsider this action.

I have lived in St. Petersburg since 2018, but before I was a resident, I was a tourist. We visited destinations throughout Pinellas County, including St. Pete Beach, Dunedin, Clearwater, and St. Petersburg before we settled here. The arts community - including great public art - was a factor in our decision to move here. Our neighborhood, Historic Kenwood, is an artist enclave.

I ask that you consider the facts about Creative Pinellas and the impact of the arts on tourism in the county.

Creative Pinellas delivers arts experiences and funding opportunities thoughtfully and efficiently through cultural tourism grants, by boosting arts communities, and showcasing our region's arts events and activities. Their galleries, programs, and artist gatherings continue to connect communities across the county with our visitors and residents with a very modest investment by the County and a rigorous internal set of financial controls.

- Of the \$94 million in bed tax revenue generated in 2024, Creative Pinellas receives 0.8% (less than 1%).
- From the County Operating Budget, Creative Pinellas receives only 0.004% of the total budget.
- Their total operating budget is \$1.78 million, with TDC funds accounting for approximately 48% of our budget.
- The share of the TDC budget that is allotted to tourism-facing salaries makes up approximately 33%.

-Their share of earned revenue is increasingly growing, and they project a 10% increase in FY2027.

Arts & culture move people beyond the beach and across the county. Five of the top twelve attractions in Pinellas County are arts destinations. Funding Creative Pinellas supports high-impact, countywide programs that residents and visitors love.

A decision to continue funding of Creative Pinellas protects a proven engine for economic impact, community well-being, and next-gen audience growth.

Katie Klopfenstein

From: Scott, Brian
Sent: Friday, September 12, 2025 9:16 AM
To: BCC Agenda Comments
Subject: FW: Contact Form: Objection to removing funding from Creative Pinellas from Heidi Brewer #31818391

From: noreply@fs30.formsite.com <noreply@fs30.formsite.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 11, 2025 10:12 PM
To: Scott, Brian <brscott@pinellas.gov>
Subject: Contact Form: Objection to removing funding from Creative Pinellas from Heidi Brewer #31818391

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This information is a result of a Pinellas County Online Customer Service form submission from the Pinellas County web site.

Direction of Inquiry

- Commissioner Chris Scherer - District 1
- Commissioner Brian Scott - District 2 (2025 Chair)
- Commissioner Vince Nowicki - District 3
- Commissioner Dave Eggers - District 4 (2025 Vice-Chair)
- Commissioner Chris Latvala - District 5
- Commissioner Kathleen Peters - District 6
- Commissioner René Flowers - District 7

Your Name

Heidi Brewer

Subject

Objection to removing funding from Creative Pinellas

Message

The arts matter. Our community matters. And so does the work of Creative Pinellas. As the designated arts agency for Pinellas County, it drives economic growth, supports artists, and strengthens our region as an arts and cultural destination. Removing support for Creative Pinellas, as you have done and propose to do, would have a devastating impact on our community.

As a St. Pete resident and independent artist, I received a grant last year from Creative Pinellas that allowed me to achieve a long held dream of creating a dance film that I hope inspires sports audiences to support the arts and likewise: inspires artists to support local sports teams. I was

able to pay my collaborators well, which created a trickle down effect — that supported their creativity and provided potential funding for their own projects.

Artists make up a large portion of the St Pete population and Creative Pinellas goes above and beyond to support them. I felt supported financially, but also emotionally and mentally by an incredible team at Creative Pinellas. I have many friends who have been able to give back to the community through their art and art service and also realize their own dreams through direct funding from Creative Pinellas, funding which you have taken away and are taking away. In this artistic economy, no one can afford *more* funding being removed. You are pulling at threads that hold this St Pete community together at a time when togetherness is already so challenging.

This is my personal experience.

Furthermore, Creative Pinellas and Visit St. Pete/Clearwater (VSPC) have been steadily building a partnership that highlights the arts as a driver of tourism while elevating Pinellas County's reputation as a premier cultural destination.

In recent months, Creative Pinellas has been working with VSPC's team to identify their needs and develop cultural tourism programs that support the County's tourism initiatives. In fact, they are working toward a system where our two teams begin sharing visitor engagement data to better understand how the arts impacts visitor attendance, spending, and satisfaction with the destination.

Their roles are complementary, not interchangeable, and defunding Creative Pinellas weakens the foundation on which cultural tourism depends. Creative Pinellas is known as an arts destination in large part because of their work to create a thriving cultural community, and it will continue to grow and refine its efforts in the coming months and years.

Current Funding Reality: Low Draw/High Results

- Of the \$94 million in bed tax revenue generated in 2024, Creative Pinellas receives 0.8% (less than 1%).
- From the County Operating Budget, Creative Pinellas receives only 0.004% of the total budget.

These modest investments sustain the entire countywide cultural infrastructure, which in turn fuels cultural tourism and economic growth.

Please do not remove ANY funding from Creative Pinellas. If anything, you should be looking for how to INCREASE funding for this vital organization.

Your Street Address

127 25th Ave N

City/Unincorporated County St Petersburg

Zip Code 33704

Your Phone Number 3609037071

Your Email Address hkbrewer@gmail.com

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Eres, Christian L

From: Scott, Brian
Sent: Friday, September 12, 2025 9:15 AM
To: BCC Agenda Comments
Subject: FW: Creative Pinellas

From: Hal Freedman <hfreedma@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 11, 2025 2:53 PM
To: Scott, Brian <brscott@pinellas.gov>; Eggers, Dave <deggers@pinellas.gov>; rkimball@sheratonsandkey.com; bruce.rector@mclearwater.com; phil@starlitecruises.com; doreen@trsinc.com; Chuck Prather <chuck@thebirchwood.com>; trisha@clearwaterferry.com; capthubbard@hubbardsmarina.com; gm@bilmarbeachresort.com; copley.gerdes@stpete.org; Dave Gattis <dave.gattis@cityofbelleairbeach.com>
Subject: Creative Pinellas

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Hello, Tourist Development Council:

As someone deeply involved with the Arts in Pinellas County, as a supporter, donor, and Board Member, I believe the decision to de-fund Creative Pinellas is extremely short-sighted and a situation that is "penny-wise-and-pound-foolish."

To save about \$0.15/resident, you would be eliminating an Arts Agency that has been efficiently doing its job for 14 years. An agency that has made many lives better and contributed to a better quality of life for residents in general. You would be placing its responsibilities in an agency that is excellent at marketing, but has no expertise in the Arts. In the long run, it is likely to cost County residents more for less productive outcomes.

Please re-think this decision, re-amend the budget, and continue to fund Creative Pinellas.

Thank you.

Hal Freedman
1 Beach Drive, SE
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
727-692-4713

Eres, Christian L

From: Scott, Brian
Sent: Friday, September 12, 2025 9:14 AM
To: BCC Agenda Comments
Subject: FW: Creative Pinellas

From: Rebecca Avrin <rsavrin@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 11, 2025 5:28 PM
To: Scott, Brian <brscott@pinellas.gov>
Subject: Creative Pinellas

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I hope you will consider supporting Creative Pinellas. It was defunded by the county commissioners and we have to get them to reverse this. Art is what grows a community. Attendance has been great at the center and should be applauded, not shunned.

Thank you for your support,

Rebecca Avrin

Eres, Christian L

From: Chaney, Coleen
Sent: Thursday, September 11, 2025 12:39 PM
To: BCC Agenda Comments
Subject: FW: Creative Pinellas Funding

From: Scott, Brian <brscott@pinellas.gov>
Sent: Thursday, September 11, 2025 12:39 PM
To: Chaney, Coleen <cchaney@pinellas.gov>
Subject: FW: Creative Pinellas Funding

From: Rachel Stewart <stewartrachel5@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 11, 2025 12:36 PM
To: Scott, Brian <brscott@pinellas.gov>
Subject: Creative Pinellas Funding

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Please please don't cut the funding for Creative Pinellas. They have served the TAMPA BAY area with a high standard of culture for tourist and local visitors.
As a visual artist I have benefited from this organization.
Keep it open!

Rachel Stewart

Eres, Christian L

From: Scott, Brian
Sent: Thursday, September 11, 2025 12:25 PM
To: BCC Agenda Comments
Subject: FW: Creative Pinellas Funding!!

From: Outofthegutter Art <outofthegutterart@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 11, 2025 11:31 AM
To: Scott, Brian <brscott@pinellas.gov>
Subject: Creative Pinellas Funding!!

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PLEASE RECONSIDER! Art is a HUGE DRAW to tourists. Being a fine art destination brings so much money to Pinellas County!

Please don't take away this funding. I am disabled, and art is my lifeline for my ongoing mental health recovery!

Thank you so much!

Sincerely,

Susan T. Martin

5263 W Pine St, St. Petersburg, FL 33709

(727) 598-4505

outofthegutterart@gmail.com

Eres, Christian L

From: Scott, Brian
Sent: Thursday, September 11, 2025 12:24 PM
To: BCC Agenda Comments
Subject: FW: Preserve funding for Creative Pinellas

From: Maria Cantonis <mariacantonis@outlook.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 11, 2025 11:48 AM
To: Scott, Brian <brscott@pinellas.gov>
Subject: Preserve funding for Creative Pinellas

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Dear Commissioner Scott,

I am a board member of the Clearwater Arts Alliance and a 47-year resident of Pinellas County. I feel it's critical that you reconsider your position on defunding Creative Pinellas.

- I am greatly concerned about the short notice to consider defunding Creative Pinellas, the lack of due process and the opportunity to amend the approach.
- The small savings in defunding Creative Pinellas is shortsighted in that it is not "wasted money." It is what is helping to create the experiences and the climate that visitors and residents want and enjoy. **IT IS THE PRODUCT that VSPC markets!**
- Having a **county arts agency** with which to work is big plus for Clearwater and other cities throughout the county.
- The numbers are striking: Creative Pinellas receives less than 1% of the tourism tax and only 0.001% of the county budget. That's pennies compared to the return they deliver. **Every dollar from the county is matched and multiplied by outside funding from the state, federal grants, foundations, and contracts.** In other words, county dollars unlock many more dollars that come right back to Pinellas.

- What do we get for that investment on the ground? We get neighborhoods made more vibrant with murals and art-wrapped signal boxes. We get exhibitions that showcase both youth and professional artists, in locations throughout the county—not just in one city or one gallery. **We get programming by experienced professionals that attracts visitors, supports our schools, and celebrates what makes Pinellas unique.**

The roles of VSPC and Creative Pinellas are **complimentary, not interchangeable** and defunding Creative Pinellas weakens the foundation on which cultural tourism depends. Pinellas is known nationally and internationally as an arts destination in large part because of the work of **Creative Pinellas to create a thriving cultural community.**

I urge you to reconsider your decision and protect this small but vital funding.

Sincerely,,

Maria Cantonis
6 Bellevue Blvd., Apt. 803
Belleair, FL 33756

Eres, Christian L

From: Chaney, Coleen
Sent: Wednesday, September 10, 2025 1:18 PM
To: BCC Agenda Comments
Subject: FW: Creative Pinellas

From: Scott, Brian <brscott@pinellas.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, September 10, 2025 1:17 PM
To: Chaney, Coleen <cchaney@pinellas.gov>
Subject: FW: Creative Pinellas

From: Ann Wykell <akwykell@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 10, 2025 1:04 PM
To: Scott, Brian <brscott@pinellas.gov>
Subject: Creative Pinellas

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Mr. Scott,

Research has shown that cultural tourism pays off. Cultural tourists stay longer, spend more money on restaurants. Artists and arts organization feed this economy, but they cannot serve them exclusively as hotels do - it is a win-win for your constituents if they can join cultural tourists in experiencing the arts. Everyone loses - tourists and residents, and the local artists who go elsewhere to work - when funding is cut. CP is an arts service organization that puts funds and work in the hands of local artists and organizations who reach out to visitors many of whom become residents. Much of its work and money goes to artists and programs mid and up county. Yes - the big museums and orchestra in St. Pete will still be here - but not the smaller programs and organizations north of St. Pete. Ann Wykell

Eres, Christian L

From: Chaney, Coleen
Sent: Wednesday, September 10, 2025 1:18 PM
To: BCC Agenda Comments
Subject: FW: Creative Pinellas

From: Scott, Brian <brscott@pinellas.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, September 10, 2025 1:17 PM
To: Chaney, Coleen <cchaney@pinellas.gov>
Subject: FW: Creative Pinellas

From: Heather Risley <hrisley1@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 10, 2025 1:14 PM
To: Scott, Brian <brscott@pinellas.gov>
Subject: Creative Pinellas

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Please back funding for Creative Pinellas!

Heather Risley
Tarpon Art Guild Gallery