

Pinellas County

*1111 McMullen Booth Road
Clearwater, FL 33759*



Minutes - Final

Friday, January 17, 2025

9:30 A.M.

Joint Board of County Commissioners Roundtable

Ruth Eckerd Hall, Grand Lobby Room

Board of County Commissioners

*Brian Scott, Chair
Dave Eggers, Vice-Chair
René Flowers
Chris Latvala
Vince Nowicki
Kathleen Peters
Chris Scherer*

ROLL CALL - 9:34 A.M.

Present:

Pinellas County

Commissioners: Chair Brian Scott, Vice-Chair Dave Eggers, Chris Latvala, Vince Nowicki, and Kathleen Peters

Barry A. Burton, County Administrator; Don Crowell, Chief Assistant County Attorney; and Tammy Burgess, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk

Hillsborough County

Commissioners: Vice-Chair Christine Miller, Chris Boles, Donna Cameron Cepeda, Harry Cohen, Gwen Myers, and Joshua Wostal

Bonnie Wise, County Administrator; and Mary Helen Farris, Deputy County Attorney

Pasco County

Commissioners: Chair Kathryn Starkey, Vice-Chair Seth Weightman, and Jack Mariano

Mike Carballa, County Administrator; and Jeffrey Steinsnyder, County Attorney

Also Present:

Other interested individuals

1. Opening Remarks

Commissioner Scott welcomed everyone and introduced Ruth Eckerd Hall Vice President and Chief Education and Community Engagement Officer Sharon Reid-Kane. Ms. Reid-Kane provided brief comments regarding the arts education program at Ruth Eckerd Hall; whereupon, Commissioner Scott requested that those in attendance introduce themselves.

2. Tampa Bay Water Presentation

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation, Tampa Bay Water General Manager Chuck Carden provided background information regarding Tampa Bay Water and discussed multiple topics, including the interconnected water system, water demand projections, and planned projects.

Commissioners Eggers, Starkey, Mariano, and Cohen provided input regarding the efforts of Tampa Bay Water, collaboration and common goals, and upcoming projects.

3. MPO/TPO Merger Update

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Tampa Bay Regional MPO - Progress and Next Steps*, Forward Pinellas Executive Director Whit Blanton provided background information regarding the function and purpose of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and transportation management areas, related requirements and responsibilities, and transportation funding. He discussed the historical context related to a potential merger of the MPOs of Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas Counties and described several benefits of a regional MPO, noting that there is impetus from the State legislature and the Governor's Office regarding the merger.

Mr. Blanton briefly discussed various considerations related to the formation of a regional MPO and noted progress made thus far, including the adoption of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) related to the potential merger, submission of a feasibility report to the Governor and the State legislature, consensus regarding the composition of a regional governing board, and approval of the scope of services for a consultant to assist with establishment of the organization; whereupon, he highlighted the principles of the MOU and next steps in the merger process.

In response to a query by Commissioner Scott, Mr. Blanton confirmed that July 2027 is the anticipated timeframe for establishment of the regional MPO and indicated that approval by the Governor will be required.

Thereupon, Commissioners Starkey, Cohen, Mariano, and Wostal provided input regarding various topics, including the leadership efforts of Florida Department of Transportation District Seven Secretary David Gwynn, the importance of ensuring regional representation, and concerns related to the potential for loss of local control and input.

Responding to queries by Commissioner Nowicki, Mr. Blanton indicated that while the Pinellas Planning Council would not be eliminated, Transportation Management Area Leadership Group meetings would no longer be necessary; that new taxes would not be required to fund the regional MPO; and that there would not be a significant increase in staffing; whereupon, discussion ensued regarding representation for major cities, efficiency, and federal funding.

Meeting Recessed: 10:46 A.M.

Meeting Reconvened: 11:01 A.M.

5. Legislative Discussion Topics:

- a). Local Option Fuel Tax (LOFT) options (summary and report attached)
- b). E-911 Fee (summary attached)
- c). East Lake Road Improvements
- d). Tampa Bay Day in Tallahassee - March 26th

Local Option Fuel Tax (LOFT) Options

Deviating from the order of the agenda, Mr. Burton provided information related to Pinellas County's Transportation Trust Fund (TTF), indicating that the buying power of the TTF has decreased; that the TTF is presently subsidized through the General Fund to sufficiently supply for the construction of bridges and roads; and that implementing registration fees for electric vehicles and indexing the gas tax would provide a significant improvement to the TTF; whereupon, he related that the Florida Association of Counties supports discussion of the issue during the upcoming legislative session.

Responding to comments and queries by Commissioners Scott and Wostal, Mr. Burton discussed the gas tax and the impact of electric vehicles related to local infrastructure needs.

Later in the meeting, Commissioner Eggers provided input related to indexing the local option fuel tax.

E-911 Fee

Mr. Burton provided background information regarding Pinellas County's E-911 fee, indicating that it was reduced to \$0.40; and that the Florida Association of Counties is supportive of a request for the fee to return to \$0.50. In response to comments by Commissioner Starkey and a query by Commissioner Scott, Mr. Carballa provided brief information related to Pasco County's funding for transportation and its E-911 fee.

East Lake Road Improvements

Mr. Burton indicated that future improvements to East Lake Road are part of a long-term joint proposal between Pinellas and Pasco Counties; that the project will require state appropriations; and that it will likely not be competitive for federal funding; whereupon, Commissioner Starkey related that Pasco County has submitted appropriation requests to assist with project funding.

Commissioner Eggers provided input related to the importance of the project, traffic signal timing along the East Lake Road corridor, and lighting technology.

Tampa Bay Day in Tallahassee - March 26th

Mr. Burton introduced the item; whereupon, in response to comments and queries by Commissioner Peters, Pinellas County Assistant to the County Administrator Matthew Spoor discussed preparations, sponsorships, and promotional items.

Commissioner Starkey suggested holding a similar regional event in Washington, D.C.; whereupon, brief discussion ensued regarding event structure and coordination.

4. Opioid Update

Pinellas County Human Services Director Karen Yatchum referenced a PowerPoint presentation and discussed opioid settlement funding allocations, Pinellas County's Opioid Abatement Funding Advisory Board (OAFAB), and the Pinellas Matters Program; whereupon, in response to a query by Commissioner Peters, she provided statistics related to the Pinellas Matters Program.

Ms. Yatchum briefly discussed a recent gap analysis procured by the OAFAB, which was utilized to assist with determining recommendations for regional funding; whereupon, she provided an overview of the recently implemented Care About Me Coordinated Access Model.

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation, Hillsborough County Health Care Services Director Kevin Wagner discussed opioid settlement funds, recommended allocations, the request for application process, and next steps.

Pasco County Support Services Director Paula Baracaldo referenced a PowerPoint presentation and provided an overview of Pasco County's efforts related to its opioid program, including establishment of an Opioid Task Force, focus areas, the application process, funded projects, and ideas for future funding.

Commissioner Peters emphasized the importance of fiscal responsibility associated with this issue and commended the Counties' efforts toward addressing mental health and addiction; whereupon, with input by Commissioners Scott and Mariano, she briefly discussed education for prevention.

6. Roundtable Ideas Exchange

Commissioner Scott opened the meeting for discussion and topic suggestions.

Commissioner Dave Eggers

Commissioner Eggers suggested inviting representatives from the Cities of Clearwater, St. Petersburg, and Tampa to future joint meetings.

Commissioner Kathryn Starkey

Commissioner Starkey suggested that the next joint meeting include discussion related to hurricane devastation and allowable expenditures for Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery funds.

Commissioner Jack Mariano

Commissioner Mariano expressed support for inviting City representatives to future joint meetings.

Commissioner Chris Boles

Commissioner Boles recommended storm response as a topic for discussion at a future meeting.

7. Closing Remarks/Next Meeting

Commissioner Scott expressed appreciation to Pinellas County Sheriff's Office deputies for their presence at today's meeting.

ADJOURNMENT - 11:53 A.M.