

Pinellas County

*333 Chestnut Street, Palm Room
Clearwater, FL 33756*



Minutes - Final

Tuesday, February 11, 2025

9:30 A.M.

Hybrid In-Person and Virtual Regular Meeting

Board of County Commissioners

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

ROLL CALL - 9:30 A.M.

Present: 6 - Chair Brian Scott, Vice-Chair Dave Eggers, Commissioner René Flowers, Commissioner Chris Latvala, Commissioner Vince Nowicki, and Commissioner Chris Scherer

Absent: 1 - Commissioner Kathleen Peters

Others Present: Barry A. Burton, County Administrator; Don Crowell, Chief Assistant County Attorney; Derelynn Revie, Board Records Manager; and Katie Poviones, Senior Board Records Specialist, Deputy Clerk

INVOCATION**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

20. County Administrator ReportsPost-Hurricane Recovery Updates

Deviating from the order of the agenda, Mr. Burton indicated that the County remains under a State of Local Emergency, but that there will be a request to terminate it at the February 25 meeting; whereupon, he related that there will also be a request, via resolution, to allow for the continuation of waiving permitting fees for those impacted by the storms; and that staff continues to prioritize recovery efforts for residents. He also discussed staff's continued efforts pertaining to the creation of a United States Department of Housing and Urban Development action plan, which is a key priority, and which will allow the County to acquire millions of dollars for residents who are most in need; whereupon, he provided information regarding the State's Elevate Florida program.

Emergency Management Director Cathie Perkins provided information and updates regarding numerous topics, including the following:

- Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Transitional Sheltering Assistance and Direct Lease Programs
- Travel trailer site inspections
- Pinellas County Income Eligible Hurricane Home Repair Program
- State Non-Congregate Sheltering Program
- Elevate Florida Program
- Low-interest disaster loans through the Small Business Administration
- FEMA Individual Assistance Program
- Messaging and outreach efforts
- American Red Cross bridge financial assistance

Ms. Perkins indicated that the Disaster Recovery Center at the Enoch D. Davis Center closed on February 3; and that residents may continue to contact FEMA for assistance.

Responding to queries by Chair Scott, Ms. Perkins and Building and Development Review Services Director Kevin McAndrew provided information related to the safe home inspection process and a webinar pertaining to the Elevate Florida Program, which is being hosted by the State for emergency managers throughout Florida.

Substantial Damage Assessments and Permitting Updates

Referring to a document titled *Substantial Damage Assessment and Permitting Update: February 11, 2025*, Mr. McAndrew presented statistical information related to the substantial damage assessment and reassessment processes and indicated that a communications plan is in place to assist property owners; whereupon, he provided details related to permitting and reassessments for various structures and discussed the number of permits issued and under review.

Responding to comments and queries by the members, Mr. McAndrew discussed various topics, including staff's education-first approach to enforcement, after-the-fact permitting, reassessments for mobile and manufactured homes, withdrawn or voided applications, and timeframes for permit issuance.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

1. Citizens To Be Heard - Public Comment.

Dawn Lechner, Clearwater
Pavel Pristash, Pinellas Park
Greg Pound, Largo
David Ballard Geddis, Jr., Palm Harbor
Ron Walker, Largo
Christine Scott, Deerfield Beach
Helen Makris, Palm Harbor
Dimitrios Makris, Palm Harbor
Jeffrey Jacob, St. Petersburg
Chris Steiner, Clearwater

PUBLIC HEARINGS

All public hearing items have been properly advertised. Affidavits of Publication have been received and are on file in the Board Records Department.

AUTHORITIES, BOARDS, CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS AND COUNCILS

Countywide Planning Authority

- 2. Case No. CW 25-01 - Pinellas County
Countywide Plan Map amendment from Retail & Services to Residential Low Medium, regarding 0.26 acre more or less, located at 1310 Gooden Crossing.

Ordinance No. 25-7 adopted, approving Case No. CW 25-01. Forward Pinellas, in its role as the Pinellas Planning Council, and the Planners Advisory Committee recommended approval of the amendment. No correspondence has been received. No citizens appeared to be heard.

A motion was made by Vice-Chair Eggers, seconded by Commissioner Latvala, that the item be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Chair Scott, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Flowers, Commissioner Latvala, Commissioner Nowicki, and Commissioner Scherer

Absent: 1 - Commissioner Peters

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

- 3. Amendment by resolution supplementing the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget realigning reserves and recognizing unanticipated fund balance for requesting departments (Hurricanes Amendment).

Resolution No. 25-14 adopted, recognizing and appropriating unanticipated revenue and realigning funds, as outlined in the Staff Report. No correspondence has been received. No citizens appeared to be heard.

Responding to comments by Commissioners Eggers and Scherer, Office of Management and Budget Director Chris Rose, with input by Mr. Burton, provided information related to tracking departments' storm-related expenses to expedite reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

A motion was made by Commissioner Flowers, seconded by Vice-Chair Eggers, that the item be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Chair Scott, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Flowers, Commissioner Latvala, Commissioner Nowicki, and Commissioner Scherer

Absent: 1 - Commissioner Peters

- 4. Amendment by resolution supplementing the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget recognizing unanticipated fund balance and unanticipated revenue and realigning reserves for requesting departments (Carryforward Amendment).

Resolution No. 25-15 approved, recognizing and appropriating unanticipated revenue and realigning funds, as outlined in the Staff Report. No correspondence has been received. No citizens appeared to be heard.

At the Chair’s request, Office of Management and Budget Director Chris Rose summarized the purpose of the proposed resolution; whereupon, responding to a query by Commissioner Eggers, Mr. Burton provided additional details related to the proposed resolution.

A motion was made by Vice-Chair Eggers, seconded by Commissioner Latvala, that the item be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Chair Scott, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Flowers, Commissioner Latvala, Commissioner Nowicki, and Commissioner Scherer

Absent: 1 - Commissioner Peters

- 5. Amendment by resolution supplementing the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget realigning reserves and recognizing unanticipated revenue for requesting departments and constitutional offices (Omnibus Amendment).

Resolution No. 25-16 approved, recognizing and appropriating unanticipated revenue and realigning funds, as outlined in the Staff Report. No correspondence has been received. No citizens appeared to be heard.

At the Chair’s request, Office of Management and Budget Director Chris Rose provided an overview of the proposed resolution.

A motion was made by Commissioner Flowers, seconded by Commissioner Latvala, that the item be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Chair Scott, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Flowers, Commissioner Latvala, Commissioner Nowicki, and Commissioner Scherer

Absent: 1 - Commissioner Peters

- 6. Ordinance amending the Pinellas County Code, Chapter 2, Article V, Division 2, Purchasing, Sections 2-156 through 2-198.

Ordinance No. 25-8 adopted, approving the amendment. No correspondence has been received. No citizens appeared to be heard.

A motion was made by Commissioner Flowers, seconded by Vice-Chair Eggers, that the item be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Chair Scott, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Flowers, Commissioner Latvala, Commissioner Nowicki, and Commissioner Scherer

Absent: 1 - Commissioner Peters

CONSENT AGENDA - Items 7 through 14

A motion was made by Vice-Chair Eggers, seconded by Commissioner Flowers, that the Consent Agenda items be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Chair Scott, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Flowers, Commissioner Latvala, Commissioner Nowicki, and Commissioner Scherer

Absent: 1 - Commissioner Peters

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT AND COMPTROLLER

- 7. Minutes of the regular meeting held December 17, 2024.

The item was approved as part of the Consent Agenda.

- 8. Vouchers and bills paid from January 5 through January 18, 2025.

Period January 5 - January 11, 2025

Accounts Payable - \$17,290,322.07

Payroll - None

Period January 12 - January 18, 2025

Accounts Payable - \$16,093,298.86

Payroll - \$4,879,579.84

The item was approved as part of the Consent Agenda.

Reports received for filing:

- 9. Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller Financial Statements, Year Ended September 30, 2024, with Summarized Financial Information for the Year Ended September 30, 2023.

The item was approved as part of the Consent Agenda.

- 10. Pinellas County Sheriff Financial Statements, September 30, 2024, with Summarized Financial Information for the Year Ended September 30, 2023.

The item was approved as part of the Consent Agenda.

- 11. Pinellas County Property Appraiser Financial Statements, September 30, 2024.

The item was approved as part of the Consent Agenda.

- 12. Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections Financial Statements, September 30, 2024.

The item was approved as part of the Consent Agenda.

- 13. Pinellas County Tax Collector Financial Statements, September 30, 2024.

The item was approved as part of the Consent Agenda.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR DEPARTMENTS

Public Works

- 14. Ratification of the approval by the County Administrator of the Sub-Recipient Management Cost Request for the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Application with the Florida Division of Emergency Management for construction of McKay Creek Operable Lake Controls and Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition Project.

Administrator’s approval ratified.

The item was approved as part of the Consent Agenda.

REGULAR AGENDA

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA - None

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR DEPARTMENTS

Administrative Services

- 15. Purchase authorization and agreements for requirements of heavy and light duty vehicles and equipment pursuant to the pricing of each cooperative contract.

(Contract No. 25-0101-PB) Purchase authorization and agreements approved in the not-to-exceed amount of \$8,691,664.28.

A motion was made by Commissioner Flowers, seconded by Vice-Chair Eggers, that the item be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Chair Scott, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Flowers, Commissioner Latvala, Commissioner Nowicki, and Commissioner Scherer

Absent: 1 - Commissioner Peters

Economic Development

16. State of Florida Department of Commerce Defense Grant Agreement for funding professional services for the STAR Center redevelopment Public Private Partnership planning and proposal.

Agreement approved in the total amount of \$250,000.00, effective July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025. County match of \$75,000.00 is required. Authority delegated to the County Administrator to negotiate and execute all agreements and documentation associated with the funding.

A motion was made by Vice-Chair Eggers, seconded by Commissioner Flowers, that the item be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Chair Scott, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Flowers, Commissioner Latvala, Commissioner Nowicki, and Commissioner Scherer

Absent: 1 - Commissioner Peters

Housing & Community Development

17. Resolution approving a Substantial Amendment to the 2024/2025 Annual Action Plan for the purpose of receiving Emergency Solutions Grant Rapid Unsheltered Survivor Housing funds. Resolution No. 25-17 adopted, as amended.

Commissioner Flowers made a motion for approval, which was seconded by Commissioner Latvala.

In response to queries by Chair Scott and Commissioner Nowicki, Housing and Community Development Planning Section Manager Joe Riddle provided information related to the purpose and utilization of the funds, noting that the funds will be applied towards the three priorities identified in the Action Plan: rapid rehousing, homeless prevention, and shelter operations; that applications for funding are scored and ranked by staff; and that they are not brought before the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) for approval.

In response to a query by Commissioner Nowicki, Mr. Riddle indicated that the priorities were provided by the Homeless Leadership Alliance of Pinellas (HLA); whereupon, Commissioner Nowicki expressed concerns regarding the potential termination of an agreement between the Pinellas Continuum of Care and the HLA.

Brief discussion ensued, with input by Messrs. Riddle and Burton and Attorney Crowell, regarding the possibility for individual approval of applications by the BCC, consideration of a condition to exclude specific organizations from the process, and potential delays in funding.

Commissioner Nowicki made a motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Scherer, to amend the resolution to reflect that staff will score the applications and present them to the BCC for approval; whereupon, Commissioners Flowers and Latvala indicated that they will accept the friendly amendment to their motion.

A motion was made by Commissioner Flowers, seconded by Commissioner Latvala, that the item be approved as amended. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Chair Scott, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Flowers, Commissioner Latvala, Commissioner Nowicki, and Commissioner Scherer

Absent: 1 - Commissioner Peters

COUNTY ATTORNEY

- 18. Proposed settlement in the case of Wrenn Smotherman v. Pinellas County; Workers' Compensation Case No. 21-012773RLY.

Settlement approved in accordance with the confidential memorandum dated February 11, 2025.

A motion was made by Commissioner Latvala, seconded by Commissioner Flowers, that the item be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Chair Scott, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Flowers, Commissioner Latvala, Commissioner Nowicki, and Commissioner Scherer

Absent: 1 - Commissioner Peters

- 19. County Attorney Reports - None

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

- 20. County Administrator Reports

Departure of Barbra Hernandez from Communications Department

Mr. Burton expressed appreciation to Communications Director Barbra Hernandez for her service and wished her well in her next career.

COUNTY COMMISSION

- 21. Appointments to the Lealman Community Redevelopment Area Advisory Committee (Board of County Commissioners as a whole).

Tyler Payne appointed for a three-year term beginning on the date of appointment.

A motion was made by Vice-Chair Eggers, seconded by Commissioner Flowers, that the item be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Chair Scott, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Flowers, Commissioner Latvala, Commissioner Nowicki, and Commissioner Scherer

Absent: 1 - Commissioner Peters

22. County Commission New Business:

Pertinent and timely Committee/Board updates, policy considerations, administrative/procedural considerations, and other new business.

Commissioner Scherer requested approval of the following Board appointments:

- James Thomas Riley to the Feather Sound Community Services District
- Joe Klinger to the Historic Preservation Board

A motion was made by Commissioner Scherer, seconded by Commissioner Latvala, that the appointments be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Chair Scott, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Flowers, Commissioner Latvala, Commissioner Nowicki, and Commissioner Scherer

Absent: 1 - Commissioner Peters

The Commissioners reported on the activities of their assigned boards and committees and discussed various topics, as follows:

Commissioner Scherer

- Meeting with Senator Rand Paul
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection Erosion Control Line Public Workshop and Hearing
- Meeting with San Pedro, Belize Mayor Gualberto Nuñez regarding a prospective sister city agreement with the City of Clearwater
- Meeting with Evara Health staff
- Consolidated Justice Information Systems meeting
- Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA)
- Dr. Carter G. Woodson African American Museum “Harriet Tubman: The Beacon of Hope” Sculpture Unveiling
- Tour of Morton Plant Hospital in Clearwater
- Pinellas County Code Enforcement ride-along

Commissioner Latvala

- Congratulations and best wishes to Communications Director Barbra Hernandez
- Joint Board of County Commissioners (BCC) meeting with State Delegation
- Ribbon-cutting and maiden voyage for Clearwater Ferry Expansion in partnership with PSTA
- Florida Holocaust Museum “To Life” Annual Benefit
- Youth Advisory Committee tour of the Pinellas County Regional 9-1-1 Communications Center
- Florida Seating expansion ribbon-cutting ceremony
- Passing of Anthony “Tony” Aloizakis, owner of Emily’s Downtown Clearwater Restaurant

Commissioner Nowicki

- Tour of Sunstar Paramedics
- USA BMX Florida State Championship Series
- Meeting with Assistant to the County Administrator Amy Davis
- Affordable Housing Advisory Committee
- St. Petersburg State of the City Address
- Tour of Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital
- Third Annual Lealman Honey and Arts Festival
- Recognition of Mosquito Control and Vegetation Management Section Manager Alissa Berro
- Philadelphia Phillies welcome dinner at Sandpearl Resort
- Congratulations to Executive Aide Jeffrey Fusco on his upcoming marriage

Commissioner Flowers

- Florida Association of Counties Tech Summit
- Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance 10th Annual Legacy Awards Dinner
- Dr. Carter G. Woodson African American Museum "Harriet Tubman: The Beacon of Hope" Sculpture Unveiling
- Area Agency on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas
- Human trafficking panel
- Conversation with Pinellas County Property Appraiser Mike Twitty
- Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council
- Upcoming Pinellas Opportunity Council, Inc. Partners Council Breakfast
- Congratulations to individuals recognized by Congresswoman Kathy Castor for outstanding community service
- Best wishes to CareerSource Hillsborough Pinellas Executive Assistant to Chief Executive Officer Leah Geis

Commissioner Eggers

- Upcoming Palm Harbor Little League Spring Opening Day
- Upcoming Whispering Souls African American Cemetery historical marker dedication
- Tri-County BCC meeting
- Meeting with Westchase Community Association, Inc.
- BCC Strategic Planning Session
- Request for a letter of support from AmSkills regarding State appropriation
- Congratulations and best wishes to Communications Director Barbra Hernandez
- Upcoming John Morrone Legacy Foundation 29th Annual Law Enforcement and First Responder Appreciation Dinner

Chair Scott

- PSTA
- Soft launch of PSTA's Grouper Airport Express
- Joint BCC meeting with State Delegation
- Interview with *Florida's Voice*
- Press conference regarding Michelin Guide expansion into St. Petersburg
- St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce 126th Annual Meeting
- Pinellas Federated Republican Women's meeting
- Third Annual Lealman Honey and Arts Festival
- Florida Seating expansion ribbon-cutting ceremony
- Appreciation to Commissioner Flowers for participating in Pinellas County Animal Services' canine/Commissioner photoshoot
- Upcoming Whispering Souls African American Cemetery historical marker dedication

Referring to a discussion from the January 28 BCC meeting regarding an Early Learning Coalition (ELC) appointment, Chair Scott indicated that he met with County Attorney Jewel White to discuss the matter; that there is no conflict with Commissioner Scherer remaining on the ELC as the gubernatorial appointee; and that Commissioner Nowicki expressed interest in serving as the BCC appointee; whereupon, Commissioner Nowicki confirmed that he is still willing to serve.

A motion was made by Commissioner Nowicki, seconded by Commissioner Scherer, that he be appointed to the ELC. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Chair Scott, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Flowers, Commissioner Latvala, Commissioner Nowicki, and Commissioner Scherer

Absent: 1 - Commissioner Peters

Chair Scott referenced comments made by Commissioner Eggers related to a request from AmSkills for a letter of support and indicated that he would like to have a discussion regarding how to handle such requests going forward. Brief discussion ensued, with input by Mr. Burton and Attorney Crowell, regarding the specificity of requests, the ability of Commissioners to write individual letters of support, Sunshine Law, and project funding; whereupon, Chair Scott indicated that requests for joint letters of support received by the Chair will be discussed at BCC meetings, while requests received by individual Commissioners may be handled separately.

Referring to repeated public comments made by Ronald Walker, Largo, Chair Scott indicated that Mr. Walker has now also sent an email suggesting that the Board has knowledge of supposed theft of funds from the County and has not taken any action; whereupon, Chair Scott related that Mr. Walker is suggesting that the County enter into a contract for a pre-arranged finder's fee; and that he would then provide more information related to the theft. Chair Scott also indicated that the Division of Inspector General's office has met with him; and that Attorney White sent Mr. Walker a letter which explained that the County does not have mechanisms in place related to finder's fees or whistleblowers.

Chair Scott indicated that he would like to discuss whether the members have any interest in creating a whistleblower mechanism; whereupon, discussion ensued, with input by Mr. Burton and Attorney Crowell, regarding various topics, including false claims frameworks, nature of the claims made by Mr. Walker, existing mechanisms to protect the public's interests, and protections for employees who bring forth issues of illegality or misuse.

Commissioner Nowicki expressed his support for a local ordinance to encourage whistleblowing and related that he had a recent conversation with Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller Ken Burke regarding his openness to discussing such an ordinance; whereupon, Mr. Burton, with input by Attorney Crowell, provided information regarding possible challenges associated with creating a program related to whistleblowing and indicated that he will speak with Mr. Burke.

Chair Scott expressed appreciation to Pinellas County Sheriff's Office deputies for their presence at BCC meetings.

ADJOURNMENT - 12:21 P.M.

Chair

ATTEST: KEN BURKE, CLERK

By _____
Deputy Clerk