

Pinellas County



Minutes - Final

Thursday, April 16, 2020

9:30 A.M.

Virtual Regular Meeting

Board of County Commissioners

Pat Gerard, Chair
Dave Eggers, Vice-Chair
Charlie Justice
Janet C. Long
Kathleen Peters
Karen Williams Seel
Kenneth T. Welch

ROLL CALL - 9:30 A.M.

Present: 7 - Chair Pat Gerard, Vice-Chair Dave Eggers, Charlie Justice, Janet C. Long, Kathleen Peters, Karen Williams Seel, and Kenneth T. Welch

Others Present: Barry A. Burton, County Administrator; Jewel White, County Attorney; Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller; and Amelia Hanks, Board Reporter

Office of Technology and Innovation Director Bryan Zumwalt introduced himself and announced that he would be the Technology Moderator for the virtual meeting; and that Chief Assistant County Attorney Don Crowell would serve as Process Moderator; whereupon, he conducted a roll call of the members.

1. Local State of Emergency

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Burton presented a timeline of actions taken in response to COVID-19. He reviewed projections with regard to hospital capacity and case counts, and indicated that the anticipated peak will occur on April 26; that approximately one percent of the County's population has been tested to date; and that a decision to ease restrictions will be based on a sustained reduction in cases and adequate testing and treatment capacity; whereupon, he reviewed possible next steps, noting that in order for the restrictions to be lifted, the Governor will have to modify or revoke his order.

At the request of Mr. Burton, Attorney White discussed the Governor's order, opining that the County could be stricter than the State, but it cannot deem a business or service essential if the Governor has not. She related that the County has received its first lawsuit regarding closures, and Mr. Burton provided input.

In response to queries by the members, Mr. Burton related that he and the Sheriff have made decisions based on their best effort to interpret and implement the Governor's order; and that there are resources available for businesses and individuals affected by COVID-19; whereupon, Mr. Burke noted that the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act will provide federal funding to help people in need.

In response to query by Commissioner Welch, Department of Health in Pinellas County Director Dr. Ulyee Choe indicated that the County and the hospitals are in communication; that BayCare has a rapid 15-minute test; and that other hospital systems are working to develop similar tests.

Discussion ensued, and in response to query by Commissioner Justice, Mr. Burton related that he will find out how people can contact the State Coordinating Officer regarding the list of essential services. Later in the meeting, he provided the number, and Attorney White provided input.

Referring to her comments at the April 13 meeting, Commissioner Peters reiterated her opinion that condominium residents should be allowed to use their pools, and following input by Mr. Burton, Sheriff Gualtieri, and Dr. Choe, she moved that the pools be allowed to open. Later in the meeting, Chair Gerard confirmed that the motion had died for lack of a second.

Commissioner Long indicated that the Board has historically based its votes on the metrics and data provided; and that she would not vote for a motion not supported by facts. Commissioners Eggers and Justice concurred, noting that the Board should continue to follow the numbers provided by Dr. Choe.

In response to query by Commissioner Peters, Mr. Burton related that staff is working on ideas with regard to an exit plan; that the first step would likely be to reconsider the Safer-at-Home order; and that specific strategies would then be developed to open beaches and pools.

Commissioner Seel related that she had received a roadmap to reopening from a member of the medical community in Pinellas County; and that she would forward the information to the members; whereupon, Commissioner Eggers indicated that he believes the Board should be cautious about acting too soon; and the residents of Pinellas County should be aware of any plan moving forward.

Sheriff Gualtieri stated that he believes the Commissioners made the right choice in adopting the Safer-at-Home order; that violations were found in less than one percent of the 4,000 businesses checked; and that he recommends reinstating its terms once the Governor's order is rescinded, modified, or expired.

In response to Chair Gerard's call for public comment, the following individuals expressed their concerns:

Tom Rask, unincorporated Pinellas County
Ken DuLac, St. Petersburg
Tammy Vasquez, Treasure Island
Neil Valk, Palm Harbor
Jonathan Loos, Madeira Beach

Scheril Murray Powell, representing Sunflora Inc.
Sharon Calvert, Tierra Verde
Robert Schuler, St. Petersburg
Michael Shelley, North Redington Beach
Danielle Ciliento, Belleair
Matt Chapman, Clearwater
Cameron Kelly, Palm Harbor
Frank Orobello, St. Petersburg
Brian Sykes, St. Petersburg
James Keen, St. Petersburg
Marilyn Turman, Clearwater
Dan Berlin, St. Petersburg
Mary Riggin, Safety Harbor
Scott Schuyler, St. Petersburg
Frank Hibbard, Clearwater
Gwen Douse, Clearwater Beach
Tiffany Beach, Clearwater Beach
Vivian Marran, St. Petersburg
Chris Mansueto, Safety Harbor

Commissioner Eggers related that the Board listens to the concerns expressed by the speakers; and that it would be appropriate to have further discussion regarding some of the issues at a future meeting. Chair Gerard concurred, noting that she does not wish to address the matters on an individual basis; and that she believes the Sheriff and Administrator have done a good job in consistently applying their interpretation of the Governor's order; whereupon, Sheriff Gualtieri indicated that he and Mr. Burton will be answering questions from the public on Facebook Live at 5:00 P.M. today.

Discussion ensued, and Commissioner Welch indicated that staff has done its best to respond to the citizens' concerns related to the Governor's imperfect order; that the order will be expiring in the next two weeks; and that he would prefer that staff focus on implementing the relief program, and Chair Gerard concurred.

A motion was made by Commissioner Welch, seconded by Commissioner Seel, that Local State of Emergency order be extended. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Chair Gerard, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Justice, Commissioner Long, Commissioner Peters, Commissioner Seel, and Commissioner Welch

Resolution No. 20-28 adopted ratifying, restating, readopting, and extending the local state of emergency established in Resolution No. 20-16, as well as all resolutions and orders issued pursuant thereto, until 3:00 P.M. on April 24, 2020.

2. Resolution Directing Staff to Develop Programs to Address Economic Impacts to Businesses and Individuals in Pinellas County and Authorizing the County Administrator to Sign Certification Form and Submit to United States Department of Treasury to Receive Coronavirus Relief Fund Payment.

Mr. Burton indicated that the federal government has passed the CARES Act to provide funding to assist individuals and businesses financially impacted by the COVID-19 disease; and that although the guidelines have not yet been published, staff is requesting permission to proceed with designing the programs, as follows:

- Utilizing the existing adult emergency financial assistance program, provide direct payments of up to \$4,000 per qualifying family to assist with expenses such as rent and utilities.
- Provide \$5,000 payments to qualifying businesses with 25 or fewer employees having a physical location in Pinellas County.

Noting that the grant application is due on April 17, Mr. Burton presented a resolution authorizing him to certify the County's eligibility to receive funds.

Responding to query by Commissioner Eggers, Mr. Burton related that the County would be administering the programs on a countywide basis in order to avoid delay; and that he will be speaking with city representatives to receive their input following today's meeting.

Discussion ensued, and Mr. Burton provided additional information regarding the programs and responded to queries by the members.

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

Aye: 7 - Chair Gerard, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Justice, Commissioner Long, Commissioner Peters, Commissioner Seel, and Commissioner Welch

Resolution No. 20-29 adopted authorizing the County Administrator to certify local government eligibility for the CARES Act and directing staff to develop programs to address community needs that may be funded from CARES Act proceeds.

Meeting Recessed: 12:06 P.M.

Meeting Reconvened: 12:17 P.M.

3. Agenda Briefing

Mr. Burton reviewed agenda items to be addressed at the April 21 BCC meeting. With input by staff, he responded to queries by the members regarding the following items, and Attorney White indicated that she will contact the Commissioners individually to brief them with respect to the settlement proposed under Item No. 19.

Item No. 13 - Change order to the contract with American Facility Services, Inc.

Item No. 16 - Change order to the contract with Granite Inliner, LLC.

4. County Commission Board Reports and Miscellaneous Items

The members provided updates regarding their assigned boards and committees and commented on various topics, as follows:

Commissioner Eggers

- Forward Pinellas, Tampa Bay Water Board

Commissioner Long

- Tampa Bay Regional Transit Authority, Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
- Fraudulent emails and telephone calls regarding CARES Act payments
- John Morrone Foundation mental health program funding for first responders and law enforcement personnel

Commissioner Justice

- Area Agency on Aging

Commissioner Seel

- Juvenile Welfare Board, Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority
- Executive Policy Group updates

Commissioner Peters

- Early Learning Coalition
- Recent Mental Health Forum

Commissioner Eggers thanked the Administrator, Sheriff, and their team members for their work, and Mr. Burton recognized the assistance provided by partner agencies.

ADJOURNMENT - 12:39 P.M.

Chair

ATTEST: KEN BURKE, CLERK

By _____
Deputy Clerk