

Pinellas County



Minutes - Final

Thursday, August 27, 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; Jeanette Phillips, Chief Deputy Clerk; and Amelia Hanks, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk

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.

Referring to a recent newspaper article, Mr. Burton made a statement regarding the County's potential purchase of the Gladys Douglas Hackworth property in the City of Dunedin. He indicated that the property meets many of the criteria developed for County land purchases; that there is a possibility of a joint venture with the City of Dunedin; that he and City Manager Jennifer Bramley will meet with the estate representative today; and that he will continue to update the Board regarding the matter.

1. Citizens To Be Heard

David Waddell, Clearwater
Karen Mullins, Dunedin
David Happe, Tarpon Springs
Dawn Bohler, St. Petersburg
Barbara Walker, Palm Harbor
Yvette Gaugh, St. Pete Beach
Nicole Mattheus, Dunedin
Kathryn Smith, Palm Harbor
Courtney Murphy, Dunedin
Dave Sillman, Tarpon Springs
Scott Papes, Palm Harbor
Yvonne Maxwell, Largo
Aden Barnes, Largo
Allison Messina, St. Petersburg
Linsey Grove, St. Petersburg
Karen Mariscal, Clearwater
Karen Nasello, St. Petersburg
Aurora Quiel, Clearwater
Amy Wright, St. Petersburg
Terri Cunningham, Tarpon Springs
Mitch Shaffer, Dunedin

Diane Lebedeff, Safety Harbor
Larri Gerson, Dunedin
Carla Rudolph, St. Petersburg

2. Local State of Emergency

Mr. Burton related that while COVID-19 numbers have declined, the county is still averaging over 100 new cases per day; that it will take time to determine the impact of the schools opening; and that the mask mandate and seating requirement have had a positive impact and should be continued; whereupon, he recommended adopting the proposed resolution extending the Local State of Emergency until September 4.

Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County Director Dr. Ulyee Choe discussed trends pertaining to percent positivity, hospital capacity, and fatalities, noting that the seven-day rolling positivity rate is currently at 3.2 percent. He stated that most experts believe there will continue to be spikes throughout the course of the pandemic, and urged everyone to continue to practice social distancing and wear a mask.

The Commissioners expressed support for extending the Local State of Emergency and maintaining the current County mandates, and responded to comments and concerns expressed by members of the public.

Topics of discussion included the following:

- Following the advice of healthcare professionals
- Opening of Pinellas County Schools; mask and social distancing compliance
- Avoiding spikes that could negatively affect local businesses
- Factors to consider as a basis for future decisions regarding the mask mandate
- Possible increase in cases due to the reopening of schools
- Continuing current safety practices while monitoring data trends

In response to query by Commissioner Eggers, Emergency Medical Services Medical Director Dr. Angus Jameson indicated that COVID-related hospitalizations have plateaued at approximately 150, 50 percent higher than in the spring; that there has been a significant mortality rate in Pinellas County; and that there is not an end date in sight for the virus; whereupon, he emphasized that the medical community is confident that asymptomatic transmission of the virus does occur.

Commissioner Peters indicated that it would not be unreasonable to come up with a plan for moving forward and communicate it to the public to provide expectations and reduce anxiety, and Mr. Burton confirmed that the Executive Policy Group has set criteria and is monitoring conditions “on the ground” daily in order to make informed decisions and recommendations for changes as they are warranted.

A motion was made by Commissioner Welch, seconded by Commissioner Long, that the order extending the Local State of Emergency 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. 20-76 adopted extending the Local State of Emergency established in Resolution No. 20-16 until 3:00 P.M. on September 4, 2020.

3. Cares Act Update

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation, Office of Management and Budget Strategic Performance Manager Aubrey Phillips provided a status report pertaining to the various Pinellas CARES programs for individuals and businesses affected by COVID-19, as follows:

Individual & Family Financial Assistance - Over \$8.1 million has been awarded for overdue housing and utility payments, benefitting nearly 3,000 households

Nonprofit Partnership Fund - Grant application is available on the program website and information will be posted as funds are awarded; application review begins today

COVID-19 Mitigation & Response - Provides personal protective equipment, testing, and contact tracing for the community and reimburses local governments for FEMA-eligible expenses

Licensed Childcare Facility Grants - Helps ensure adequate childcare capacity to support the workforce; 146 grants approved, totaling \$980,000

Workforce Re-employment & Training - Launching soon to help those displaced from their jobs due to COVID-19

Local Business Grants - Initial program provided \$16.2 million to over 3,000 small businesses; new program expanding eligibility, including home-based businesses, to be announced next week

Ms. Phillips reported that the existing Adult Emergency Financial Assistance Program, operated by 2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares, provides CARES Act housing and utility assistance along with wraparound crisis intervention services; that County staff has been working collaboratively with 2-1-1 to implement process improvements including streamlined documentation, additional staffing, and increased client communication; and that the program web page is being updated to provide clients with simple instructions to obtain needed services. Referring to a graph depicting weekly payments made under the program, she related that process improvements implemented the first week of July have greatly increased administrative efficiency, increasing payments by 350 percent.

In response to comments by Commissioner Eggers, Mr. Burton and Ms. Phillips related that 2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares has added staff to help reduce the backlog under the Financial Assistance program; that case tracking tools have been implemented; and that website

updates will improve communication with the applicants. Human Services Director Daisy Rodriguez indicated that staff is developing a communication tool or document for clients to submit to their landlord or utility company indicating that they have applied and are awaiting review; and that it is important to submit all documents at once.

In response to queries by Commissioners Eggers and Welch, Mr. Burton and Ms. Phillips confirmed that there is no way to cross-compare with other jurisdictions to determine whether applicants have already received assistance; and that people are confused by the various federal, state, and local programs; whereupon, Ms. Benedict clarified that the Cities of Largo and St. Petersburg contact 2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares to verify whether payment has been made.

Ms. Phillips stated that it is difficult to determine the total number of individuals currently in queue for the Financial Assistance program, noting that many applicants have failed to respond to information requests, and agreed to provide further information. Stressing that the Pinellas CARES programs are available countywide, she urged anyone needing assistance due to COVID-19 to visit the cares.pinellas.gov website.

Commissioner Eggers expressed concern regarding the requirement that CARES Act funding be distributed by the end of the year and the possible need to set a cutoff date for applications. He related that Congressman Gus Bilirakis told him here is a good chance the date will be extended, and stressed that the County should continue to pursue the matter in hopes of a three- to six-month extension; whereupon, Ms. Phillips indicated that staff is working with consultants to monitor what is happening at the federal level, and will present a program update to the Board in September.

4. Budget Information Session

Safety and Emergency Services

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation, Safety and Emergency Services Director Jim Fogarty discussed an update to the proposed Emergency Medical Services (EMS) budget to fund an additional seat for City of Largo Unit 38. He related that he has been working with the Fire Chief and his staff for over three years to develop alternative strategies to avoid adding capacity to the system, and everything possible has been done; and that similar efforts are ongoing with many of the other districts.

Mr. Fogarty proposed that the additional Largo 38 seat be funded at 50 percent for Fiscal Year 2021 at approximately \$286,000, and at 100 percent for Fiscal Year 2022, for a total of \$571,352. He displayed a chart showing the EMS Fund forecast through Fiscal Year 2026, indicating that the department will attempt to make adjustments to revenue and expenditures to change the slope of the curves.

Referring to a slide titled *Relevant Requirements*, Mr. Fogarty presented information in support of the proposed increase, noting that at 13.7 calls per day, Largo 38 has exceeded the requirement for Staffing Level C for several years, qualifying it for the proposed additional seat.

Mr. Burton related that the process used to determine staffing levels has been in place for approximately five years; that he has had conversations with City Managers and gotten different perspectives; and that he believes there are opportunities to work with the City Managers and Fire Chiefs to refine the ordinance to address gaps.

Responding to query by Commissioner Long, Mr. Fogarty and Human Services Director Daisy Rodriguez related that in general, the closest unit will respond to a 9-1-1 medical emergency call; and that a fire emergency has a different response structure; whereupon, Mr. Fogarty explained the concept of priority dispatch, stating that the agencies that have implemented it have had tremendous success.

Commissioner Eggers indicated that he brought the matter up last week after being contacted by a fire district regarding positions requested by Largo, Palm Harbor, and Dunedin; that he has no issue with the system, which was designed by the participants and staff and appears to be working; and that his concern is with the funding issue, noting the importance of clear communication.

Thereupon, Mr. Burton indicated that staff will prepare a budget to reflect the discussion and recommendations brought forward today, and no objections were noted.

Penny for Pinellas

Capital Improvement Program Budget Manager Jacqueline Trainer referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Penny for Pinellas Community Projects* and related that the Fiscal Year 2021 strategy is to try to fund the projects on the original 2017 published list; that dollars are allocated for design to update the project scope and cost; and that community needs will be re-evaluated and balanced with available funding.

Ms. Trainer reviewed projects included in the 2017 list that are scheduled for design in the Fiscal Years 2021-2026 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) plan, noting that the Lealman Exchange has been completed; and that partner facility leases have been amended with regard to capital projects. She related that there are projects not on the 2017 list that remain in the system as requests for review and prioritization on an annual basis.

Referring to concerns expressed by Commissioner Eggers at the August 20 meeting, Ms. Trainer related that the Fiscal Years 2020-2025 CIP six-year plan did not include Community Projects; that the December 2019 ten-year Penny plan included approved CIP projects, along with a listing of all submitted Community Projects; and that the 2021-2026 CIP six-year plan includes Community Projects scheduled for design funding, noting that projections will be updated based on the financial impacts of COVID-19.

Mr. Burton clarified that nothing was removed from the ten-year Penny plan; that the projects are either in the six-year window or will be retained for future consideration; that projections will be revised annually, particularly in light of COVID-19; and that staff is aware of community needs and will consider them in the context of other priorities.

Later in the meeting, Commissioner Eggers discussed the following matters, and Chair Gerard and Mr. Burton provided input.

- Value of Assistant County Administrator positions in meeting the needs of their respective communities
- Request for an environmental land presentation at a future meeting
- Borrowing from other funds to advance Penny projects

In response to queries by Commissioner Welch, Mr. Burton indicated that 2021 project funding is based on a projected six-percent decrease in Penny revenue; and that the ten-year plan will be adjusted as necessary going forward.

5. John Morroni Legacy Foundation - Mental Health Initiative Update (Commissioner Long)

Commissioner Long provided information regarding the mental health pilot program established by the John Morroni Legacy Foundation for Pinellas County first responders and law enforcement personnel, indicating that the report relates to the status of the project at the end of July.

Noting that the program has been a tremendous success as a result of the stressors that first responders and law enforcement have been under during COVID-19, Commissioner Long related that it has been necessary to put a cap on the ability to accept further patients; that she is working with the Sheriff on a funding strategy to keep the program in place; and that the annual event benefiting the foundation will be postponed.

6. County Commission New Business Items

Commissioner Justice noted that the expanded Wall Springs Park opened on August 1, representing a 125-acre addition to the County's Parks and Recreation portfolio, noting that it won a Project of the Year award from the American Public Works Association.

Chair Gerard indicated that she is unable to serve on the Canvassing Board for the November General Election cycle; and that Commissioner Seel has volunteered to serve as a substitute member.

A motion was made by Commissioner Welch, seconded by Commissioner Justice, that Commissioner Karen Williams Seel be appointed as a substitute member for the Board of County Commissioners. 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


Discussion ensued, and Chair Gerard related that former Commissioner Susan Latvala has agreed to serve as an alternate member. Attorney White provided input and explained the procedure for designation of members, noting that she will be asking the Chief Judge to appoint Commissioner Latvala and former St. Petersburg City Councilmember Herb Polson, who will serve as substitute for the Supervisor of Elections, who is a candidate.

Commissioner Gerard related that the Board of County Commissioners is required to appoint a representative to a regional affordable housing advisory board and volunteered to serve in that capacity for the remainder of the current year, noting that there are no meetings scheduled.

A motion was made by Vice-Chair Eggers, seconded by Commissioner Long, that Commissioner Pat Gerard be appointed as the Board's representative. The motion carried by the following vote:

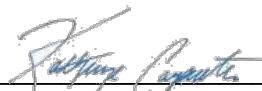
Aye: 7 - Chair Gerard, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Justice, Commissioner Long, Commissioner Peters, Commissioner Seel, and Commissioner Welch

ADJOURNMENT - 12:19 P.M.


Chair



ATTEST: KEN BURKE, CLERK

By 
Deputy Clerk