

# **Pinellas County**

*333 Chestnut Street  
Clearwater, FL 33756*



## **Minutes - Final**

**Wednesday, June 21, 2023**

**9:30 A.M.**

**Budget Information Session**

**Palm Room**

## **Board of County Commissioners**

*Janet C. Long, Chairman  
Kathleen Peters, Vice-Chair  
Dave Eggers  
René Flowers  
Charlie Justice  
Chris Latvala  
Brian Scott*

**ROLL CALL - 9:32 A.M.**

**Present:** Chair Janet C. Long, Vice-Chair Kathleen Peters, Commissioner Dave Eggers, Commissioner René Flowers, Commissioner Charlie Justice, Commissioner Chris Latvala, and Commissioner Brian Scott

**Others Present:** Barry A. Burton, County Administrator; Jewel White, County Attorney; and Shirley Westfall, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk

Deviating from the agenda, Chair Long related that Tourist Development Council (TDC) member Michael Williams has changed positions at the Innisbrook Golf Resort; and that he is still eligible to serve as a TDC member and would like to continue to do so; whereupon, Attorney White conveyed information regarding TDC membership eligibility, and the members came to a consensus for Mr. Williams to remain on the TDC.

**1. Article V (Information Only)**

Following introductory comments by Mr. Burton, Office of Management and Budget Director Chris Rose discussed the history of Article V and noted that the documents provided are informational only.

**2. County Attorney**

Budget and Financial Management Analyst Shane Kunze reviewed the Department's budget summary, Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 budget drivers, and topics of discussion including salary increases to reduce turnover.

Attorney White introduced Department Administrative Manager Melissa Kennedy and related that the Department's accomplishments will be included in a memo distributed prior to the upcoming County Attorney Oversight Committee meeting; and that reasons for staff turnover include retirements and competitive salaries in the private sector; whereupon, she, with input from Mr. Burton, responded to queries by the members, and Chair Long commended the work and expertise of the County Attorney's Office.

**3. Tax Collector**

Tax Collector Charles W. Thomas discussed the Department's preliminary budget, noting that the 3.78% increase is primarily due to a capital asset expense of \$600,000 to renovate the mid-county service center and salary increases granted to retain employees. He provided information regarding the Department's fees and commissions; whereupon, discussion ensued regarding the service center renovations, available online transactions, and expanding the Department's vehicle registration renewal kiosks to more Publix locations.

4. State Attorney

State Attorney Bruce Bartlett indicated that his submitted budget proposal for FY24 has an increase of approximately \$81,000 over last year due to technology and automation needs. He reviewed the Department's advancement of technology completed over the past several years and informed the members that a budget amendment will be forthcoming in FY23 to replace radios in the vehicles of law enforcement investigators; whereupon, discussion ensued regarding staffing and turnover.

5. Judiciary - Including Law Library

Chief Judge Anthony Rondolino, Sixth Judicial Circuit, introduced Pinellas-Pasco Circuit Judge Shawn Crane as his successor to the position of Chief Judge and provided information regarding Article V and the transition of financial responsibilities for judicial operations being shifted between the County and the State. He reviewed the Department's operating budget analysis and two decision packages requesting two new positions to accommodate a Security Analyst and a Family Support/Parenting Time Coordinator; whereupon, discussion ensued.

Chief Judge Rondolino thanked the members for their continued support, and Commissioner Eggers and Chair Long commended him for his service.

6. Public Defender

Public Defender Sara Mollo introduced several members of her staff and discussed the Department's purpose, operating budget analysis, and decision packages for FY24; whereupon, she pointed out that challenges include staff retention, salaries, and workload.

Mitigation, Advocacy, and Treatment Team Bureau Chief Ashley Najjar Roura reviewed court services and highlighted the need for additional funding for treatment courts including Mental Health Court, Veterans' Treatment Court, and Adult Drug Court; whereupon, she, with input from Ms. Mollo, responded to queries by the members.

7. Convention and Visitors Bureau

Referring to a document titled *Convention & Visitors Bureau*, Management and Budget Manager Jim Abernathy provided information on how the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) is funded and reviewed the budget summary, FY24 budget drivers, and topics for discussion, including personnel services, operating expenses, and beach renourishment costs.

Mr. Abernathy referred to the Capital Funding Program Chart distributed at the meeting and reviewed funding for beach renourishment as well as other projects, noting that funding requests for the Philadelphia Phillies Spring Training Complex, the St. Petersburg Historical Society, and the Dali Museum were conceptually approved but are not included in the Department's FY24 budget request; and that once an agreement is finalized between the County and the requesting organizations, funding for the projects will be included in future budget requests or in a budget amendment if needed.

Mr. Abernathy discussed staffing and provided a summary of the 12 decision packages being requested, noting that the total for all requests is \$8.4 million in Tourist Development Tax (TDT) funds, with \$8.1 million being recurring costs.

Responding to a query by Commissioner Eggers, Mr. Burton confirmed that 11 positions within the Department are vacant; that staffing has been an on-going issue; and that Brian Lowack was recently designated as Interim President and CEO of the CVB to resolve that issue; whereupon, he noted that further discussion with staff and the Tourist Development Council regarding prioritization among the decision packages is needed.

Mr. Lowack praised the CVB staff and updated the members on the strategy to fill the vacant positions. He provided information regarding the Elite Events funding program application process, updated capital project guidelines, and the need for increased digital and traditional advertising and marketing to continue to attract tourists; whereupon, with input from Mr. Burton and Assistant County Administrator Kevin Knutson, Mr. Lowack responded to queries by the members, and discussion ensued regarding advertising, spending and beach renourishment.

**Meeting Recessed: 12:11 A.M.**

**Meeting Reconvened: 12:53 PM**

**8. Public Works - Including Transportation and Environmental**

Referring to a document titled *Public Works*, Budget and Financial Management Analyst Charlie Jenkins, Office of Management and Budget, reviewed the Department's operating budget summary, FY24 budget drivers, decision packages, proposed fee changes, and topics of discussion including personnel services, operating expenses, and other topics; whereupon, discussion ensued regarding the proposed budget and the status of the Transportation Trust Fund, with input from Public Works Director Kelli Hammer Levy and Messrs. Burton and Rose.

Ms. Levy reviewed the Department's accomplishments and work plan items, and responded to queries by the members regarding community engagement, air quality, and other topics.

9. Governmental Capital Improvement Program Budget Information Session: Penny for Pinellas

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation, Budget and Financial Management Analyst Andrew Brown, Office of Management and Budget, discussed the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) governmental projects for FY24 -FY29 which are primarily funded by Penny for Pinellas. He highlighted the funding sources and uses, noting that a detailed report of the budget for each project is included in the meeting materials; and that the fund's ten-year forecast is balanced. He reviewed the 10-year estimates for the Penny for Pinellas fund, new project requests, the Capital Fund forecast, Penny fund distribution commitments from 2017, the 2024 recommended Penny fund distribution, and projects scheduled beyond FY30; whereupon, he, with input from Mr. Burton and Ms. Levy, responded to queries by the members.

During discussion and in response to a query by Chair Long, Director of Communications Barbra Hernandez, with input from Mr. Burton, provided information on communication efforts to the public regarding projects funded by the Penny for Pinellas fund including signs, mailings, videos, and other initiatives.

**ADJOURNMENT - 2:36 P.M.**