

PLANNERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Meeting Summary
June 1, 2026

The Planners Advisory Committee held its June 1, 2026 meeting in person in the Palm Room at the Pinellas County Communications Building located at 333 Chestnut Street, Clearwater.

The Chair, Andrew Morris, called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. and the members introduced themselves for the record.

Committee Members in Attendance Included:

Andrew Morris, Maryellen Edwards, Danielle Stewart, Whitney Clark, Mark Griffin, Tatiana Childress, Frances Leong-Sharp, Cecilia Chen, Tom Scofield, Gil Martinez, Dave Dixon, Lauren Wolf, Marcie Stenmark, Gianna DiBrizzi, Todd Biron, Erica Lindquist, Richard Hartman, Craig Southern, Jacob Labutka (arrived 1:34), Christina Porter (arrived 1:38)

Forward Pinellas Staff in Attendance Included:

Rodney Chatman, Emma Wennick, Linda Fisher, Nousheen Rahman, and Maria Kelly.

Others in Attendance Included:

2. Approval of Minutes from the May 4, 2026 PAC Meeting [Vote: 13-0]

Motion: Mark Griffin

Second: Tatiana Childress

3. REVIEW OF FORWARD PINELLAS AGENDA FOR JUNE 8, 2026
PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

3A1. Case CW 26-07 – City of Clearwater [Vote: 14-0]

A presentation was given by Lauren Wolf, Clearwater City staff, and questions were asked and answered. Motion by Mark Griffin and a second by Maryellen Edwards to recommend approval.

3A2. Case CW 26-08 – City of Clearwater [Vote: 16-0]

A presentation was given by Marcie Stenmark, Clearwater City staff, and questions were asked and answered. Motion by Mark Griffin and a second by Danielle Stewart to recommend approval.

3A3. Case CW 26-09 – Town of Redington Shores [Vote: 16-0]

A presentation was given by Dave Dixon, Redington Shores Town staff, and questions were asked and answered. Motion by Marcie Stenmark and a second by Mark Griffin to recommend approval.

3A4. Case CW 26-10 – City of Pinellas Park [Vote: 16-0]

A presentation was given by Danielle Stewart and Todd Biron, Pinellas Park City staff, and questions were asked and answered. Motion by Mark Griffin and a second by Frances Leong-Sharp to recommend approval.

4. PLANNING TOPICS OF INTEREST

4A. Special Action Review Subcommittee Recap

Rodney Chatman provided an update on the ongoing review of the Pinellas Planning Council Special Act. A subcommittee of the Forward Pinellas Board has been formed to evaluate potential amendments to the legislation, with regular updates being provided to stakeholders throughout the process. Any changes to the Special Act could affect the Planning Council's governance structure, membership, responsibilities, and its role within the countywide planning framework. Proposed amendments are expected to be developed by fall 2026, reviewed by the Pinellas County Legislative Delegation, and considered during the Florida Legislature's spring 2027 session.

The presentation emphasized the Planning Council's role as a regional planning resource that extends beyond countywide plan amendment reviews. Recent involvement in evaluating the region's capacity to support a potential federal Maritime Prosperity Zone highlighted the Council's ability to analyze long-range impacts related to employment growth, housing demand, transportation infrastructure, and economic development. Survey results from planning professionals across Pinellas County also identified high staff turnover and limited institutional knowledge within many local governments, reinforcing the Council's value as a technical resource that provides continuity, specialized expertise, and planning support across jurisdictions.

Subcommittee discussions included an examination of regional growth trends over the past 25 years. Data showed relatively stable population growth and more modest employment gains in Pinellas County compared to neighboring Hillsborough and Pasco Counties, while residential development has significantly outpaced industrial development. Stakeholder feedback recognized the strengths of the countywide planning process, including transportation planning expertise, technical assistance, economic development support, data analysis, intergovernmental coordination, and consistent development standards that promote predictability across jurisdictions.

Several potential reform options are being considered, ranging from streamlining the existing amendment review process to adopting a vision-driven, service-oriented planning model that would expand technical assistance and local government support while focusing countywide review efforts on activity centers and strategic growth areas.

The presentation also outlined possible changes to Planning Council membership and governance, particularly in response to potential regional MPO consolidation. The subcommittee will continue evaluating these concepts, with future discussions expected to provide greater clarity regarding potential changes to the countywide planning process and the Planning Council's long-term role.

4B. Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) Coordination

Linda Fisher shared that the Pinellas Planning Council is continuing its annual effort to improve the accuracy of official population estimates prepared by the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR). These estimates are important because they are used for state revenue-sharing allocations and provide the population data required for local comprehensive planning.

Unlike the decennial U.S. Census, which provides official population counts every ten years, BEBR's annual estimates are developed using housing, permit, utility, and Census Bureau data to estimate population changes between census years. Different methodologies can produce varying results, particularly as more time passes since the last census.

For 2025, BEBR estimates that Pinellas County's population remains approximately 7,800 residents above the 2020 Census count, although it reflects population declines over the past three years. This differs significantly from the U.S. Census Bureau's annual estimate, which suggests the county has experienced a population decline since 2020, highlighting the importance of using accurate local data to inform population estimates.

To improve estimate accuracy, Forward Pinellas will again collect housing unit counts, demolition permit data, and certificates of occupancy from participating local governments and submit the information to BEBR. Municipal staff are encouraged to assist in gathering this information from their building and development departments, with submissions requested by mid-July.

5. OTHER PAC BUSINESS/PAC DISCUSSION AND UPCOMING AGENDA

5A. Upcoming Land Use Cases & Pre-App Meetings

Rodney Chatman praised the PAC members for continuing to schedule these valuable meetings in advance of submitting land use cases

5B. Interesting Topics from Your Planner's Notebook

Mr. Chatman informed the committee that a member of the County Commission has requested an analysis of data center development and its potential implications for Pinellas County. In response, staff is preparing a white paper that will evaluate current trends, potential regulatory considerations, and planning issues associated with data centers.

The white paper is expected to be completed within approximately two months and will be presented to the committee for review once a draft is available. Staff noted that there is growing interest and concern regarding the potential development of data centers in the county, particularly related to their infrastructure demands and potential impacts on neighboring jurisdictions and the county as a whole.

The forthcoming analysis will help inform discussions regarding appropriate regulatory approaches and regional planning considerations.

6. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

6A. CPA Actions and Forward Pinellas Administrative Review Items

Rodney Chatman advised the PAC members that there was a public hearing held by the Countywide Planning Authority on May 5th and approved two cases in Largo for their community redevelopment districts. A Tier 1 amendment was processed for St. Petersburg in May.

6B. SPOTlight Emphasis Areas Update

Rodney Chatman advised there were no updates.

7. UPCOMING EVENTS

The Chair highlighted the upcoming events of interest as noted in the agenda.

An inquiry was made regarding the Special Achievement in GIS (SAG) Award, and Mr. Chatman shared Forward Pinellas was notified by ESRI that we won the award. Apparently ESRI designated several of their partners for this international award and felt like the work we have been doing with Arc Urban was noteworthy. Nicole Galasso will be going to San Diego, on our behalf, to accept the Special Achievement in GIS award.

8. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:48 p.m.

Chair

Date