

From: [Scott, Brian](#)
To: [BCC Agenda Comments](#)
Subject: FW: CROOKED CREATIVE PINELLAS
Date: Wednesday, September 3, 2025 9:12:14 AM

From: Robert Bausman <robbausman77@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 2, 2025 9:24 PM
To: Scott, Brian <brscott@pinellas.gov>
Subject: CROOKED CREATIVE PINELLAS

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Hello, I just wanted to forward this information to you regarding Creative Pinellas. This information is from 2019 I believe.

I'm actually a long time resident of Tampa Bay and a professional artist. I unfortunately have to communicate with you anonymously at this point, to be sure I don't make myself a target for these pretentious and very spiteful people that run, and are employed at this organization. Unfortunately, it is the same inner circle of useless people that have positioned themselves as gatekeepers, who dictate the allocated funds for creative culture in Pinellas County. (Along with almost every other local "Arts" organization.)

There is not one actual working Artist or Retired real Artist involved with this organization. Just opportunists who couldn't make it as professionals, masquerading as bleeding heart liberals draining the allocated arts budget dry with their salaries, mismanagement of funds, and silly initiatives that have no real public impact.

Let me be clear, a creative organization needs to exist

within Pinellas county, to support WORKING REAL ARTISTS. Just not Creative Pinellas. It was the Grassroots REAL artists that made the Tampa Bay area a renowned art destination, not greedy nonprofits that have almost NO oversight and take advantage of real creative professionals. (Despite over \$1 million budget annually.)

Thank you for your time and please feel free to respond to this email if you'd like. I would love the opportunity to help develop something new in place of CP, that actually supports Art and REALLY helps generate tourism in our beautiful county.

Please see below for my personal last straw with CP dating all the way back to 2019 when they gave \$300,000 to the former director for an art project that I don't think lasted more than 18 months...

(This was an email forwarded to me back then..) VVV
CREATIVE PINELLAS

SECRETLY SLIPS \$325,000

BP OIL SPILL CASH

TO

FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MITZI JO
GORDON and CURRENT CREATIVE PINELLAS
BUSINESS INCUBATOR TENANTS, CARRIE
BOUCHER

Dear Pinellas County Board of Commissioners:

We, as citizens of an ethical and moral county, write to express our concerns with the use of public funds apportioned to Creative Pinellas resulting from the BP-Deepwater Horizon Settlement. As recognized by citizens of Pinellas County, we are fully aware, the collective voice and aspirations of the citizen survey, detailed funds to be allocated for a county-wide traveling art project to enhance public good.

Problem one – HIGH ALLOCATION TO ONE PROJECT:

- Unfortunately, as we previously expressed, we allege Pinellas citizens are not aware, the entire budget of over \$300,000 would be abnormally allocated to one artist, for one project.
- o This is highly suspicious and unusual, given arts funding is extremely difficult to procure in this county, and further, there is no county standard of such disproportionate funding not divided into several smaller scale projects that help more artists while exposed art to more of the populace.

Problem two – SEVERE CONFLICT OF INTERESTS:

- We, as collective tax paying citizens are further alarmed by the lack of oversight, transparency, and the over dependence on the public's digital illiteracy, as a simple google search, populates publications revealing

Executive Director Mitzi Gordon's request for \$300,000 in arts funding prior to her departure from Creative Pinellas. Mitzi Gordon resigned, and subsequently became a rent subsidized tenant of Creative Pinellas and now, along with two cohorts collected over \$300,000. In all of our 50 plus years as residents, we have never witnessed this level of blatant abuse of public resources. Is this legal? The irony of this conflict is beyond our highest imagination, coupled with a traveling art project, we allege was designed for Mitzi Gordon and Carrie Boucher, who use buses around the county for projects as Creative Pinellas tenants: NOMAD Bus and Blue Bird Bus. Inherently, our next question would be to ask:

- Who recommended a traveling art project to the board of commissioners? As there certainly appears to be evidence of severe conflicts of interests.
- Why would Barbara St. Claire, as leader and fiduciary not acknowledge the obvious conflicts?

Problem 3 – NO HISTORICAL MATRICULATION?

- In this environment of collusion and interference, we are surprised by the level of coincidence and optics, given hundreds of eligible and qualified artists applied for this funding, absent knowing they were competing against the former Creative Pinellas Executive Director, and current Creative Pinellas business incubator tenants.
 - o We also noticed that some of the finalist had won

smaller CP grants but we were unsuccessful in determining Mitzi, Carrie or Bridget's participation in any of the smaller emerging artist or professional grants—especially given they are tenants of Creative Pinellas and would be aware of this. Commissioners if you are not paying attention to this, you've given our citizens a front row seat to a shameful, dishonorable and high degree of corruption, that requires a serious discovery prior to approving this funding.

Problem 4 – PANEL FROM HILLSBOROUGH TO PICK FOR PINELLAS???

- In the optics of an arranged and impeccably staged public art plot, Creative Pinellas held a county-wide request for all artist to submit proposals for a \$325,000 BP settlement funded traveling public art project. A panel composed of Allison Casper Jones, Sarah Howard, Robin Nigh, Mark Ormond, Ken Rollins and Ryan Swanson selected a familiar trio of individuals who they share numerous professional exchanges and partnerships. Pinellas County boasts 1000's of artists within the county's roster, and yet this strategically hand-picked, selection of panelist privately favored Mitzi Gordon, who most recently served as Creative Pinellas' previous Executive Director.

- o Ken Rollins, (USF Graduate), Ryan Swanson (USF Graduate), Sarah Howard (USF employee), Mark Ormond (Ringling Employee), Robin Nigh (City of Tampa), Allison Casper Jones (Tampa entrepreneur)

- o Is there no one in Pinellas County that could have served as a panelist? Did Ken Rollins ever support Mitzi Gordon in her role as Executive Director? Did Ryan Swanson ever work with Carrie Boucher and Nomad bus? How were the panelist advised to abstain for conflicts of interest?

Problem 5 – MORE CONFLICTS!!! WAS THE SPACECRAFT, DESIGNED UNDER THE MENTORSHIP OF CREATIVE PINELLAS?

Coincidentally, former Executive Director Mitzi is also a rent subsidized tenant at Creative Pinellas Business Incubator, where according to its online brochure and annual report; offers incubator tenants, keys to a private office, classrooms, mail room and resource center, along with mentoring, training, workshops business support, development, growth and success.

- o Mitzi's team also includes Carrie Boucher who also receives a public financial benefit from Creative Pinellas as a rent subsidized tenant of the Creative Pinellas business incubator.

- o According to Creative Pinellas documents, the incubator expresses that tenants must follow the following guidelines and criteria to participate in the program: They must call Pinellas County home, have a 501(c)3 designation and be arts and culture oriented. Current organizations in the incubator include Carrie Boucher's Nomad Art Bus, Dunedin Music Society, Mitzi Gordon's Bluebird Books Bus, Tampa Bay

Ukulele.

§ Is it true that, Creative Pinellas has 4 Business incubator tenants, and 2 out of the 4 tenants won the traveling art project?

o The incubator also offers these nonprofits a “slew” of programs and resources, including a digital marketing lab, business consultants and mentorship opportunities.

§ How far does the mentorship go?

· FURTHER QUESTIONABLE RELATIONSHIPS?

o Bridgett Elmer, who it is not known whether she is a tenant of the Creative Pinellas Business Incubator currently works as Coordinator of the Letterpress and Book Arts Center at Ringling College of Art and Design, where she also teaches along in similar relationship to panelist Mark Ormond who also has a relationship with the Ringling College of Art and Design.

Problem 6 – PROTECTING APPEARANCES

According to a Fox 13 new report, current Creative Pinellas Executive Director Barbara St. Clair stated that, “many artists are very, very good at creating their art. But what we can help them with is developing their market, developing their business skills. As an obligation, each Creative Pinellas tenant is required to

commit to being on-site, provide volunteer hours, provide and commit to mentoring and share their art and skills.” Unfortunately, this behavior fosters the appearance that Creative Pinellas staff supported and enhanced the winner’s candidacy while also posing a conflict of interest if perhaps, any of the three winning candidates had access to the traveling art project RFQ process during their mandatory volunteer hours.

- Is this how the county conducts RFP processes? We believe this is the exact purpose of the Florida Sunshine Law.

Problem 7 - LACK OF EXPERIENCE

In the initial call for artists, it is very disturbing that Creative Pinellas requested: “Applicants will be evaluated on their history of public art commissions, letters of reference and demonstration of past projects of commensurate size and scope.” Under ELIGIBILITY: “This project is open to artists who have been residents of Pinellas County, Florida, for at least one year and aged 18 years and older only. Artists in all disciplines and stages of their careers are encouraged to apply.”

Artist groups and collectives may apply, with lead artists and team member roles defined.

- Why would Creative Pinellas want all artist in all disciplines and “stages” to apply for a \$325,000 project?

- What other Pinellas County RFP/RFQ projects of a size and scale (\$325,000) lack such specificity?
- Does the selected artist have the history of public art of this scale? Where and what? Has this team every built anything commensurate size and scope?
 - o How did they become a team? Is it because they are both tenants of Creative Pinellas??
- Who was the selected artist recommender?
- Did any staff from Creative Pinellas write a letter of support for business incubator artists, Mitzi Gordon, Carrie Boucher?
- How were any of the 5 published finalists qualified for this project?

Problem 8 – VIOLATIONS OF SUNSHINE LAW & ACCOUNTABILITY?

While the general public was invited to comment online and at various locations offering feedback on the finalists; the general public was not invited to view the closed-door finalist presentations, witness the jury's deliberations, observe how the vote was tallied and by who, nor was the outcome of the survey presented or made available to the general public. This is in violation of the Florida Sunshine Law and the Creative Pinellas

leadership must be held accountable.

PROBLEMATIC Questions the County Board of Commissioners should resolve:

1. When was Mitzi Gordon's official date and reason for resignation from Creative Pinellas?
2. At any time, has Mitzi Gordon, petitioned, lobbied for BP settlement funds for Creative Pinellas or directly for her non-profit?
3. What forms of development, business support, mentoring, and opportunities were provided to Mitzi Gordon, Carrie Boucher and Bridget Elmer as tenants of the business incubator?
4. As Creative Pinellas Business Incubator tenants, Mitzi Gordon and Carrie Boucher are obligated to volunteer with Creative Pinellas. What type of volunteer work was completed and what specific duties or administrative support did they provide during the Traveling Art Project, RFQ?
5. Is Carrie Boucher's Nomad Bus a current partner of panelist Ryan Swanson's (on the selection panel) New Orleans Project?
6. How many of the finalist, are rent subsidized business incubator tenants or have any financial interests

with Creative Pinellas?

Solution – INVESTIGATE & FACT FIND

We encourage and support the Board of Pinellas County Commissioners to investigate, summon public records, and authorize the appropriate parties, up to and including law enforcement the District Attorney and Attorney General to investigate alleged ethics violations, public corruption, misappropriation of funds, embezzlement and remove, terminate or disqualify any or all individuals or parties for the misuse, deceit and abuse of public funding.

We encourage the Board to further exhaust, was this a lawful process and best use of public funds? We would suggest that \$325,000 be divided into smaller public art projects for the participation of more than just one artist or traveling project. As presented, this project offers no permanent county ownership as the Spacecraft will NOT be owned by the citizens of Pinellas county, but privately by the former Creative Pinellas Executive Director Mitzi Gordon and cohorts. In effect, the county is paying to borrow art, and then return it. If this is not the case, what will happen to the Spacecraft upon the end of the contract?

In fulfilling our civic duty to inform the public, we will be furnishing this to the media, watchdog groups, investigative organizations, creative groups and all of the participating artists. We will follow-up with an investigative survey to assist your efforts to protect

Pinellas County citizens.

Sincerely,

Pinellas Citizens Guild