

RESOLUTION NO. 25-139

WAIVING FEES AND PERMITS FOR STORM RECONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR

WHEREAS, on September 23, 2024, pursuant to applicable state law (including Florida Statutes Section 252.36), the Governor of the State of Florida issued Executive Order 24-208 to declare a state of emergency in certain counties, including Pinellas County (also referred to herein as the “County”), due to a tropical weather system then designated as “Potential Tropical Cyclone Nine” and ultimately designated as “Hurricane Helene” (“**Helene**”); and

WHEREAS, on September 24, 2024, pursuant to Florida Statutes Section 252.38(3)(a)5 and Pinellas County Charter Section 2.04(k), the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners passed Resolution 24-68 declaring a state of emergency within the boundaries of the County due to Helene (as may be extended or expanded from time-to-time, the (“**Emergency**”); and

WHEREAS, as Helene passed west of Pinellas County, the County experienced unprecedented storm surge, measuring 6.31 MHHW at Albert Whitted Airport in St. Petersburg. That storm surge caused significant and widespread damage throughout the County, particularly in low-lying neighborhoods. Initial damage assessment by County staff identified 5,948 properties within the unincorporated county and the communities of Belleair Beach,, Belleair Shore, Indian Rocks Beach, Oldsmar, Kenneth City and Safety Harbor (which are served by the Pinellas County Building & Development Review Services) that were affected by Helene, of which 208 were destroyed, 3,552 suffered major damage, 1,078 suffered minor damage, and 1,110 were otherwise affected; and

WHEREAS, on October 5, 2024, the Governor of the State of Florida issued Executive Order 24-214 to declare an additional state of emergency in certain counties, including Pinellas, due to a tropical weather system then designated as “Tropical Storm Milton” and ultimately designated as “Hurricane Milton” (“**Milton**”); and

WHEREAS, on October 9, 2024, at 8:30 PM, Milton made landfall south of Tampa Bay as a Category 3 hurricane. Although the County was not impacted by storm surge, the County experienced sustained winds of 83 MPH, with a gust of 101 MPH recorded at the Albert Whitted Airport tower. In addition to those hurricane-force winds, over 18 inches of rain was recorded in the County, with 5 inches of rain falling in a single hour. The combination of wind and rain from Milton caused extensive damage throughout the County, including loss of power to more than 450,000 households in Pinellas County. Initial damage assessment by County staff identified 2,623 properties within the unincorporated county and the communities of Belleair Beach, Belleair Shore, Indian Rocks Beach, Oldsmar, Kenneth City and Safety Harbor (which are served by the Pinellas County Building & Development Review Services) that were affected by Milton, including damage from high winds, rainfall-driven flooding, or both. Of those properties,

50 were destroyed, 582 suffered major damage, 908 suffered minor damage, and 1,083 were otherwise affected; and

WHEREAS, the unprecedented combination of two major hurricanes (each a “**Storm**”) impacting the County in a 13-day period has resulted in widespread damage and destruction of residential and commercial properties in the County; and

WHEREAS, properties damaged by water intrusion due to storm surge, rainfall-based flooding, or wind-driven rain (resulting from failure of the building envelope due to fallen trees, windborne debris, or other issues) during the extreme rainfall described above are in immediate need of selective demolition and water remediation work to remove water-soaked materials and help mitigate mold growth and additional property damage, followed by repair or reconstruction to make them habitable again; and

WHEREAS, if demolition, repair, or reconstruction work is performed without the permits and inspections required under the Florida Building Code, it will (i) increase the likelihood that the work will fail to comply with the Florida Building Code, thereby reducing the safety and value of the affected property, and (ii) jeopardize the 40% discount on flood insurance currently applied to *all* residents in the County through FEMA's Community Rating System. Therefore, the risk of such unpermitted, uninspected work poses an immediate danger to the public health, safety, and welfare that requires emergency action; and

WHEREAS, various provisions of state and local law (including Florida Statutes Sections 553.79 and 553.80) ordinarily require the County to establish application and inspection fees for building permits and to apply those fees consistently. But with an estimated 3,000 damaged homes in the unincorporated County that have not pursued permits for repairs underway or completed, it is necessary to protect the public interest by continuing to encourage compliance by waiving double the normal permit fees for that work that has occurred without permits to allow owners of Storm-damaged properties to become compliant with the Florida Building Code and the County’s Floodplain Management ordinance; and

WHEREAS, on February 25, 2025, the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners approved a resolution waiving any application or inspection fee for a building permit application submitted from September 27, 2024, to June 30, 2025, for work on property in the unincorporated County and the communities of Belleair Beach, Belleair Shores, Indian Rocks Beach, Oldsmar, Kenneth City and Safety Harbor that was damaged, directly or indirectly, by either Storm; and

WHEREAS, on September 18, 2025, the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners approved a resolution waiving the duplicate after the fact building permit fee for a building permit application and the duplicate after the fact construction in a floodplain permit for manufactured/mobile homes submitted for work already commenced or completed in storm

damaged properties between September 19, 2025, through December 31, 2025; and

WHEREAS, County Staff and the Board have determined that the unique circumstances related to hurricane recovery justify additional relief from fees currently mandated by the Pinellas County Building Permit Fee Schedule and Development Review Services Department Fee Schedule.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of County Commissioners of Pinellas County, Florida, at a duly assembled meeting held on this 16th day of December, 2025, that:

The Board of County Commissioners hereby waives the duplicate after the fact building permit fee for a building permit application and the duplicate after the fact construction in a floodplain permit fee for manufactured/mobile homes submitted for work already commenced or completed on storm damaged properties between December 31, 2025, through June 30, 2026.

These waivers apply to properties located in unincorporated Pinellas County and the communities of Belleair Beach, Belleair Shores, Indian Rocks Beach, Oldsmar, Kenneth City and Safety Harbor (independent of application administrative fees for internal costs related to pre-permit applications, if applicable) that was damaged, directly or indirectly, by either Storm, subject to the following conditions:

1. This waiver is applicable to after the fact permits for work to demolish and repair storm damage.
2. This waiver is applicable to after the fact permits for work to demolish a “substantially damaged” structure as that term is defined in Section 158-182 of the Pinellas County Code
3. This waiver is applicable to after the fact permits for work to reconstruct, alter, or modify a structure that sustained such damage to elevate that structure or otherwise bring it into compliance with the County’s floodplain regulations and the Florida Building Code.
4. This waiver is applicable to after the fact permits to repair a manufactured/mobile home that sustained damage and is required to obtain a Construction in a Floodplain permit in compliance with the County’s floodplain regulations.
5. This waiver is not applicable to after the fact permits for accessory outdoor amenities including, but not limited to a swimming pool, driveway, patios, screen cages and sheds.
6. This waiver is not applicable to after the fact permits for new construction unrelated to storm damage.
7. This waiver will expire on June 30, 2026.

Commissioner Latvala offered the foregoing Resolution and moved its adoption, which was seconded by Commissioner Nowicki, and upon roll call the vote was:

AYES: Scott, Eggers, Flowers, Latvala, Nowicki, Peters, and Scherer.

NAYS: None.

ABSENT AND NOT VOTING: None.

APPROVED AS TO FORM

By: David Barrera
Office of the County Attorney