

Forward Pinellas (PPC & MPO)

Department Purpose: The Pinellas Planning Council (PPC) is a dependent special district of the Board of County Commissioners. The Board of County Commissioners approves its budget and certifies its millage. The Pinellas Planning Council has existed in some form since 1965. It was reconstituted in its current form in 1988 by a special act of the State Legislature (Chapter 88-464, Laws of Florida), and approved by countywide referendum as an amendment to the Pinellas County Charter. In September 2014, the Pinellas Planning Council (PPC) unified its membership with the Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), as stipulated by Chapter 2012-245, Laws of Florida. The merged board is charged with addressing both countywide land use and transportation concerns within the boundaries of Pinellas County, and it has re-branded itself Forward Pinellas. Both the PPC and the MPO continue to exist as regulated separate organizations. The agency's staff are PPC employees, and the PPC is reimbursed by the MPO for applicable operating costs and staff services.

The mission of the Pinellas Planning Council, as the advisory body to the Countywide Planning Authority, is to maintain and enhance a representative forum for countywide planning that provides for overall policy direction, plan consistency, interagency coordination, and technical assistance in furtherance of a coherent, efficient, and effective countywide planning process.

The PPC annually adopts a countywide ad valorem tax, with the corresponding millage levy authorized by the Board of County Commissioners. The maximum tax levy authorized by the Special Act (Chapter 2012-245, Laws of Florida) is one-sixth of one mill (.1666), with the FY21 millage levy of .0150 at 9.0% of the authorized levy. For FY22, a millage increase is being considered to 0.0160.

Executive Summary

For FY22 Forward Pinellas will continue to work with partner agencies and organizations to develop integrated transportation and land use solutions that sustain the quality of life and strengthen the economic value of the communities of Pinellas County. A major focus of the agency's resources in the coming year will be responding to growing pressures to deliver more housing options that are affordable and preserving lands that can accommodate high-wage job growth. The agency plans to complete several tasks to further that objective. They include a major update of the 2008 Target Employment Industrial Lands Study, which laid the foundation for current policies that preserve land for high-paying jobs for Pinellas County.

The agency continues to deliver services to Pinellas County's communities in the form of static and interactive mapping, technical assistance for special planning projects, serving as a planning data and analysis clearinghouse, and convener of local/area stakeholders to solve complex problems. The agency's leadership believes in developing a dynamic and highly capable staff and uses retirements of long-tenured staff as an opportunity to grow the next generation of leaders while ensuring that personnel costs remain stable.

The agency is facing increased fiscal constraints due to reductions in grant revenues and increases in operating costs. For example, the Florida Department of Transportation and Pinellas County

have eliminated their local cash match contributions for a federal grant program to the MPO that is used to fund a portion of agency operations. The fiscal impact to Forward Pinellas is approximately \$172,000. The FDOT portion of the local cash match no longer provided was \$120,000 and the local cash match no longer provided by the County was \$52,000.

Budget Summary Table

Resources	FY18 Actual	FY19 Actual	FY20 Actual	FY21 Budget	FY21 Estimate	FY22 Request	Budget to Budget Change	Budget to Budget %
Fund Balance	1,207,443	1,227,159	1,310,867	384,270	1,281,147	1,809,880	1,425,610	370.99%
Taxes	1,060,479	1,150,295	1,245,617	1,306,430	1,250,000	1,407,460	101,030	7.73%
Charges for Services	1,232,331	1,512,041	1,254,848	1,597,000	1,592,000	1,612,970	15,970	1.00%
Interest Earnings	2,518	3,893	1,786	2,000	2,000	2,020	20	1.00%
Revenues Total	2,295,328	2,666,229	2,502,251	2,905,430	2,844,000	3,022,450	117,020	4.03%
Total Resources	3,502,771	3,893,388	3,813,118	3,289,700	4,125,147	4,832,330	1,542,630	46.89%
Requirements	FY18 Actual	FY19 Actual	FY20 Actual	FY21 Budget	FY21 Estimate	FY22 Request	Budget to Budget Change	Budget to Budget %
Personal Services	1,945,714	1,871,790	1,933,765	2,280,000	1,427,130	2,182,930	(97,070)	-4.26%
Operating Expenses	299,499	677,395	552,752	919,770	851,140	2,107,650	1,187,880	129.15%
Capital Outlay	0	0	10,849	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Constitutional Officers Transfers	30,399	25,429	34,605	37,000	37,000	37,860	860	2.32%
Total Expenditures	2,275,612	2,574,614	2,531,971	3,236,770	2,315,270	4,328,440	1,091,670	33.73%
Reserves	0	0	0	52,930	0	503,890	450,960	851.99%
Total Requirements	2,275,612	2,574,614	2,531,971	3,289,700	2,315,270	4,832,330	1,542,630	46.89%

Budget Analysis

Resources

- The PPC is determining if a millage increase is warranted for FY22. The current budget projection for Ad Valorem taxes is a 1.0% increase over the FY21 property values. The millage increase being discussed with the Forward Pinellas Board is to increase the millage from 0.0150 to 0.0160. An increase in the FY22 budget for Ad Valorem taxes is based on this scenario and reflects a \$101,030 increase, or 7.7%. Just recently, the Property Appraiser estimate on property values puts the projected increase at 4.0%. The PPC is currently aware of this increase and is discussing if an increase for FY22 is still warranted.

- Total Resources of \$4.8M reflect an increase of \$1.5M, or 46.9%. Approximately \$1.4M of the increase is due to the adjustment in Fund Balance from unused funds projected in FY21. Unused funds are due to the following:
 - The Gateway Master Plan and Safe Streets Pinellas Action Plan project costs came in under budget.
 - Some projects have taken longer than anticipated to complete. For example, the PPC is still working with the City of St. Petersburg and the City of Indian Rocks Beach on two Safe Streets Pinellas Demonstration Projects. The PPC projects these projects to be done in early 2021, but they will most likely be complete in late fall 2021. Another delayed program is the Planning & Place-Making Grant Pilot Program. There are two projects in the City of St. Petersburg and one in Pinellas Park that have yet to be completed.
 - The Knowledge Exchange Series on Multimodal Transportation Indices Best Practices was delayed because of the pandemic.
 - The PPC plans to convert their agenda packets to Legistar/Granicus and budgeted funds to cover these costs. This project was delayed because the required training was only available in a virtual format and the department felt that in-person training is the most effective option for our agency.
 - The PPC budgeted funds to hire a Planning Analyst or Planner after Al Bartolotta's retirement in December 2020 but delayed that decision once FDOT notified them of their decision to no longer provide the local cash match. This was done to better understand the financial impact of the loss in revenue.
 - FDOT's reimbursement of eligible MPO costs does not occur on a set schedule. The PPC must have a flexible fund balance to "front" MPO costs and seek reimbursement when the funds from FDOT are received.
- The PPC receives other revenues from other charges to local governments, interest, and MPO services. Local governments contract with Forward Pinellas to complete various types of planning projects that fall under technical assistance. Specific details are as follows:
 - Maintains zoning and/or future land use maps for 8 local governments
 - Fulfills special mapping requests and are compensated for more complex requests that involve significant staff time
 - Engaged by the City of Gulfport to conduct a building scale and massing study for the waterfront redevelopment area in FY21 and will continue into FY22
 - Engaged by the City of Belleair Beach to update the comprehensive plan and land development regulations in FY21 and will continue into FY22
 - For FY22, anticipate the completion of about \$10,100 of work for local government partners
- PPC charges the MPO for costs associated with providing the MPO supportive services as outlined in the Staff Service Agreement between the PPC and the MPO. These costs are payable to the PPC as reimbursements and recorded as revenues for the PPC.

Requirements

- Personal Services is projected to decrease by \$97,070, or -4.3% due to retirements of long-term employees and the future hiring of new employees at the minimum pay grade.
- Operating Expenses increased \$1.2M, or 129.2%. Professional Services, Contingency, budgeting for Government Wide expenses not previous included in the budget, and Intergovernmental Service Charges increased for FY22. Approximately \$600,000 will be used to conduct an Investment Corridor Study in support of the Advantage Pinellas Plan. The department will plan to study either 34th Street South, Alt. US 19 or Roosevelt Blvd/East Bay/West Bay Drive and will work with their Board and local governments to select the most appropriate corridor.

- Additional initiatives for FY22 include:
 - The PPC plans to update the 2008 Target Employment and Industrial Lands Study. This study update will take a fresh look at the Pinellas County landscape and assess the supply of industrial and employment-designated land needs and recalibrate solutions to mitigate ongoing pressure to redevelop parcels with residential and retail uses, which tend to return a higher short-term profit to landowners, but are the least beneficial for the countywide economy over the long term.
 - The PPC will continue to implement the recommendations of the “Gateway Master Plan” and “Safe Streets Pinellas” initiatives in FY22. The “Gateway Master Plan” was developed in collaboration with Pinellas County, the City of St. Petersburg, the City of Pinellas Park, the City of Largo, and FDOT to create a comprehensive vision and land use strategy to help prioritize actions that will lead to complementary investments today that will support the strengths and assets that will make this area special tomorrow. “Safe Streets Pinellas” is the Vision Zero strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries in Pinellas County, while increasing safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all. This approach was first implemented in Sweden in the 1990s and was very successful across Europe — and now it’s gaining momentum in major American cities.
 - The PPC will partner with Pinellas County’s Housing and Community Development Department to create a design studio pilot program. The purpose of this countywide pilot program is to offer this service to local governments to help visualize and solve complex planning challenges, particularly regarding redevelopment, multimodal accessibility, and housing affordability. The goal is to use a combination of in-house staff and consultant resources to work with the community members, developers, etc. to create remarkable public/private spaces, elevate design expectations for private development, and promote Pinellas County as a center of design innovation emphasizing accessibility, housing affordability, compatibility, equity and economic opportunity.
 - The PPC will continue to work with the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA), the City of St. Petersburg, and the City of South Pasadena on the second phase of a transit-oriented development plan for the SunRunner corridor. The focus of this phase will be to develop clear guidance for redevelopment projects for use by local governments when working with the development community on projects

that will complement the enhanced transit service. This guidance will be in the form of graphic tools such as design guidelines, pattern books, etc.

- Through the MPO, Forward Pinellas will begin to focus on achieving the goals for the “Investment Corridors” adopted in the 2045 Advantage Pinellas Long Range Transportation Plan. These multimodal corridors of regional significance will combine investment in transportation choices, redevelopment of underutilized commercial properties, and regulatory reform and other tools to enable mixed-use development that provides more housing that is affordable to people of different income levels. Forward Pinellas will work with selected local governments, FDOT, and other partners to develop an initial corridor investment plan for the first of several identified corridors.
- The PPC is required to maintain a 10.0% reserve based on Total Expenditures. The reserve is calculated as the Ending Fund Balance added to the Contingency line item. The current reserve projection for FY22 is at 45.1%.

Attachments

- **Attachment 1 - Budget Reports**
- **Attachment 2 – Organizational Chart**