

Saving our Cities, County and Planet  
( **No, our people** )  
Presentation to Pinellas County Commissioners  
September 27, 2016

Our great grandsons Cameron and, now, Coleson are still why I keep urging you to act **and to act with due haste.**

I am giving you a report of my meeting with your staff: Chris Moore and Renea Vincent. From my perspective, it was a productive meeting. I ask that you read it, especially **concentrating on the recommendations.**

In addition, you have a recent newspaper article from Tarpon Springs Mayor Chris Alahouzos proudly citing the steps being taken to combat Climate Changes. There is a great deal happening in my community, but I highlighted three actions: solar, reclaim water and our tree ordinance all of which are spoken to in my report. I ask that you set a goal (by 2030) for 60% of the County buildings to be equipped with solar. **There are stories to be shared with others.**

On Tuesday, September 13, 2016, I, along with Commissioner Welch, attended a Solutions for Coastal Communities: Resilience and Adaptations in Tampa Bay” conference. I commend two presentations for your action. All of these knowledgeable minds said the same thing, whether it be Sea Level Rise, the need for alternative energy investment, or re-thinking our land management codes: Climate Change is real, it is happening now, it is happening everywhere some places (like here in Tampa Bay) faster than others, but, in all places faster than we ever imagined. Ask Commissioner Welch to tell you what he heard from:

1. Annapolis Naval Commander Angela Schedel, “Framing Regional Priorities: Critical Predictions and Urgent Actions”. Annapolis playing fields, parking lots and builds are being flooded by even the smallest storm. Her message “**Adapt**, when, and if, you can; **Armor**, if you can afford to, and **Abandon**, most surely.”
2. Broward County Director of Environmental Planning and Community Resilience, “Cultural Adaptations: Lessons From the Past”. The five counties in southeast Florida have been meeting together for 5+ years to combat the affects of Climate Change/Sea Level Rise. Their efforts are regional. We can learn much from their model. Remember

the name Jan Booher, from southeast Florida and her grant to work with vulnerable citizens.

To emphasize an important step forward in saving our communities, I am sharing with you a 2005 Walking Communities study from a nationally recognized consultant which Tarpon Springs is working to implement. It should be the future for development. **There is a story to be told.**

I have three requests:

Start organizing, at least, an annual (perhaps semi-annual) Pinellas County Day-Long Workshop with all municipalities and other governmental units (1) to **share** what each is doing to combat all of the Climate Change issues (2) and, most importantly, **inform** them of what the county/region is doing and **lead** them to act quickly. (3) Through Chris Moore, Renea Vincent, or some staffer, keep me in the loop about all Pinellas County (or regional) Climate Change initiatives.

Any questions? I likely will return.

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## Report on Climate Change meeting with Pinellas County staff

As part of my on-going Climate Change commitment to the congregation (Unitarian Universalist Church of Tarpon Springs), on Monday, August 1<sup>st</sup>, I met for about an hour and 10 minutes with Christopher Moore, Pinellas County Principal Planner and Renea Vincent, Director of Pinellas County Planning. When I returned home and walked in the door, Janet asked, as she always does, "How'd it go?" I responded, but not as I always do, "It went well, I think." I said, "think" because you never know how successful a meeting of this type has been until down the road. The proof is in the pudding! However, they listened, took a good quantity of notes, and their heads were going up and down in agreement most of the time. A summary of the specifics follows:

### Sea Level Rise (SLR)

Chris Moore wanted to show a power point presentation on a Countywide Vulnerability Assessment (Impact of Sea Level Rise on Critical Infrastructure) currently under way. I had been given the assessment and had read over it some weeks in advance of the meeting. It is a start. The study reveals that county leaders are thinking correctly. I made the point SLR is a regional (Tampa Bay) issue. They agreed. I stated, while I know studies must occur, sea level rise was an issue that we should not spend too much time studying. Those who have already been studying SLR tell us it is occurring much faster than we imagine. Pinellas County's 2014 study revealed that most municipalities do not believe SLR is a pressing issue, or they don't have the resources to even begin to deal with it. Those leading (County Commissioners & staff) have a real challenge to educate many.

I urged staff to look at the two videos shown at the recent Sea Level Rise conference organized by the Institute for Strategic Policy Solutions (where their own staffer Kelli Hammer Levy made a presentation on encroachment of salt water into estuaries) and show the videos to the County Administrator and Commissioners. One demonstrates where we are making a mistake in dealing with beach erosion and the other a short motivational speech by a teenager.

We talked about the need for new county ordinances that would prohibit construction on vulnerable coastal lands not yet built on, freezing construction of parcels on vulnerable lands where building has already

occurred, and taking a close look at the remaining vulnerable parcels. At the very least, make persons or developers building on vulnerable coastal parcels aware of their vulnerability.

I made them aware of Jan Booher's Sea Level Rise Community Resiliency Program (jjlbooher@comcast.net) being developed and funded by Unitarian Universalist Church.

**Recommendation: Continue to stay apart of the Tampa Bay Regional Council and all others combating SLR. Don't study too long, time's a wasting! Lead!**

#### Solar

I told them about the Tarpon Springs Pilot Solar investment of \$50,000 that is so successful there is now \$500,000 in the 2017 budget for more solar projects. **There was a story to be shared with other municipalities.** I urged them to ask the Commissioners to set a goal by 2030 for solar on a significant percentage (say 60%) of Pinellas County buildings.

**Recommendation: As has the City of Tarpon Springs, simply make the investment. The only study needed is what systems to purchase.**

#### Water

I stated water is surely a major concern for all. Again, I urged a look at Tarpon Springs Reverse Osmosis System. While it may not be the answer for every community, urge the Commissioners to take the lead in finding answers, now! To think about catching rainwater: in homes, businesses and the county buildings. I cited St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Kriseman's home that catches rainwater and uses it, not for irrigation, but for flushing toilets and even washing clothes. Perhaps, this will necessitate new city and county ordinances, but it is doable.

One subject I had in my notes to discuss, but failed to do so was partnering with Lowe's, Home Depot, both, or some one else to install low volume flush toilets in homes and businesses. Start with County buildings-lead! The UU Tarpon Springs Church is doing such as we remodel our sanctuary. Set some goals and get after it. It's doable.

**Recommendation: Look to other coastal cities and counties to determine what innovative steps they are taking in design, architecture and construction of land and buildings.**

#### Saving trees

It told them about the strong tree ordinance in Tarpon Springs. You cut down a tree in Tarpon Springs, you had better be ready to replace it with another, or pay a fine and let the City plant one. To look at the county's ordinances around this issue and **tell the Tarpon Springs story to other municipalities.**

**Recommendation: Spread the word to all municipalities about the Tarpon Springs ordinance and adopt a similar county ordinance.**

#### Recycle

I stated, Janet and I had curbside recycling in Auburn, Indiana, before we came to Tarpon Springs twenty-two years ago and have had it in Tarpon Springs since living here. It makes sense to do it; it's the right thing to do. While curbside recycling may not be feasible for the County, they must increase the number of drop sites and educate the citizens to use the system. Another story to be shared with others.

**Recommendation: Increase the number of County drop-off sites, find a way to get all municipalities to adopt the program, and education citizens to use the program to its maximum. Lead!**

#### Walking Communities

By this time it was getting old hat, but I share with them the story of a 2007 consultant study aimed at making Tarpon Springs a walking community. Not a walk around community for tourist to see our treasures, but building residences combined with businesses to provide all the needs of a family within walking distance. Tarpon Springs is doing it. I think other communities are doing it. Again, municipalities need to be brought together to share their stories on dealing with Climate Change: to learn what the County is doing, follow its lead and challenged the municipalities to do more.

## People Mover

Although it is central to mitigating the affects of Climate Change, I only mentioned resurrecting this issue, because to a large degree it is in the hands of the Pinellas Transit Authority. However, the system must be completed to accomplish a number of things, not the least of which is combating the affects of Climate Change.

**Recommendation: Vigorously lobby all who might help: Congressmen, State Legislators, and local Municipal leaders. Reach out to agencies and groups to build a coalition that cannot be denied.**

## The Bottom Line

The bottom line is: the Pinellas County Commissioners are headed in the right direction. The question is: will they be able to see Climate Change as **the high priority** it must be and, therefore, make the investments necessary to protect and save the citizens, the businesses and the way of life that is "Pinellas County". That will take follow up and gentle watchdoging.

**Organize frequent county conferences to share what is being done, inform what must be done, and find the resources to get it done.**

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# My Community

## ► mayor's corner

### Tarpon Springs Is A "Green" City

by Mayor Chris Alahouzos  
City of Tarpon Springs



The City of Tarpon Springs is leading by example through its certification as a "Green Local Government" by the Florida Green Building Coalition. Green practices support more environmentally friendly and responsible decisions, which protect

the environment and sustain our natural resources into the future.

Some highlights of the City's Green Initiatives and Programs are:

- Achieving Tree City USA designation.
- Adopting tree protection codes to promote water conservation and energy conservation.
- Maintaining a Florida Clean Marina Program.
- Enacting a manatee protection plan.

- Implementing advanced energy conservation measures with our facilities.
- Developing our own local alternative water supply with a reverse osmosis water treatment in partnership with the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD).
- Having an advanced reclaimed water system that reuses about 80 percent of our treated wastewater for irrigation.
- Starting a Solar Panel Pilot Program constructed and operated by our own staff.
- Collecting yard waste regularly and recycling it as mulch and offering it back to the community.
- In the event of a natural or other disaster, a Debris Management Plan is in place that calls for a recycling strategy for salvageable materials.
- Developing an historic preservation ordinance and funding mechanism to aid with historic preservation.
- Providing recycling collection services, chemical/hazardous waste collection and an education program for businesses and multi-family dwellings.

These are just some examples of the many achievements that City staff and leadership have developed for our community. I will work to continue making our ways of living more sustainable so that our community will be a thriving and enjoyable place to live for us and future generations. ♦

Mayor Chris Alahouzos is available at 324 E. Pine Street, Tarpon Springs, (727)-938-3711.