

# **Pinellas County**

*333 Chestnut Street  
Clearwater, FL 33756*



## **Minutes - Final**

**Wednesday, June 14, 2023**

**9:30 A.M.**

**Budget Information Session**

**Palm Room**

## **Board of County Commissioners**

*Janet C. Long, Chair  
Kathleen Peters, Vice-Chair  
Dave Eggers  
René Flowers  
Charlie Justice  
Chris Latvala  
Brian Scott*

**ROLL CALL - 9:34 A.M.**

**Present:** Chair Janet C. Long, Vice-Chair Kathleen Peters, Commissioner René Flowers, Commissioner Charlie Justice, Commissioner Chris Latvala, and Commissioner Brian Scott

**Not Present:** Commissioner Dave Eggers

**Others Present:** Barry A. Burton, County Administrator; Jewel White, County Attorney; and Shirley Westfall, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk

**1. Introduction and Budget Overview**

Mr. Burton referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *FY24 Budget Overview/Budget Information Sessions* and indicated that the budget discussion will begin with an overview of the current challenges, noting that budget development involved a collaborative effort between the Constitutional Officers, Appointing Authorities, and the County Departments; and that with the Board of County Commissioners' (BCC) input, staff will reformulate and present a balanced budget at the July 18 BCC meeting.

Mr. Burton related that some of the challenges and budget drivers include the increasing costs associated with personnel services and salary adjustments, Florida Retirement System changes, an extra pay period due to 2024 being a leap year, chemicals, property insurance, fuel, vehicle replacement, health benefits, professional services, utility services, and repair and maintenance services. He indicated that the County's Strategic Plan guides the budget development; and that the priorities are County employees, improve retention and recruitment, keep taxes and fees low, maintain high levels of service, deliver on promises, adjust to inflation, and continue with a disciplined financial approach.

Office of Management and Budget Director Chris Rose related that there is property tax roll growth of 11.8%; that the countywide millage rate is flat; that no recommendations have been made on the decision packages; that funding is sized to continue services and accommodate inflation; that the General Fund is not yet structurally balanced; and that Penny for Pinellas is balanced for the 10-year term of the levy. Mr. Burton indicated that Penny for Pinellas is balanced for the items promised in the 2017 list; whereupon, he responded to queries by Chair Long.

Mr. Rose underscored that there are 22 distinct millage rates that the BCC will be asked to vote on; whereupon, he reviewed the next steps of the budget process through October 1, when the new fiscal year begins.

2. Property Appraiser

Pinellas County Property Appraiser Mike Twitty referred to a document titled *FY24 Budget Information Session Kickoff* and discussed the property value trends, taxable value of new construction, residential housing market, sale statistics, active listings, sales trends, residential homestead vs. non-homestead properties, the “recapture rule”, and informational resources for the public. He indicated that the taxable value increased 11.8%, which is approximately \$12.5 billion, with 70% generated from residential and 30% from commercial properties; that the County has experienced 11 years of positive taxable value growth; that single-family home median sales price is about \$450,000; and that over the past decade, the differential between assessed value and just value, protected under the Save-Our-Homes cap, has increased from \$2 billion to \$63.6 billion; whereupon, he responded to queries by the members.

3. Human Resources - Including Employee Health Benefits

Referring to a document titled *Human Resources and Employee Benefits*, Management and Budget Manager Jim Abernathy, Office of Management and Budget, presented the budget summary and budget drivers, including explanations for increases and decreases in revenues and expenditures. Responding to queries from the members, Mr. Burton, with input from Human Resources Assistant Director Maria Ciro, related that meetings are currently taking place to address employee salaries and healthcare cost increases.

Ms. Ciro discussed the Department’s accomplishments and performance measures and highlighted the successful improvements in technology and automation systems; whereupon, she responded to queries by the members.

Mr. Burton emphasized the importance of increased training needs within the County, specifically for supervisors.

4. Communications

Budget and Financial Management Analyst Audrey Ables, Office of Management and Budget, reviewed the budget summary, budget drivers, topics for discussion, and a decision package request, noting that operating expenses have decreased due to cost-savings efforts.

Communications Director Barbra Hernandez reviewed accomplishments, work plan strategies, and performance measures and provided information regarding increased support and presence in the community, better support to County departments, and live chat interactions. She related that the goals for the upcoming year include completion of public participation training with all departments, development of consistent public participation guidelines, launch of an external E-newsletter, continued hurricane education, and the return of the Pinellas Citizen University.

Office of Management and Budget Director Chris Rose, with input from Mr. Burton, related that a financial stress test was conducted on non-enterprise-funded County Administrator Departments, which created other budget scenarios with legitimate ways to reduce the County's service levels and costs in case the recommended budget is not approved.

Mr. Rose commended Ms. Hernandez for her efforts in efficiency and reducing costs. She related that the Verizon Communications contract was renegotiated resulting in monthly savings; and that a new closed-captioning technology was acquired, cutting that expense in half for the following year.

**5. Airport**

Budget and Financial Management Analyst Shane Kunze, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), reviewed the operating budget summary, budget drivers, topics of discussion, and later in the meeting, the decision packages.

Budget and Financial Management Analyst James Lewis, OMB, discussed the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget overview, noting that project constraints are due to cost increases, long lead times on materials, and contractor availability; whereupon, he highlighted current and new projects and indicated that increased funding is requested for some of those; and that construction of the new multi-level parking garage has been moved up to FY25-FY27.

St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport (PIE) Director Thomas Jewsbury indicated that the increases in funding are due to entering the next six-year CIP; and that project scopes have been expanded as a result of attaining grant funding; whereupon, he provided an overview of the Airport's accomplishments, work plan highlights, and performance measures, noting that PIE was named the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) 2022 Airport of the Year in the small to medium-sized airports category based on efficiency and customer service. He related that in 2022, PIE exceeded its highest number of passengers with 2.4 million; and that the new cell phone lot restrooms have been completed; whereupon, he responded to queries by the members regarding wildlife and noise concerns.

Deputy Director of Finance and Administration for PIE Yvette Aehle reviewed the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program, noting that the Airport works with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) with regard to encouraging disadvantaged companies to bid on construction projects; that the FAA's three-year goal requirement for FY2024-26 is due; and that the Airport will identify DBE firms that are ready and able to work and submit that information to the FAA for approval as part of the goal.

Office of Management and Budget Director Chris Rose indicated that there was no stress test conducted for the Airport or other County enterprise departments, as they are self-supporting, and Mr. Burton stated that they do not receive any General Funds.

**Meeting Recessed: 11:42 A.M.**

**Meeting Reconvened: 12:26 P.M.**

6. Economic Development

Budget and Financial Management Analyst, Audrey Ables, Office of Management and Budget, reviewed the budget summary, budget drivers, and topics for discussion, noting that the STAR Center has an anticipated shortfall of \$1.2 million in FY25, hindering capital improvements, but that a plan is in development to alleviate the issue. Later in the meeting, she reviewed the decision package requests and the operating budget analysis for the General Fund and the STAR Center.

Budget and Financial Management Analyst James Lewis, Office of Management and Budget, provided an overview of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), relating that the Department is facing challenges such as cost of materials, lead time on materials, and contractor shortages for capital projects; that the Six-Year CIP FY24-29 is reduced by \$500,000; and that the planned appropriations for FY24 will be decreased by 50.9%, as compared to FY23.

Economic Development Director Dr. Cynthia Johnson discussed the Department's accomplishments, work plan highlights, and performance measures, noting the progress related to the development of the ARK Innovation Center, recruitment and retention of high-paying industry partner Dynasty Financial Partners, an award of over \$68 million in federal contracts associated with the Small Business Development Center, which places Pinellas County in first position in the region to assist clients with federal opportunities, bringing the STAR Center up to code, and other activities; whereupon, discussion ensued, and she responded to queries by the members.

7. Department of Administrative Services

Office of Management and Budget Director Chris Rose, with input from Mr. Burton, related that the Department of Administrative Services has been reorganized, and the Construction Services will now be a stand-alone department.

Budget and Financial Management Analyst Shane Kunze, Office of Management and Budget, reviewed the Department's purpose; the budget summaries for the General Fund, Fleet Management Fund, and Risk Financing Fund; budget drivers; topics for discussion; and decision packages. Discussion ensued regarding vehicles, fuel, generators, ADA compliance, and the St. Petersburg Veterinary Technology Center. Administrative Services Director Joe Lauro highlighted the Department's accomplishments, work plan highlights, performance measures, and the purchasing and risk management initiatives.

Deputy Director of Administrative Services Diana Sweeney updated the members on the *Cityworks* asset management software, maintenance issues, Capital Improvement Projects, and a new database for County-owned parcels.

**Meeting Recessed: 1:45 P.M.**

**Meeting Reconvened: 1:48 P.M.**

**8. Construction Services**

Budget and Financial Management Analyst Shane Kunze, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), reviewed the budget summary for Construction Services, noting that because it is a new department there are no decision packages, accomplishments, work plan, or performance measures available, but they are being developed in partnership with OMB.

Director of Building Design and Construction Jeff Brazil informed the members that the Department is working on policies and procedures; that open communication with customers is important and has been greatly improved; and that they have recently engaged with professional construction estimators. Mr. Burton emphasized that the key for creating this department is to assist with project estimating and planning and to alleviate the challenges with increasing cost estimates; whereupon, he, with input from Administrative Services Director Joe Lauro, responded to queries by the members.

**ADJOURNMENT - 1:56 P.M.**