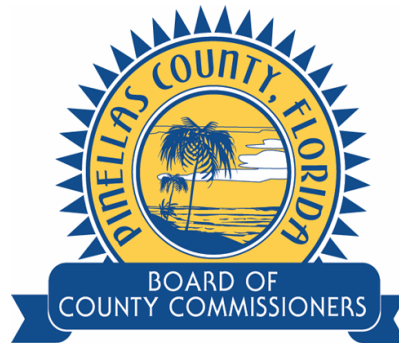


Pinellas County

*12600 Roosevelt Blvd N
St. Petersburg, FL 33716*



Minutes - Final

Thursday, February 2, 2023

9:30 A.M.

Joint BCC/State Delegation Meeting

St. Petersburg Marriott Clearwater

Board of County Commissioners

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

ROLL CALL - 9:35 A.M.

Board of County Commissioners (BCC) – Janet Long, Chair; Kathleen Peters, Vice-Chair; Dave Eggers, Charlie Justice, Chris Latvala, and Brian Scott

Pinellas County Legislative Delegation – Representative Adam Anderson, Representative Linda Chaney, Representative Lindsay Cross, Senator Nick DiCeglie, Senator Ed Hooper, Representative Berny Jacques, and Senator Darryl Rouson

Not Present – Commissioner Rene Flowers, Representative Kimberly Berfield, and Representative Michele Rayner

Others Present – County Administrator Barry A. Burton, Chief Assistant County Attorney Don Crowell, Intergovernmental Liaison Brian Lowack, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller Ken Burke, Property Appraiser Mike Twitty, Public Defender Sara Mollo, Sheriff Bob Gualtieri, Sixth Judicial Circuit Chief Judge Anthony Rondolino, Supervisor of Elections Julie Marcus, Board Reporter/Deputy Clerk Katie Poviones, and other interested individuals

1. Welcome

- Janet Long, Chair, Board of County Commissioners
- Ed Hooper, Chair, Legislative Delegation

Chair Long called the meeting to order and welcomed the Delegation members and visitors. At the Chair's request, those in attendance introduced themselves.

2. 2023 Legislative Program

Mr. Lowack thanked the Delegation for their continued support and reviewed the following highlights from the 2022 session:

- Support of Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons
- Bill amendment to allow counties and cities the right to choose a solution for private sanitary sewer laterals
- Approval of appropriations requests totaling \$25 million in infrastructure investment in Pinellas County

Mr. Lowack discussed the County's legislative priorities for the 2023 session, starting with specialty contractor licensing. He related that House Bill 735 was passed two years ago with the intention to reduce barriers for small business contractors; that an unintended consequence of the bill is that small business contractors will no longer be able to receive a permit to do their work, impacting approximately 1,100 contractors in Pinellas County alone; and that the County has provided the delegation with a number of proposed solutions to remedy the issue.

Mr. Lowack identified waste energy facilities as another legislative priority for the County and indicated that a bill from last year's session created two grant programs to provide funds for and encourage capital investment in waste energy facilities; and that it is of importance to the County that funding for the programs that was stripped away be reinstated.

Mr. Lowack concluded with the County's final legislative priority regarding a local bill, highlighting that a special act from 1980 created a special taxing district in unincorporated Seminole to provide for youth sports; that the district levied \$500,000.00 for three years to purchase the Seminole Youth Athletic Association Complex; that the district has not had the ability to generate any revenue since 1983, leading its Board to request to dissolve; and that the bill would provide ownership of the property to the County. He indicated that the County owns the remaining two recreational facilities in unincorporated areas; and that ownership of all three properties would allow the County to invest in the facilities and meet the needs of youth recreation in the community.

Mr. Lowack discussed appropriations bills and provided information regarding the County's funding asks of the State:

- A request of \$5 million to go towards infrastructure and utility investments at the St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport to prepare the vacant Airco site for development.
- A request of \$500,000.00 to launch a pilot project at Weedon Island Preserve focused on restoring salt marshes and the local habitat.
- A request of \$3.75 million for three backup generators in each of the special needs emergency shelters throughout the county, of which two will need to be relocated to comply with the new Sea Lake and Overland Surges from Hurricanes (SLOSH) model.

Mr. Lowack thanked the delegation for their work and collaborative efforts with the County; whereupon, at the request of Chair Long, the delegation members introduced their staff. Senator DiCeglie related that a bill to address issues with specialty contractor licensing has been introduced in the House and the Senate; and that collaboration between the delegation and the County is essential in identifying and resolving unintended consequences of legislation.

In response to a query by Senator Hooper, Mr. Lowack explained that the special taxing district in unincorporated Seminole requested the aforementioned local bill; that it was their intent for the property to come under ownership of the County; and that a master plan for all three facilities in the unincorporated communities will be introduced in the coming weeks; whereupon, discussion ensued regarding the developing master plan and feedback from discussions with the City of Seminole, with input from Mr. Burton and Representative Jacques.

During discussion, Representative Chaney provided information regarding a bill related to

condominium safety, noting that she would appreciate if the County could share any feedback they receive in relation to the proposed legislation. Responding to a query by Chair Long regarding feedback related to shoreline erosion, Mr. Lowack remarked on the significance of the issue and Representative Chaney clarified that beach erosion is not within the scope of the bill but addresses the structure of the condominiums; and that she will ensure any information shared with her is taken into consideration in relation to the bill.

3. Constitutional Officers

Commissioner Eggers thanked the delegation and commented on Tampa Bay Water projects, the future of Metropolitan Planning Organizations in the area, and environmental issues. Chair Long remarked on the need for better public transportation options in the area for the sake of public health and safety; whereupon, she invited Judge Rondolino to address the members.

Sixth Judicial Circuit Chief Judge Anthony Rondolino

Judge Rondolino remarked on the at-times negative implications of legislation on the court system's operations and funding and commented on the new Second District Court of Appeals (DCA) Courthouse in St. Petersburg, its positive impacts on accessibility to the courts, and business growth for the community.

Public Defender Sara Mollo

Ms. Mollo thanked the members for their efforts to resolve issues that impact the vulnerable populations that her office serves and echoed the Judge's comments on the new DCA courthouse. She noted that public defenders across the state are facing a crisis regarding staffing and recruiting attorneys and thanked the members for taking those issues into consideration.

Property Appraiser Mike Twitty

Mr. Twitty thanked the members for their great communicative efforts and explained that there will be a significant number of ad valorem tax bills filed this year as a result of 10 years of market value increases; that, as legislative Chair of the Property Appraisers' Association of Florida, he will work with the County's Office of Management and Budget in relation to bills that may have adverse impacts on Pinellas County; and that several bills have already been filed related to affordable housing, tiny homes, timeshare evaluation, and flood disclosures on residential and commercial property sales.

Mr. Twitty provided information regarding a bill he is championing this year in collaboration with Senator Hooper and Representative Anderson. He related that the bill is currently in the drafting stage and is a consumer protection bill related to property taxes; that the bill seeks to address the issue of homebuyers not being properly informed of their new home's tax burden; and that the bill would require online listing platforms to have a tax

estimator to provide homebuyers with a reliable figure of what their taxes may look like the year following their purchase.

Supervisor of Elections Julie Marcus

Ms. Marcus indicated that the delegation should have received an email regarding her office's priorities for Pinellas County, which are different in some cases from the Florida Supervisors of Elections association; that her office will be proposing a budget this year that will include requirements from recent legislation, as well as any bills that result from this year's legislative session. She cautioned against making any significant changes to election law this year due to the lengthy preparations for the presidential election in 2024 and related that her office is always available to answer any questions that delegation members may have regarding elections.

Chair Long commended the Supervisor of Elections Office and Ms. Marcus for their outstanding work and diligence, and Ms. Marcus remarked on the dedication of her staff and collaborative efforts with the delegation and the BCC; whereupon, in response to a query by Commissioner Latvala, Ms. Marcus discussed early voting sites that were added last year and feedback received on their operations and accessibility.

Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller Ken Burke

Mr. Burke provided an update on the Guardianship Improvement Task Force, which he spoke about at the last joint BCC meeting with the delegation, and thanked Representative Chaney for her efforts to see the related bill through the legislative process. He discussed funding of the Clerk's Office over time and related that the Clerk's Office is the only constitutional officer at the County level that receives most of its funding from the State; that the Clerk's Office budget has decreased by 8.2% in the past 10 years, which presents a challenge to properly pay employees amidst rising costs and inflation; and that, while traffic citations were a significant portion of funding for Clerk's Offices when the budget was originally created, the number of citations made has shrunk significantly since then.

Mr. Burke indicated that clerk offices across the state are in crisis due to lack of funding as a result of their fee-based funding structure; that the Clerks will be asking the legislature this year to consider reallocating a portion of the \$143 million that they collect, which goes towards the State's general revenue; and that the Clerks will also ask the legislature to consider providing funding for the various free services that their offices offer to the public. He noted that the bill associated with these requests has a sponsor in the House and Senate and is currently in being drafted; whereupon, he requested support from the delegation members regarding the bill.

Representative Cross thanked the constitutional officers for their presentations and the work they do that goes unrecognized.

4. Open Discussion

Commissioner Peters expressed her concerns regarding the reduction in funding to Health and Human Services and the Department of Corrections in the Governor's budget and encouraged the delegation members to advocate for mental health and addiction services. She provided information regarding the County's Coordinated Access Model to be implemented soon and noted that it could become a model for similar programs across the state if it is successful.

Commissioner Justice thanked the delegation members for their time and wished them a great legislative session and safe travels as they commute to Tallahassee. He reminded them that the appropriations presented as the County's priorities are important, however, the County would welcome other opportunities if they present themselves during session.

Later in the meeting, Senator Hooper encouraged Ms. Mollo and Mr. Burke to continue advocating for increased funding and urged the County to continue to communicate with the delegation members to make them aware of important topics and needs. He noted that a large amount of resources during this legislative session will go towards southwest Florida as they continue to recover from Hurricane Ian; and that he appreciated the opportunity to discuss legislative priorities with the BCC and constitutional officers.

5. Public Comment

Chair Long opened the meeting for public comment; whereupon, the following individuals stated their concerns:

David Ballard Geddis, Jr., Palm Harbor
Greg Pound, Largo

ADJOURNMENT - 10:49 A.M.