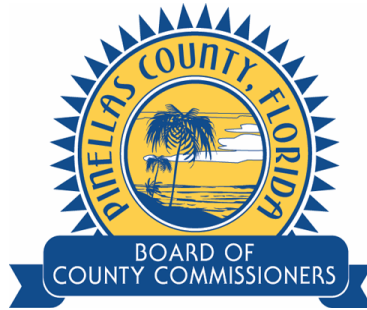


Pinellas County

*315 Court Street, 5th Floor Assembly Room
Clearwater, Florida 33756*



Minutes - Final

Tuesday, February 21, 2017

9:30 AM

4th Floor Clerk's Conference Room

Board of County Commissioners - Work Session

*Janet C. Long, Chairman
Kenneth T. Welch, Vice-Chairman
Dave Eggers
Pat Gerard
Charlie Justice
John Morroni
Karen Williams Seel*

ROLL CALL - 9:33 A.M.

Members Present:

Board of County Commissioners - Chairman Janet C. Long, Vice-Chairman Kenneth T. Welch, Dave Eggers, Pat Gerard, Charlie Justice, and Karen Williams Seel.

Federal Legislative Delegation - Representative Gus Bilirakis (arrived at 9:43 A.M.), Representative Charlie Crist (arrived at 9:43 A.M.), Chief of Staff Susie Perez Quinn and Regional Director Shahra Anderson representing Senator Bill Nelson, and State Director Todd Reid representing Senator Marco Rubio.

Not Present: Commissioner John Morroni, Senator Bill Nelson, and Senator Marco Rubio.

Others Present: James L. Bennett, County Attorney; Mark S. Woodard, County Administrator; Mike Twitty, Property Appraiser; Mary Scott Hardwick, Intergovernmental Liaison; other interested individuals; and Christopher Bartlett, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk.

1. Welcome

Chairman Long welcomed those present to the joint meeting of the BCC and the Pinellas County Federal Legislative Delegation and, at her request, those in attendance introduced themselves; whereupon, she thanked the legislators and noted that Representatives Bilirakis and Crist would be arriving shortly.

2. Overview of County's legislative program

Beach Nourishment Update

Chairman Long indicated that the meeting would start with the Beach Nourishment Update from the Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District.

Army Corps of Engineers Project Manager Laurel Reichold updated the members on the current status of the Sand Key Beach Renourishment Project and noted that the project is funded and will include approximately 900,000 cubic yards of material; that estimated construction time is four to six months; and that work could begin in September 2017. She stated that funding has been requested to include additional beach segments located in Long Key and Treasure Island, but it has not yet been approved; that the additional segments have been included in the work plans; and that both segments will be included as contract options for Sand Key bids.

Ms. Reichold related that perpetual easements are needed from the homeowners to ensure the beach is open and accessible to the public; that the easements must be secured before the work can begin; that press releases and messages have been used to notify the affected homeowners; and that the County is working to track and acquire the necessary easements.

Ms. Reichold noted that the Corps is evaluating whether to dredge John's Pass and use the material in cooperation with the Treasure Island segment.

Responding to queries by Commissioner Seel, Ms. Reichold indicated that the Sand Key segment will include beaches from Clearwater Pass to John's Pass; and that easements are not needed for State- or County-owned lands. She noted that private lands on the beach will be affected; and that public access to the beach has already been established and would not be a part of the project.

Ms. Reichold indicated that Treasure Island's Federal participation extension will end in 2025; that the Corps will use \$600,000 of existing funds to complete a study to extend Federal participation an additional nine years to 2034; and that there is an opportunity to seek study authority to transfer the nine-year extension study into another 50-year study pursuant to Section 7001 of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014. In response to query by Commissioner Justice, she stated that the 50-year study would require Congressional authority provided in the annual report.

Discussion ensued concerning the County's efforts to acquire the needed easements, and Environmental Services Manager Andy Squires provided an update; whereupon, Ms. Reichold provided updated information regarding options to mitigate shoaling in the Shell Key, Pass-a-Grille, and Tierra Verde waterways, indicating that it could be used as a potential borrow source for the Shore Protection Project or as an aquatic eco-system restoration project under the Federal Continuing Authorities Program (CAP). She noted that CAP requires a non-Federal partner such as the County or State in order to explore local issues; and that the maximum amount of funding is about \$5 million.

Responding to queries by the members, she indicated that using the area as a borrow source would require the proper authority; that initial research would take six months; that a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document would need to pass through Federal consultations; and that it would likely be nine months from start to finish.

In response to query by Chairman Long, Mr. Squires related that the University of South Florida will complete a sand migration study in November; and that the study will provide a better idea of sand movement and expected changes to the system. He stated that the County does not consider the area an aquatic disaster; that barrier islands often change and move around; and that the County continues to monitor the water quality every six weeks and has found no issues.

Responding to query by Representative Bilirakis regarding the Anclote River Basin, Ms. Reichold related that the outer portions of the channel have never been dredged; that Anclote Key is slowly migrating to the south; and that the channel can be realigned and would require about \$2 to \$3 million for dredging. She stated that the City of Tarpon Springs is acquiring the necessary easements on the disposal site; and that the related NEPA document can be completed relatively quickly. Chairman Long noted that the

storm season is approaching; and that the harbor is the only safe harbor on the west coast of Florida, and discussion ensued.

National Flood Insurance Program

Mr. Twitty provided background information regarding the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and related that Pinellas County has the highest number of NFIP policies in the nation, over 50,000; that 67 percent of the policies are for interior properties; and that the median home price is approximately \$135,000. He noted that private insurance companies remain selective in choosing which properties to insure; and that if the situation continues, it will exacerbate certain issues; whereupon, in response to queries by Chairman Long, Van Scoyoc Associates Vice Presidents Gregory Burns and Harry Glenn provided the following information:

- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires Congressional direction to adjust policy rates.
- Consumer-friendly reforms face resistance from Congress, particularly in the House of Representatives.
- The current program expires September 30, and Congress will have to act to extend the program or make changes before reauthorizing the program for another four years.
- The Financial Services Committee has started to meet, of which Representative Crist is a member. Representative Crist has directed his staff to draft legislation towards consumer-friendly reforms.
- The National Academy of Sciences completed an exhaustive study on the NFIP but made no useful recommendations.

Representative Bilirakis stated that he has a bill which will create more transparency in the program and update the current flood maps. Representative Crist noted that he is co-sponsoring a bill with Representative Bilirakis; and that they will work with FEMA and amongst themselves to protect the citizens' interest in the matter.

Transportation

Representative Bilirakis stated that infrastructure, which includes transportation, is a priority for the current Administration; and that despite other priorities, infrastructure needs to be addressed as soon as possible, and Representative Crist concurred.

Responding to queries by Commissioner Welch regarding the process for identifying priorities for funding, Forward Pinellas Executive Director Whit Blanton indicated that a list of project priorities is adopted annually by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and transmitted to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). He related

that among the top priorities are the U.S. Highway 19 corridor, Gandy Boulevard corridor, and the Gateway Express Project currently under construction. He noted that capital projects are easy to identify for funding; and that the biggest challenge is identifying and addressing the ongoing operations and maintenance transportation projects.

Mr. Blanton stated that some Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority projects are on the priority list; that the projects include the State Road 60 corridor and the Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit project; and that future transit service is being incorporated into project designs as part of working with FDOT; whereupon, discussion ensued concerning the merits of establishing a regional MPO.

During discussion, Mr. Blanton indicated that a regional MPO would have more institutional capacity to focus on three to five major projects in the region; that there is willingness among the MPOs to come together despite many challenges; and that a meeting is scheduled for May 12 to kick off a study to evaluate the models of regional MPOs in Phoenix, San Francisco, Orlando, the Twin Cities, and the Puget Sound area.

In response to query by Commissioner Eggers regarding the drastic reduction in Federal funding for bridges, Ms. Quinn stated that should the White House and Congress come together on an infrastructure plan, it would provide about \$1 trillion for various projects, bridges included. Mr. Reid related that lists of suggested projects are already being assembled; and that the County should communicate its projects as soon as possible.

Zika

Representative Bilirakis related that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has been given the authority to approve the genetically-modified mosquito to combat the virus; that more funding is needed; and that the County may want to consider establishing a pilot program; whereupon, Mr. Woodard stated that the County has embarked upon the process; and that the Purchasing Department has connected with the vendor so the County can be ready should the FDA grant approval for distribution of the mosquito.

3. Discussion of Healthcare Policy and Funding

In response to query by Chairman Long, Representative Bilirakis related that a new healthcare plan will be unveiled next week; whereupon, he noted the following proposed changes to be part of the new policy:

- Children up to the age of 26 will be allowed to stay on their parents' plan.
- No one should be removed from a plan and lifetime caps would not be allowed.
- Medicare Part D would be diminished.

- The use of refundable tax credits remains under consideration.

Representative Crist indicated that there are still concerns over the proposed changes, but that he is encouraged by Representative Bilirakis' report, and discussion ensued.

4. Open discussion

State Director Todd Reid representing Senator Marco Rubio

Mr. Reid related that Senator Rubio serves on the Foreign Relations and Intelligence Committees, and Appropriations, and is currently overseas meeting with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies. He indicated that Senator Rubio is working with the Administration on an infrastructure program; and that he continues to work with Federal and State agencies to ensure efforts are coordinated against the spread of Zika.

Chief of Staff Susie Perez Quinn representing Senator Bill Nelson

Ms. Quinn stated that beaches are a key component in helping Florida communities; that the Army Corps of Engineers update was very informative; and that Senator Nelson is exploring how to possibly use the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and other smaller agencies to enhance beach renourishment projects. She noted that Senator Nelson is a member of the Senate Science and Transportation Committee, the Finance, Commerce, and Armed Forces Committees, and a new sub-committee on Cyber Security. She discussed the importance of addressing the flood insurance, transportation, infrastructure, and Zika issues.

Representative Charlie Crist

Representative Crist thanked the members for hosting the delegation and noted that it has provided an opportunity to better work together. He introduced two staff members in attendance, Interim District Director Steven Cary and Outreach Director Gershon Faulkner.

Representative Gus Bilirakis

Representative Bilirakis related that he has co-sponsored a bill to be voted on by Congress next month concerning the cost of prescription drugs; and that the bill aims to speed up the FDA process, reduce costs to consumers, and create competition among drug manufacturers. He noted that he has started a separate bill to expand health coverage for veterans that ensure that more veterans would be eligible for dental care.

5. Public comment - none.

ADJOURNMENT - 11:02 A.M.