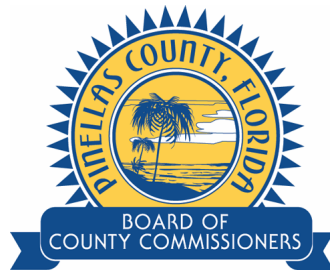


# **Pinellas County**

*315 Court Street  
Clearwater, Florida 33756*



## **Minutes - Final**

**Thursday, March 1, 2018**

**9:30 AM**

**BCC Assembly Room**

## **Board of County Commissioners - Work Session**

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

## ROLL CALL - 9:35 A.M.

Present: Chairman Kenneth T. Welch, Vice-Chairman Karen Williams Seel, Dave Eggers, Charlie Justice, and Janet C. Long.

Absent: Pat Gerard and John Morroni.

Others Present: Mark S. Woodard, County Administrator; Jewel White, County Attorney; other interested individuals; and Jenny Masinovsky, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk.

### 1. Small Business Enterprise Program

Mr. Woodard introduced the item, relating that the Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Program is a race- and gender-neutral program designed by the Board in 2002 to provide a sheltered marketplace for small businesses to do business with the County; that throughout the years, local area jurisdictions have developed additional related programs; and that today, staff will provide an overview of the SBE Program and its results and limitations and offer opportunities for its enhancement.

Chairman Welch indicated that it is a priority to improve the SBE Program, which has underperformed for a number of reasons, by expanding opportunities for engagement in various County projects to the broadest group of qualified businesses, including women-, minority-, and veteran-owned; and that doing so is reflected in the County's Strategic Plan. He related that state, county, city, and other partners are supportive; that the matter was discussed with various stakeholders and staff yesterday at an event at Lakewood High School; that he plans to contact more community leaders in order to make a countywide impact; that the goal for today is to find consensus on the direction to take to improve the program; and that staff will return with a plan, including information about an allocation of resources.

Director of Economic Development Mike Meidel related that representatives from the Office of Human Rights, the County Attorney's Office, and the Purchasing and Economic Development Departments are in attendance to address questions by the members; whereupon, he and Purchasing Director Joe Lauro referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Pinellas County's Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Program* and provided background information regarding discriminatory procurement practices and disparity studies of neighboring jurisdictions, how the issue ties to the Strategic Plan, categories of purchases, current programs and their limitations, and options for improvement along with projected costs.

During lengthy discussion and in response to queries by the members, Mr. Meidel provided further details regarding options for improvement, indicating that looking at the effectiveness of the "encouragement model" based on ensuring awareness of available contracts among women and minority firms would be appropriate. He also discussed an alternative improvement path, conducting a disparity study, noting that the County has never

been cited for disparity in its purchasing practices; that should that option be selected, there may be a cost-saving opportunity to do it jointly with the City of St. Petersburg; that it would cost \$300,000; and that it would indicate what extra efforts should be taken to ensure that an organization is being fair to all segments of society; whereupon, he related that the study would take two years and explained why. At the request of Commissioner Eggers, he agreed to provide further information regarding findings of discriminatory practices in Hillsborough County.

Mr. Woodard confirmed that businesses are not required currently to indicate if they are minority-owned to be on the County vendor list; that the County does not track such information; and that disparity studies oftentimes emerge as a result of a legal claim of discrimination against a jurisdiction, which triggers the need to create a program to address a potentially negative practice; whereupon, he opined that the County could proceed with enhancing the current program without necessarily incurring the expense and time related to conducting a disparity study.

In discussing the procurement process, Messrs. Lauro and Woodard distinguished between the County's current practice of giving preference to Pinellas, Pasco, Manatee, and Hillsborough Counties via additional points and an attempt to eliminate competition altogether by balkanizing the process, cautioning against the latter and indicating that the local counties discussed but did not proceed with a "buy local" practice several years ago, and at the request of Commissioner Seel, Mr. Lauro indicated that he would confirm the same. Mr. Woodard discussed collaboration between the Purchasing and Economic Development Departments and additional resources which may be required to enhance the program, and Mr. Meidel provided information as to what constitutes "small business" and the requirements to qualify for the SBE Program.

Mr. Meidel reiterated that the goal of enhancing the program is to ensure that all companies have a chance to participate in the County's construction, professional consulting services, and other projects. He noted the importance of increasing awareness and community outreach, assisting with the application process, and removing barriers, such as high minimum insurance costs, in order to encourage participation. Responding to query by Commissioner Eggers, he discussed the possibility of partnering with universities to involve students taking business-related courses in assisting small businesses.

In response to the Chairman's call for citizens wishing to be heard, Michelle Ligon, St. Petersburg, encouraged the Board to find a creative solution to the problem; Hayes Fountain, Largo, expressed a desire to provide his services locally, noting that it has been difficult to obtain contracts; and Grady Terrell, St. Petersburg, urged the Board to not be threatened by litigation in their decision-making.

Responding to queries by the members, Mr. Fountain indicated that the barrier to obtaining contracts with the County is based on not having access to or relationships with the decision-makers. In response to comments by Mr. Terrell, Mr. Woodard clarified that if the County improves the existing program without conducting a disparity study, the probability

of litigation against it would be fairly small; whereupon, he noted the importance of advancing rapidly with hiring the consultant, purchasing the software, and developing a program that is the easiest and most transparent for the vendor community, indicating that the consultant should seek best practices involving opportunities which would ensure reciprocal acceptance of business certifications throughout the region, thereby removing barriers to vendor participation.

Chairman Welch indicated that he is supportive of acquiring the software to start tracking the County's engagement with the business community, hiring a consultant to seek out the best practices from the counties which have addressed the issue in different creative ways, and eventually adding staff, noting that he would support a disparity study if the consultant determines it would make the best impact; whereupon, he requested that the item be brought back to the Board at the March 13 work session for further discussion. Commissioners Seel, Long, and Justice concurred and discussed the importance of providing vendors with ease of participation, focusing on staff efforts and attitude with regard to outreach, and having a roundtable discussion with other governmental partners on addressing the issue collectively. Responding to query by Chairman Welch, Mr. Woodard indicated that staff can start moving forward with the aforementioned improvements immediately.

Commissioner Eggers indicated that while he supports hiring a consultant and obtaining the software to enhance the current program, a disparity study, which can be conducted simultaneously, is important in order to protect the County from a legal standpoint and understand how much of an issue disparity is, noting the value in merging efforts with the City of St. Petersburg and the school system to share resources in conducting the study.

### Department Presentations

Deviating from the agenda, Chairman Welch indicated that the Airport and Convention and Visitors Bureau department presentations will be heard at this time.

#### 3. Airport

St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport Director Thomas Jewsbury introduced his staff and reported that the Airport is a self-sustaining enterprise department of the County that has 62 full-time employees; whereupon, he referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Doing Things! Airport*, and provided information pertaining to the Airport's economic impact on the county, the areas it serves, its growth and development, accomplishments, and awards.

During discussion and in response to queries and comments by the members, Mr. Jewsbury discussed Airport infrastructure improvement projects to address traffic issues and connectivity, Airco development studies, opportunities to diversify and expand service, the primary customer base, and raising the cost per plane passenger fee.

4. Convention and Visitors Bureau

Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater (VSPC) President and CEO David Downing introduced his staff and reported that VSPC has 49 full-time employees and is financed entirely by the Tourist Development Tax (TDT); whereupon, he referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Doing Things! Convention and Visitors Bureau* and discussed promotional and marketing activities and venues, partners, projects, the impact of the tourism industry on the economy, objectives, and accomplishments.

During discussion and in response to queries and comments by the members, Mr. Downing, with input by Mr. Woodard, presented information regarding convention center space for business tourism, promotional strategies, partners, the effect of the TDT revenue on industry wages, and the Classification and Compensation Study by Evergreen Solutions as it relates to VSPC employees; whereupon, he distributed publications containing "beaches and culture" maps of the area, noting that they are offered at rest stops throughout the state.

2. Parks and Conservation Resources

Parks and Conservation Resources Director Paul Cozzie introduced his staff, reporting that the department has 200 full-time employees; whereupon, he referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Doing Things! Parks and Conservation Resources* and discussed the areas that the department supports, its duties, accomplishments, and objectives, noting that volunteers continue to be integral to the department's success.

In response to comments and queries by the members, Mr. Cozzie provided information pertaining to implementation of a software application for Fort De Soto Park visitors.

**Meeting Recessed: 12:23 P.M.**

**Meeting Reconvened: 1:04 P.M.**

5. Creative Pinellas

Creative Pinellas Executive Director Barbara St. Clair introduced her staff, and referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Doing Things! Creative Pinellas* and a report titled *Regional Arts Dialogue, Maximizing the Arts Impact for Pinellas County, Report and Community Plan for Pinellas County*, indicated that Creative Pinellas is the local arts agency for the County; and that in 2017-2018, the department built a permanent staff of five full-time employees, including herself. She discussed department activities, partnerships, accomplishments, objectives, and the economic impact of the arts on the county; whereupon, the members commended her and the staff on their hard work, including community outreach efforts and compiling the report and the plan.

## 6. Planning

Planning Director Renea Vincent introduced the department managers and referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Doing Things! Planning*, reporting that her department has 37 full-time employees; whereupon, she provided information regarding department duties, ongoing projects, accomplishments, and objectives.

During discussion and responding to queries and concerns by the members, Ms. Vincent addressed the need for pedestrian crossing improvements in Lealman and discussed the Mobile Home Park Redevelopment Program, including the possibility of using a motel for transitional housing and implementing manufactured and tiny houses as affordable housing alternatives; whereupon, she and the members commended staff on their hard work and accomplishments.

## Other Business

Chairman Welch, with input by Attorney White, provided an update of the CareerSource Pinellas Executive Committee meeting that took place the day before, relating the following:

- Marion Hale, attorney for CareerSource Pinellas President and CEO Ed Peachey, rejected the allegations relating to Mr. Peachey, including those of forgeries and scams, indicating that there are no grounds to fire him.
- The Executive Committee voted to terminate Mr. Peachey's employment.
- The Executive Committee voted to pay an undetermined settlement amount to Mr. Peachey that would include five months of pay and benefits; however, the decision is pending a determination of whether a state law limiting employment settlement to six weeks, which pertains to government entities, applies to CareerSource.
- According to a letter from James Landsberg, Inspector General (IG), Department of Economic Opportunity, there is reasonable suspicion of potential criminal activity relating to CareerSource.
- It is questionable whether the current Executive Committee members should continue serving and select the next CEO, given their denial and lack of accountability with regard to Mr. Peachey's actions, including a willingness to overlook the IG's concerns by providing Mr. Peachey with a substantial settlement amount prior to completion of the investigation concerning him and CareerSource.
- Requested that Commissioners Eggers and Long consider being alternate members on the committee.

Thereupon, the members, with input by Attorney White, discussed the possibility of legal action by Mr. Peachey and the need for new membership with regard to the organization's board and committees, and Mr. Woodard provided information relating to the recently initiated application process based on the Board's direction, indicating that following a review by the Economic Development Department staff of the candidates' eligibility, the matter would be presented to the Board.

**ADJOURNMENT - 2:29 P.M.**