

# **Pinellas County**

*315 Court Street  
Clearwater, Florida 33756*



## **Minutes - Final**

**Thursday, May 10, 2018**

**9:30 AM**

**BCC Assembly Room**

### **Board of County Commissioners** **Budget Information Session**

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

**ROLL CALL - 9:32 A.M.**

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

Absent: John Morroni.

Others Present: Jewel White, County Attorney; Mark S. Woodard, County Administrator; and Chris Bartlett, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk (minutes by Jenny Masinovsky).

**1. Tax Collector - Charles W. Thomas**

Mr. Thomas indicated that the Tax Collector's General Fund net expenditure request of \$11,641,510 has met the target for Fiscal Year 2019 set by the Office of Management and Budget; and that the budget shows a \$1.65-million upturn due to increases in healthcare costs and salaries; whereupon, he provided information pertaining to projects planned for the next fiscal year, as follows:

- Adding security to the Tax Collector branch offices is expected to be implemented by June.
- Replacement of vertical applications will reduce the cost of doing business in future years.
- Construction of the North County and South County Service Centers is expected to commence by the end of the year.

Responding to queries by the Commissioners, Mr. Thomas clarified the location of the future South County Service Center and indicated that it should open its doors around the beginning of 2020. He provided information regarding the Tax Collector's P.O. Box locations and the benefits of outsourcing the mail pickup of tax payments and registration renewals and their partial processing.

Mr. Thomas briefly discussed the need for and the cost of security guards at the branches, and related that the expenditure increase from Fiscal Year 2018 to 2019 was due to health insurance costs and salary raises, and from 2017 to 2018 due to a second-floor expansion in the current North County Service Center.

Responding to further queries by the members, Assistant County Administrator Paul Sacco explained the causes for the delay in construction at the North County Service Center, indicating that a phased construction process will likely commence in the October timeframe and be completed in the summer of 2019, allowing the Tax Collector's Office to start operations while construction activities are taking place; whereupon, Mr. Thomas

discussed the challenges in addressing the unfunded state mandate with the Legislature, resulting in Pinellas County subsidizing the state driver license and motor vehicle services at \$9 million annually.

In response to queries by the Chairman, Mr. Woodard confirmed that the Tax Collector's Office has no decision package this year; and that packages presented by other departments and agencies will be briefly discussed today and then brought forward for the Board's review next week.

2. District Six Medical Examiner - Dr. Jon R. Thogmartin

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Forensic Science Center FY 18-19 Budget*, Dr. Thogmartin presented general information related to the Medical Examiner and Forensic Science Center, and indicated that he is appointed by the governor and has been serving Pinellas and Pasco Counties for almost 18 years; whereupon, he discussed staff certification and facilities accreditation, grant awards, and the increasing workload experienced in both facilities, attributable to synthetic opioids continuing to be prominent, noting that seized drug and DNA submissions at the lab have gone up by 20 and 25 percent, respectively; and that the Medical Examiner's caseload is the highest to date.

Referring to data presented in various charts and tables, Dr. Thogmartin discussed Medical Examiner Office structures and provided a cost comparison with the Hillsborough, Manatee, Orange, Broward, and Miami-Dade Districts, demonstrating that his service and management model offers a higher level of performance at a lower cost than all others.

In reviewing the budget request, Dr. Thogmartin emphasized the impact of the synthetic opioid crisis on his office, briefly discussed other expenses, and noted that the request in the amount of \$6,217,730 is being submitted at 3.3 percent under the target for Fiscal Year 2019 set by the Office of Management and Budget.

During discussion, Dr. Thogmartin provided further details regarding the origin and effect of synthetic opioids and answered questions by the members, as follows:

- There are seven doctors working in the Medical Examiner Office, including him.
- The liquid chromatograph mass spectrometer (LCMS) system has been purchased, is undergoing a validation process, and should be operational in approximately 90 days. It will allow for the better detection of drugs and reduce the cost and time of processing.
- Pasco County cases comprise approximately 27 percent of the Medical Examiner's workload. Pasco contracts on a fee-for-service basis, and Dr. Thogmartin is currently negotiating a fee increase.

Thereupon, the members and Mr. Woodard thanked Dr. Thogmartin for his years of service.

3. Florida Department of Health, Pinellas County - Dr. Ulyee Choe

Dr. Choe conducted a PowerPoint presentation titled *Florida Department of Health, Pinellas County FY2018-2019 Budget Presentation*, reviewing the Health Department's mission, services, and governing statute; whereupon, he discussed the following top priorities and focus areas:

Top Priorities

- Access to Care
- Behavioral Health
- Health and Disease Prevention
- Healthy Communities and Environment

Focus Areas

- School Health Nurses Initiative
- Dental Sealants
- Pinellas County Opioid Task Force
- Health in All Policies

Dr. Choe thanked the Board for supplying additional funding in support of the school nurses program and indicated that 20 of the 40 nurses anticipated to be provided in 2018 have been hired; that the goal is to complete the hiring by the end of September; and that the benefits gained from the health assistance provided to students are already apparent.

Dr. Choe discussed accomplishments of the past year, including provisions for dental sealants and the work of the Opioid Task Force, noting that for the first time, all 40 Title I elementary schools and 3 Title I middle schools, which corresponds to nearly 7,600 children, have benefited from the sealants; and that the Task Force continues to focus on the five priority areas as it works to end opioid addiction and deaths.

Dr. Choe provided information concerning the *Health in All Policies* program, noting that it is a strategy that ensures that leaders are informed of the health consequences of various policy options, recognizing that social determinants have a profound impact on health; whereupon, he related that the Department will utilize a grant from The Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg and work with Pinellas County and local municipalities toward program implementation.

Dr. Choe presented an overview of current financial resources for the Health Department and provided a breakdown of various funding sources and program support by the Board of County Commissioners. He presented financial information relating to Fiscal Year 2019 County resources, noting that ad valorem taxes will be approximately 0.08 mills, which will support the core contract consisting of Primary Care Services, School Health Nurses, and Health Fund Reserves; and that the budget increase is due to the School Health Nurses Program.

Dr. Choe discussed proposed changes to the Fiscal Year 2019 User Fee Schedule and the strategic plan for implementation of performance measures relating to HIV infections, childhood vaccines, the dental sealant program, and childhood obesity.

During discussion and in response to queries by the members, Dr. Choe provided clarification regarding the Fiscal Year 2017-2018 financial resources. He presented information pertaining to whether medical marijuana could be an effective alternative to prescription opioids; whereupon, he discussed implementation of the school nurses program; the importance of access to healthy foods and fitness zones; international travel vaccinations; and partnership with the Community Health Centers.

**4. Pinellas Planning Council - Whit Blanton and Rodney Chatman**

Forward Pinellas Executive Director Whit Blanton provided background information regarding Forward Pinellas, indicating that it was created as a result of the merger of the Pinellas Planning Council (PPC) and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO); that the MPO brings two-thirds of the revenue by way of state and federal grants to maintain the countywide transportation planning program; and that the remaining one-third of the revenue consists of ad valorem taxes collected by the PPC.

Mr. Blanton discussed the plans and challenges anticipated in the upcoming fiscal year associated with the adoption of a new Long Range Transportation Plan, a regional transit investment strategy to connect adjacent counties, and changes in staff structure and leadership roles. He related that the agency works on a countywide level as well as a regional level; and that the aforementioned *Health in All Policies* strategy and equity considerations are important factors in the decision-making process; whereupon, he recognized the valuable working partnerships with organizations such as the Florida Department of Transportation, Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority, and the Public Works and Planning Departments of the County.

Planning Division Manager Rodney Chatman referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Forward Pinellas Budget Information Session FY 2018-2019* and related that Forward Pinellas is an integrated transportation and land use agency; that it has 17 full-time employees; and that various advisory committees provide valuable input; whereupon, he discussed the agency's responsibilities, the Strategic Business Plan built along the foundation of "adapt, build, and connect," last year's accomplishments, and the Fiscal Year 2019 Work Plan highlights.

Responding to query by Commissioner Seel, Mr. Chatman indicated that banks are unwilling to finance "tiny homes," noting that Forward Pinellas is working with the City of St. Petersburg to understand and develop solutions regarding obstacles to financing.

Referring to a graph depicting the millage rate and capacity over recent years, Mr. Chatman pointed out that the PPC has held the millage at a very low rate since the recession; and that the agency has taken a conservative approach regarding its spending decisions and is

mindful of the potential impact should the additional homestead exemption ballot question pass in November. Mr. Blanton summarized the budget request, indicating that with a reserve of approximately \$800,000, the agency is in a healthy financial status and is not requesting to adjust the current millage rate of 0.015 mills.

Responding to queries by the members, Messrs. Chatman and Blanton provided information regarding the Affordable Housing Forum in the fall and plans relating to the Forward Pinellas office building; whereupon, at the request of Commissioner Seel, Mr. Blanton agreed to provide recent reports concerning U.S. Highway 19.

Chairman Welch commended Mr. Blanton and his staff on their efforts in building relationships, continuing outreach across neighboring counties, and moving the County's transportation vision forward, and Commissioner Eggers agreed, thanking Mr. Blanton for his leadership in the region and sound decisions relating to the reorganization of the agency staff.

**5. Office of Human Rights - Paul Valenti**

Mr. Valenti referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Office of Human Rights FY '19 Budget Proposal*, and provided an overview and update regarding the three core programs run by the department: Investigation of External Complaints of Discrimination, Civil Rights Compliance, and Wage Theft/Recovery.

Mr. Valenti related that earlier this year, a civil rights compliance review was conducted by the federal government at the St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport, and the preliminary feedback is positive; and that \$207,830.55 in wage theft funds have been recovered and paid to those individuals who performed work without getting paid. He indicated that a substantial sum of money remains to be collected from the responsible employers due to problems with enforceability of the Wage Theft Ordinance, which, among other issues, will be brought to the Board for discussion in the fall.

During discussion and responding to queries by the members, Mr. Valenti indicated that of the total \$784,000 in claimed wages, \$482,815 were awarded but remain uncollected. Equal Opportunity Coordinator Lisa Postell provided information regarding the number of received cases, distribution of wage-theft-related information in the Spanish-speaking community, and employers violating the ordinance; whereupon, at the request of the members, Mr. Valenti agreed to provide a summary report of all claims, including the number of cases and names of the employers.

Mr. Valenti presented the Fiscal Year 2019 proposed budget in the amount of \$1,198,570, relating that the figure is \$6,530 below the target set by the Office of Management and Budget; and that the 2.6-percent increase over the current year is based on personnel and operating costs.

Mr. Valenti discussed other considerations contributing to cost savings, noting that the office has historically strived to have a conservative budget and has expended less than what was appropriated; that it takes a lead role in projects historically performed by consultants; and that the department continues to engage in considerable community outreach, and discussion ensued.

Chairman Welch complimented Mr. Valenti and his office, noting that a large volume of work has been undertaken without changes in staffing, and responding to his query, Mr. Valenti indicated that he is cognizant of potential budgetary limitations; and that his office does not currently require additional employees; whereupon, he expressed appreciation of the Board's commitment to provide resources in support of civil rights, allowing his office to work toward the elimination of discrimination.

**6. Human Resources - Holly Schoenherr**

Ms. Schoenherr recognized the HR leadership team, an intern, and a partner from the Office of Management and Budget present in the audience. She referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Human Resources FY19 Budget* and indicated that her department plans to stay under 99 percent of the proposed budget target in the amount of \$4,301,150; and that there are no decision packages to be considered for the next fiscal year; whereupon, she provided information about the history and mission of the department and the six Centers of Excellence into which it is organized.

Noting the important role of partners, including the Employee Advisory Council, Unified Personnel Board, Board of County Commissioners, and the Appointing Authorities, in the department's successes, Ms. Schoenherr discussed the following accomplishments and 2018 priorities and responded to queries by the members:

**Accomplishments**

- Adopted the Respectful Workplace Behavior/Anti-Bullying Policy
- Hurricane Irma: two-thirds of the HR team completed an emergency assignment
- Created the Workplace Connections Committee
- Launched a Classification and Compensation Study
- Achieved 91-percent completion rate of the Job Assessment Tool
- Provided a Total Compensation Statement to each employee
- Planned, implemented, and reported the 2017 Employee Voice Survey

**2018 Priorities**

- Implement findings of the Classification and Compensation Study
- Address Workforce Pipeline
- Ensure identification and implementation of action plans based on 2017 Employee Voice Survey findings

- Provide Learning Paths and training courses for talent development
- Educate employees on the available benefits, including financial and wellness aspects
- Assessing benefits and wellness programs
- Promoting diversity and inclusion

Ms. Schoenherr noted that the 2017 Employee Voice Survey response rate of 74 percent was significantly above the previous 2015 survey with a response rate of 58 percent and higher than the national rate; and that she believes the improvement resulted from ensuring confidentiality. She indicated that while she is pleased with the HR department survey results overall, areas for improvement which were identified include a connection between compensation and performance, work schedule flexibility, addressing poor performance, and staff morale; whereupon, she discussed indicators of employee engagement, noting that real engagement is based on an emotional commitment to the employer, caring about job quality and the reputation of the organization, and having pride in one's work.

The members commended Ms. Schoenherr on doing great work, meeting the budget target, and efforts related to hiring of the new County Attorney and County Administrator, and Commissioner Eggers expressed appreciation of the valuable insight provided by Human Resources Officer Meagan Decker at a recent meeting.

**7. Feather Sound Community Services District - Harry Venezia**

Mr. Venezia conducted a PowerPoint presentation titled Feather Sound Municipal Services Taxing Unit, FYE 2019 and provided information regarding the responsibilities of the Feather Sound Community Services District Board members, operating expenses, current needs and priorities, and the organization's financial history.

Mr. Venezia presented the District's Fiscal Year 2019 budget request as follows: millage increase from 0.5 mills to 0.75 mills and funding from the County reserves of \$200,000 to support community improvements, including replacing the boardwalk and front entrance signage; whereupon, responding to queries by Chairman Welch, he provided further details and clarification as to upcoming expenses.

During discussion and in response to queries by the members, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Bill Berger indicated that passing of the homestead exemption could result in a revenue loss to the District of approximately \$10,000 a year, based on the current millage rate; and that the District needs the \$200,000 in order to accomplish the aforementioned projects. He provided a comparison of two charts titled FSCSD Ending Fund Balance by Year, one depicting ending fund balance projections by year for Fiscal Year 2018 through 2023 based on a millage increase to 0.75 mills and the other based on a millage increase to 0.7 mills, indicating that because 0.7 mills would sustain community needs and allow for building of the reserves, albeit at a less accelerated pace than the 0.75 mills, OMB is recommending a 0.7 millage rate.



Responding to queries by Commissioner Eggers, Mr. Venezia indicated that the Feather Sound Community Services District Board members were unanimous in their decision to increase the millage, and 95 percent of the residents support it; and that he was unable to obtain Commissioner Morroni's input on the matter.

**Meeting Recessed: 11.59 A.M.**

**Meeting Reconvened: 1:01 P.M.**

**8. East Lake Recreation Services District - Mark Sanders**

Mr. Sanders thanked the Board for providing the district with 0.25 mill last year. He provided information about the facilities and discussed completed and ongoing projects, noting that much of the infrastructure is aging and in disrepair; and that the facilities are growing; whereupon, he discussed the electrical renovations, including the first-in-the-country LED lighting for a ball field implemented last year, and plans for parking lot expansion.

Mr. Sanders reported that last year approximately 22,300 volunteer hours were donated to the District, saving it over a half million dollars; and that the population in the East Lake area is growing, with many young families needing recreation services; whereupon, he thanked the Board for its ongoing support.

**9. East Lake Library Services District - Lois Eannel**

Ms. Eannel thanked the Board for supporting the library in the past year and discussed the stages of the Phase I library expansion adding 2,500 square feet, noting that the construction is anticipated to be completed by August. She expressed hope that the library would potentially expand by another 6,000 to 9,000 square feet (Phase II) in order to get closer to the minimum standard for a public library appropriate for the number of patrons and the size of the community that the East Lake Library serves. She noted that the Phase II expansion would involve building up versus out to prevent any impact to the nearby wetlands; and that energy-efficient measures are being explored for the new construction.

Ms. Eannel discussed library plans for next year relating to construction; community partnerships and participation in various events; new library spaces, programs, services, and collections, including free mobile hotspots allowing access to Wi-Fi service; and future goals and objectives, given the possibility of reduced revenue. She noted that the library continues to find ways to stay relevant in the world of technology.

Ms. Eannel expressed pleasure in working with Real Estate Management Project Coordinator John Smith, requesting that he return for the Phase II construction; whereupon, she read a letter from a patron about an experience at the East Lake Library, complimenting staff on being helpful, respectful, and professional.

**10. Palm Harbor Community Services District - Erica Lynford and Gene Coppola**

Palm Harbor Community Services Agency (PHCSA) Director Erica Lynford expressed appreciation to Mr. Woodard and his staff for their service and the growing partnership between the County and PHCSA. She thanked the Board for providing funding in the past year and expressed hope for its support of the Agency and the Palm Harbor Library with a quarter mill for each next year; whereupon, she discussed projects funded through the millage, including a football/soccer field, teen mentoring program, and a Youth Advisory Council, noting their importance to the community.

Ms. Lynford stressed the value of volunteer contributions and related that PHCSA offers free meals and exercise programs for low-income residents and various other free programming for all; whereupon, she noted that the free services are sponsored by summer day camps run by the Agency.

Palm Harbor Library Director Gene Coppola thanked the Board for providing Municipal Services Taxing Unit funding to the library and indicated that with the funds received last year and this year, it was able to purchase Macintosh computers and offer the new service to its users; whereupon, he thanked Mr. Woodard for his support over many years.

Mr. Coppola discussed the evolution of libraries, noting that while fewer items are being checked out, usage of libraries is increasing dramatically because they provide a safe and relaxing environment for people to gather; and that recognizing the trend, the Palm Harbor Library has incorporated more study rooms and programs, such as a cooking program conducted in a mobile kitchen; whereupon, he invited the Commissioners to attend a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the opening of a new activity center on May 31. He indicated that all items in the center will be portable; and that the project was not publicly funded.

Mr. Coppola related that the services provided and the number of hours donated by library volunteers have been remarkable; that the library recently celebrated 40 years of existence; and that it strives to be conservative with its funds and accommodating to the patrons.

The members thanked Ms. Lynford and Mr. Coppola for reaching out and keeping them updated, and for their commitment and dedication. Commissioner Eggers noted the invaluable role of the volunteers and thanked Ms. Lynford and Mr. Coppola for motivating them; whereupon, in response to query by Commissioner Justice, Mr. Coppola provided clarification relating to the equipment and accommodations for Macintosh computer users.

**11. Pinellas Public Library Cooperative - Cheryl Morales**

Chairman Welch introduced Doug Lewis, Pinellas Public Library Cooperative (PPLC) Board of Directors Vice-Chair, who related that the Cooperative is functioning well and noted the creativity in services provided by the East Lake and Palm Harbor libraries. He briefly discussed the growing value of technology, noting that it is widely utilized by patrons for a variety of purposes; whereupon, he related that Ms. Morales is celebrating 30 years as a librarian.

Ms. Morales referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *PPLC, Board of County Commissioners, May 10, 2018* and provided an update regarding services that have become available at the library in recent years, such as pet adoption, reading to dogs, borrowing a bouzouki, cooking, sewing, knitting, downloading electronic materials, learning to play a ukulele, and searching for ancestry. She noted that the library has been awarded a \$10,000 grant that will allow it to expand the ukulele lending program and provide online courses for music instruction. Responding to query by Chairman Welch, she indicated that the ancestry.com service cannot be accessed from one's home due to the subscription cost, but is available at all 24 public library outlets within the Cooperative.

Ms. Morales discussed circulation trends and database usage, as well as connecting with patrons online, through social media, and a mobile application. She noted that similar to the Palm Harbor Library, program participation numbers are skyrocketing, with the Largo Library, which received statewide recognition, at the top; and that the Cooperative manages a delivery service for libraries to share materials.

Ms. Morales referred to a PPLC Board membership roster, noting that information about one vacancy has been posted. She related that Board activity for the past year has focused on revisions to the Interlocal Agreement, expiring on September 30; and that the revised agreement will likely be presented for the Commissioners' review in August. Responding to queries by Commissioner Seel, she indicated that the main change involves categorizing library materials such as books and online databases as "non-fixed capital expenditures" rather than operational to allow for a 100-percent credit from the state, noting that it would bring the library in line with the state library funding model; and that a list of all revisions will be provided to the Commissioners, and Mr. Woodard provided input.

Ms. Morales provided further details regarding partnerships and programs which have had great success and growth, including Reading with Tampa Bay Rays, the Ukulele Lending Library Program, Museum Pass Program, State of Florida Career Online High School, and the Juvenile Welfare Board Campaign for Graded Level Reading; whereupon, she discussed the importance of services for visually/hearing impaired individuals, relating that those services have extended to Sarasota County for a high fee; and that significant outreach has taken place informing the veteran community of available services.

Chairman Welch thanked Ms. Morales for her partnership; whereupon, he reminded the members that the next Budget Information Session will take place on May 17.

**ADJOURNMENT - 2:00 P.M.**