

Pinellas County

*315 Court Street
Clearwater, Florida 33756*



Minutes - Final

Tuesday, December 4, 2018

9:30 AM

Joint BCC/State Delegation Meeting

Clerk's Conference Room, 4th Floor

Board of County Commissioners

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

ROLL CALL - 9:35 A.M.

Present:

Board of County Commissioners (BCC) – Kenneth T. Welch, Chairman; Karen Williams Seel, Vice-Chairman; Dave Eggers; Pat Gerard; Charlie Justice; Janet C. Long; and Kathleen Peters

Pinellas County Legislative Delegation – Senator Darryl Rouson, Chairman; Representative Chris Sprowls, Vice-Chairman; Representative Nick DiCeglie; Senator Ed Hooper; Representative Chris Latvala; and Representative Wengay Newton, Sr. (late arrival)

Not Present: Senator Jeff Brandes; Representative Ben Diamond; Representative James Grant; and Representative Jennifer Webb

Others Present: Barry A. Burton, County Administrator; Jewel White, County Attorney; Brian Lowack, Intergovernmental Liaison; other interested individuals; and Chris Bartlett, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk

1. Welcome

Commissioner Kenneth T. Welch, Chairman, Board of County Commissioners
Senator Darryl Rouson, Chairman, Pinellas Legislative Delegation

Chairman Welch called the meeting to order and welcomed the Delegation members and visitors. At his request, those in attendance introduced themselves; whereupon, he related that Representatives Diamond and Webb and Senator Brandes had prior commitments and are unable to attend.

At the Chairman's request for opening comments, Senator Rouson remarked on the desire of the Delegation to work hard and look out for the interests of Pinellas County. He noted that he had requested \$25 million from the Legislature to help combat the opioid crisis and addiction epidemic occurring in Florida communities; that an initial allocation of \$10 million was discussed but did not get funded; and that he has traveled the state to better understand the issues from the client and provider perspectives to help inform his effort to secure the funding going forward; whereupon, he discussed Creative Pinellas, the Arts Alliance, and his full commitment to support funding for the arts.

2. Red Tide Cleanup Efforts - State, County, City Partnership

Environmental Management Director Kelli Levy provided an update on the County's cleanup effort to mitigate the effects of red tide. She stated that crews removed over 1,800 tons of material between early September and the end of November; and that 206 tons were processed at the County's waste-to-energy plant with the remainder going to the landfill.

Ms. Levy indicated that over 1,000 water samples were analyzed to stay abreast of red tide counts within county waters; and that crews were effectively demobilized around November 21,

with all areas clear of concentrations except for Gulfport and Treasure Island. She noted that the County continues to work with state and federal agencies to monitor related activities; and that red tide mitigation plans will be added to her department's overall emergency plan.

Responding to queries by the members, Ms. Levy discussed the benefits of proactively removing dead sea life from offshore before it could reach the shoreline, and noted that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection provided a grant of \$7.5 million to help fund the cleanup effort; whereupon, discussion ensued regarding the delay in receiving Federal Emergency Management Agency reimbursement for County expenses related to the effects of Hurricane Irma.

4. Overview of County's Legislative Priorities

Deviating from the agenda, Chairman Welch introduced Mr. Lowack to discuss the County's chosen priorities.

Mr. Lowack provided background information and discussed the following priorities:

1. Funding projects in support of regional transportation
2. Improved oversight of Community Redevelopment Areas (CRAs)
3. Funding centralized mental health treatment facilities
4. Clarification of self-defense laws

Commissioner Long stated that the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority is requesting \$1.5 million; and that Senator Bill Galvano has indicated that he will help find a recurring revenue source as a top priority.

Responding to query by Representative Newton regarding revenue sharing between the County and Forward Pinellas, Assistant County Administrator Rahim Harji stated that there is no agreement at this time; and that following a transit funding work session in January, the County will have a better funding strategy.

Representative Newton discussed having CRAs promote people programs rather than spending money on infrastructure, and Chairman Welch concurred. In response to query by the Representative regarding using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for infrastructure within CRAs, Assistant County Administrator Jake Stowers stated that the County has used CDBG money in its Lealman CRA; and that other CRAs are located within municipalities that receive separate CDBG funding, and discussion ensued.

In response to queries by Representative Newton regarding mental health issues, Assistant County Administrator Lourdes Benedict stated that the County works closely with the Central Florida Behavioral Health Network; and that over \$15 million in funding has been raised in recent years to help address the matter.

Commissioner Peters noted that when the County lost federal grant money, it lost beds and services; that any increases it received were strictly for pharmaceuticals and treatments; and that without wraparound services to help support treatment plans, the programs become less successful; whereupon, she discussed the Marchman Act and the need for better reporting and data collection throughout the state, and discussion ensued.

Senator Rouson related that he has filed a bill to repeal certain self-defense laws in the state; that its purpose is to start discussions toward clarification and modification of existing laws; and that he feels everyone supports lessening the confusion surrounding the use of self-defense.

5. Appropriations Requests

Mr. Lowack discussed several projects for which the County is seeking appropriations from the state:

- The Lofty Pines sewer/stormwater retrofit project involving approximately 120 homes and connecting them to the City of Dunedin's sewage collection facilities, eliminating the need for septic systems.
- A proposed community facility to provide outdoor recreational activities for youths in the Highpoint community.
- A new vocational pilot program focused on utilities and public works-related services by providing high school graduates a means to achieve certifications in emerging fields and take advantage of employment opportunities in the Tampa Bay region.
- The East Lake Library Expansion Phase 1B.
- A new Redington Joint Use Public Safety Facility, in partnership with the Cities of Redington Shores, Redington Beach, and North Redington Beach, to provide office space for Public Works, Supervisor of Elections, County Sheriff, and Emergency Medical Services staff.
- The Gulf Boulevard Undergrounding project to move utility lines underground from Clearwater Beach to the City of St. Pete Beach.

Representative Latvala stated that he would sponsor the Highpoint project. Following brief discussion, Representative Newton indicated that he would sponsor the Utilities Vocational Workforce Pilot Program; whereupon, Chairman Welch thanked both Representatives for their support.

Emerging Issues

Deviating from the agenda, Chairman Welch indicated that the number of auto thefts in Pinellas County has become a public safety issue; that while the rate of thefts has been

decreasing, there were still 978 incidents of auto theft in 2017; and that many people have lost their lives in accidents involving stolen vehicles. He noted that the County Commission has supported diversion programs and has approved funding for several programs related to the issue; whereupon, he discussed several programs and services that could be expanded to improve their effectiveness, and the implementation of a prolific offenders database including a Detention Risk Assessment instrument that remains delayed.

Senator Rouson stated that he supports, and urged the Delegation to support, the County's efforts in addressing the issue, and spoke about his personal experiences attending the funerals of three young boys involved in a related incident last year. He noted that a program to target prolific juvenile offenders involved with auto thefts will be implemented in January to serve Hillsborough County; and that he hopes it will be successful enough to expand to Pinellas and other counties.

Representative Newton related his experiences and provided background information on his activities advocating for funding of youth job opportunities programs and for longer detention of car thieves in the juvenile justice facilities. He stated that if the County will commit to a million dollars and the cities, along with the Juvenile Welfare Board, also make a commitment, he will match their support by requesting \$6 million in appropriations for job opportunities or workforce programs to ensure the availability of after-school employment for youths in the community.

Commissioner Long reported on the regional climate resilience and sea level rise compact that was signed by 25 regional governments on October 8. She stated that the compact was recently signed at the Florida Association of Counties' (FAC) policy conference in Punta Gorda, and at the FAC's legislative conference in Tampa; whereupon, she discussed how rising sea levels could potentially devastate the Tampa Bay region.

**3. Contractor Licensing Department Update
- 2019 Local Bill**

Department Director Glenn Wardell provided background information on the creation and responsibilities of the Contractor Licensing Department, noting that it is a dependent agency of the County.

Mr. Wardell stated that there is a need to remove the residency requirement for government officials chosen to serve on the Pinellas County Construction Licensing Board. Mr. Lowack related that under the Special Act, Building Officials are required to live in the county; that nearly half of all officials live outside of Pinellas County; and that the seat earmarked for Pinellas County will go unfilled as its Building Official does not meet the stated residency requirement.

Mr. Lowack stated that because the County does not require its official to live in the county, it would like to exempt the position from the residency requirement in order for an official to be able to serve on the Board, and discussion ensued.

6. Open Discussion

- Commissioner Gerard provided a brief update on CareerSource Pinellas and noted that the FBI started its own investigation about a month ago.
- Commissioner Justice related that a Farm Share event will be held in the Lealman area and invited everyone to attend. He noted that he is interested in the Delegation's response to the recent issues disclosed regarding Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg.
- Commissioner Eggers discussed the economic importance of the Tampa Bay region and its dependence on a consistent regional message coming from all partners. He noted that many recent changes have been made to how Community Redevelopment Areas are managed financially; whereupon, he related that suicide rates in Florida remain high but have been decreasing and provided information on a recent study looking into the causes related to suicides among youth.
- Deputy Supervisor of Elections Julie Marcus, representing Supervisor of Elections Deborah Clark, extended an invitation to the attendees to visit the office and receive a tour of the election facilities. She acknowledged the partnerships with the County departments and Commission and the Legislative Delegation, thanking all of the organizations for their continued support of the Elections Office when called upon.
- Commissioner Long related that funding for the Clearwater Beach Causeway Busway program is included in the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) work program; that an increase in funding is needed for the Tampa International Airport Express Service; and that FDOT Secretary David Gwynn has asked that letters of support be sent to the State to ensure that the Westshore Interchange project is the number one priority for the region, and Commissioner Eggers provided input.
- Commissioner Peters congratulated the Delegation members on being elected or re-elected to serve a new term in the Legislature.
- Commissioner Seel noted that as an ex-officio member of Creative Pinellas, she supports the need and advocacy for increased arts funding.
- Representative Newton congratulated Commissioner Peters on her election to the County Commission.
- Commissioner Long noted that Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority Executive Director David Green is in attendance; whereupon, Mr. Green introduced himself.

7. Public Comment

Chairman Welch indicated that he has received no requests from persons wishing to be heard.

Conclusion

Senator Rouson thanked those in attendance and noted that the Pinellas County Elections Office did not experience any major problems during the recent General Election in November; and that the Delegation members are ready to help. He stated that he is optimistic and expecting good returns during the next legislative session.

ADJOURNMENT - 11:01 A.M.