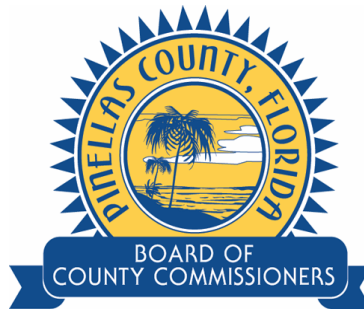


Pinellas County

315 Court Street
Clearwater, Florida 33756



Minutes - Final

Thursday, June 20, 2019

9:30 A.M.

Public Works Clearwater Campus, 2nd Floor Training Room

Board of County Commissioners - Work Session

Karen Williams Seel, Chair

Pat Gerard, Vice-Chair

Dave Eggers

Charlie Justice

Janet C. Long

Kathleen Peters

Kenneth T. Welch

ROLL CALL - 9:32 A.M.

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

Absent: Kathleen Peters.

Others Present: Barry A. Burton, County Administrator; Jewel White, County Attorney; and Jerry Gottlick, Board Reporter.

Chair Seel welcomed the attendees to the Public Works facility, noting that the building houses the County's traffic control center.

1. Joint BCC/TDC Work Session

Tourist Development Council Members Present: Chair Karen Williams Seel, BCC; Vice-Chair Russ Kimball, Sheraton Sand Key Resort; Julie Ward Bujalski, City of Dunedin Mayor; George Cretekos, City of Clearwater Mayor; Charlie Gerdes, City of St. Petersburg Councilmember; Phil Henderson, Jr., StarLite Cruises; Joanne "Cookie" Kennedy, City of Indian Rocks Beach Mayor; Doreen Moore, Travel Resort Services, Inc.; Keith Overton, Tradewinds Island Resorts; Charles Prather, The Birchwood Inn; and Anthony Satterfield, Alden Suites.

Absent: Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry.

Following comments by Mr. Burton, Managing Assistant County Attorney Michael Zas referred to a PowerPoint presentation and provided a brief overview of the Pinellas County Tourist Development Tax (TDT), relating that the six-percent *bed tax* is charged on accommodation rentals of six months or less; that approximately 98 percent is paid by out-of-county visitors; and that it generated approximately \$60 million in Fiscal Year 2018. He reviewed the governing statute, permitted uses and limitations, provisions of the current Tourist Development Plan, existing commitments under the Plan, and additional commitments related to the Capital Project Funding Program; whereupon, he discussed recent statutory amendments allowing use of TDT revenue for estuary and lagoon improvements and certain public facilities.

Attorney Zas provided the following recommendations, noting that any Plan amendment would require a majority plus one vote.

- BCC should decide whether to amend the Tourist Development Plan to include one or both recent statutory amendments.
- BCC should consider whether to amend the Plan to include any new funding obligations and to delete those funding commitments that have been satisfied.

Lengthy discussion ensued regarding the public facilities amendment, and responding to queries by the members, Attorney Zas indicated that the statute is limited to major capital infrastructure projects that would increase *and* positively impact tourist-related business activities, noting that the latter would have to be demonstrated through an economic impact study. He discussed the statutory requirements, including types of projects, funding options, and the project review process, and provided examples of transportation facilities that may be eligible for funding, remarking that any potential project would have to be evaluated individually.

The members stressed that certain aspects of the statute, such as what constitutes an increase and positive impact, need to be clarified, expressing concern that basic infrastructure support projects do not appear to be eligible, and Attorney Zas suggested that a court challenge or an Attorney General's opinion would provide clarification.

Responding to comment by Mayor Bujalski, Commissioners Long and Justice discussed the importance of healthy estuaries and lagoons for the environment and the local economy. Responding to query by Mayor Kennedy, Attorney Zas related that beach nourishment funding allocation is a function of County staff; and that it is not addressed through the Plan out of flexibility considerations, noting that the Plan could be revised, and Chair Seel confirmed the County's commitment to beach nourishment.

Mayor Cretkos opined that the potential amount of money available for public facility projects would be insufficient to address any major infrastructure issues, noting that the public may misinterpret the current discussion in thinking that a new pot of money may become available, and Commissioner Welch agreed.

Commissioner Long discussed the role of transportation in enhancing the visitor experience, noting that the legislators are interested in projects involving new technologies; whereupon, in response to her comment regarding visitor contributions to the local infrastructure, Chair Seel stated for the record that visitors pay the Penny for Pinellas infrastructure sales surtax and a portion of the sales tax.

Chair Seel expressed her support for innovative transportation projects, but cautioned that amending the Plan would open the door to a myriad of funding requests for projects relating to drainage, sewer, and other infrastructure. Referring to a handout distributed by James Abernathy, Office of Management and Budget, she noted that there is a generous fund balance within the TDT Capital Funding Program and offered examples of existing and potential alternative funding sources such as the gas tax, stressing that keeping the 60-percent allocation for marketing intact is critical for the future of tourism. Commissioner Gerard noted that the Plan could be amended at a future time, should a project arise, and Chair Seel agreed, and brief discussion ensued with regard to the amendment process.

Mr. Burton indicated that conversation on transportation generated today will pave the way for the upcoming broader discussion by the BCC; whereupon, at his request, Forward Pinellas Executive Director Whit Blanton referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Tourism, Transportation and Land Use*, noting that he made a similar presentation to the BCC a year ago. He discussed the following matters and responded to queries by the members:

- How including the option of funding public facilities in the Plan may impact the County
- Increasing number of residents and visitors
- Visit St. Pete/Clearwater survey results regarding the use of transportation by visitors
- Connecting workers to jobs
- How transit currently supports tourism
- Benefits of improved transit to residents and visitors, including quality of life, congestion alternatives, and reduction in demand for parking at destinations

Mr. Blanton underscored that funding of transportation infrastructure projects always involves partnerships, and a local match may be as small as 20 percent when leveraged with state or federal sources; that transit is the weakest link in the transportation network; that tourism accounts for approximately 7.2 percent of the jobs in the county, contributing approximately \$10 billion to the regional economy; and that it is an integral part of transportation planning. Responding to queries by Mayor Kennedy and Mr. Henderson, Mr. Blanton provided comments regarding pedestrian safety and micromobility, and discussion ensued.

Mayor Bujalski indicated that she supports amending the Plan to include the option of funding public facilities, with a caveat that it would be limited to transportation that enhances tourism, so that the opportunity is available should a suitable project arise, and related that infrastructure in the City of Dunedin is inadequate to handle the increasing visitor traffic. Mr. Overton suggested amending the Plan to include all public facilities allowed under the statute, noting that projects would be filtered through a case by case review.

Responding to comment by Mr. Henderson, Chair Seel welcomed the members to provide input on amending the Plan, reminding them that ultimately it will be a decision by the BCC; whereupon, the members stressed the importance of protecting and preserving the 60-percent allocation for marketing purposes in light of the ever-increasing usage of bed tax, noted the need to improve transportation, and indicated that the Plan could be amended if a project comes up at a later time.

Commissioner Long remarked that it was never her intent to use the 60-percent marketing allocation for other purposes, and Chair Seel provided input.

Responding to comment by Mr. Kimball, Chair Seel indicated that the BCC has endorsed dedicating significant funds from Penny for Pinellas IV to address affordable housing needs; whereupon, she thanked the members for attending the work session and announced that the BCC will hold a work session on transportation and housing on July 18.

Meeting Recessed: 11:04 A.M.

Meeting Reconvened: 11:17 A.M.

2. North Pinellas Trail Loop Update

Mr. Burton introduced the item; whereupon, Transportation Division Director Ken Jacobs referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Pinellas/Duke Energy Florida Trail, North Loop Segment Project Update*, and provided an update regarding the project status, discussing the following matters:

- History and purpose of the Pinellas Trail
- Types and safety of pedestrian crossings
- North loop segment location, length, and funding
- Criteria for determining the optimal segment location: Meadow Wood
- Flashing beacon signs at trail crossing intersections
- Distance to homes
- Crime
- Property values
- Next steps

In response to queries and concerns of Commissioner Eggers, Mr. Jacobs discussed the options for the proposed trail crossing at State Route 580, including a flashing beacon sign, pedestrian refuge in the median, and an overpass. He noted that the project design stage is currently 60 percent complete, thus the overpass option can be explored and the design modified upon the Board's desire; and that there is a need to create a prioritized list of trail overpasses to be forwarded for consideration to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

During discussion and responding to queries by the members, Mr. Jacobs indicated that the proposed placement of two new traffic signals has been approved by FDOT; and that the minimum proximity from the trail to a private property line would be 25 feet; whereupon, he provided information regarding trail sidewalk setbacks, differences between the Northside Drive and Meadow Wood trail location options, and inconveniences relating to the number of street crossings and curved sections of certain trail segments in the City of Clearwater.

Upon the Chair's call for persons wishing to speak, the following individuals stated their concerns regarding the project:

Scott Bressler, Clearwater

Bruce Rumble, Clearwater (spoke on behalf of others in attendance)

Robert P. Isabella, Westchase

Anthony Isabella, Clearwater

In response to the speakers' concerns, Mr. Jacobs addressed issues such as pedestrian crossing safety, permitting, a recent fatality on the trail, and traffic congestion on State Route 580; whereupon, he discussed the drawbacks of locating the trail segment in the McMullen Booth Road area, as suggested by the speakers.

Upon the Chair's call for any other persons wishing to speak, Brian Smith, Ozona, indicated that he is speaking on behalf of the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee and as the former Planning Director for the County, and expressed support for the proposed project.

Responding to queries by the members, Mr. Jacobs provided information regarding flashing beacon sign function options and McMullen Booth Road area traffic volumes, street intersections, and driveway crossings; whereupon, the members discussed the following:

- Value of the trail to the community
- Unfeasibility of locating the trail along heavily-travelled McMullen Booth Road
- Support for the Northside Drive trail location option
- State Route 580 overpass
- Safety of the trail
- Need for policies regarding scooters, electric bikes, night-time use of the trail, and connections to business districts
- Making future overpasses less steep than the present structures
- Honoring the promise of trail building to the citizens

Upon introduction by Chair Seel and responding to a concern of the speakers, Kim Craven, Duke Energy Corporation, provided information about electromagnetic fields and studies as to whether they cause cancers, particularly childhood leukemia. He indicated that while a weak association was found, there has not been a scientific conclusion as to causation; and that he will leave pertinent scientific literature with staff.

Chair Seel thanked Mr. Craven, Scott Daniels of Pinellas Trails, Inc., Brian Smith, and the citizens for attending the work session and providing input; whereupon, following brief discussion and responding to query by Mr. Burton, she directed staff to proceed with the Northside Drive trail location option, and Mr. Jacobs provided information relating to next steps in the process.

Meeting Recessed: 12:59 P.M.

Meeting Reconvened: 1:08 P.M.

3. Honoring the Memory of Commissioner John Morroni

Chair Seel referred to a memorandum from Commissioner Justice dated June 3, 2019 and a document titled *Pinellas County Administrative Directive, Honorary Naming Rights Policy*, and thanked Commissioner Justice for providing the background information;

whereupon, at her request, he discussed a proposal to honor the memory and service of the late Commissioner Morroni by renaming a County facility after him, and presented several options for the members' consideration.

Following brief deliberation, the members agreed that the County building located at 12490 Ulmerton Road, the Sunstar Paramedics location, would be the most fitting, and Chair Seel noted that it would memorialize Commissioner Morroni's commitment to first responders.

4. County Administrator Six-Month Review

Chair Seel introduced the item, remarking that she has been impressed with Mr. Burton's responsiveness, strong business acumen, and public outreach efforts. Mr. Burton distributed documents titled *County Administrator 6-month Performance Review Compilation of Ratings November 2018 - April 2019, Term Sheet, and Addendum 1 County Administrator Employment Agreement* to the members; whereupon, they commented on his performance and commended him on the progress made with regard to building relationships and trust in the community, his holistic approach to transportation and focus on problematic areas, and creating an environment that facilitates interaction between the members and staff.

Discussion ensued regarding Mr. Burton's request to change his contract with regard to (1) annual performance evaluation and salary review, (2) annual leave, and (3) the §457 Plan, as presented on the *Term Sheet* document, and Attorney White provided input. Chair Seel indicated that if a change to the §457 Plan is approved for Mr. Burton's contract, the same should be done with regard to contract with Attorney White.

Following discussion, Chair Seel noted the lack of consensus on the matter. She suggested that the changes requested by Mr. Burton be reflected in the budget draft; and that the matter be brought for a formal discussion by the Board in September, before the start of a new budget year and closer to Mr. Burton's one-year anniversary with the County, and no objections were noted.

ADJOURNMENT - 1:29 P.M.