



**Forward Pinellas Board Workshop
Summary
December 14, 2022**

[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

Board Members in Attendance:

Mayor Cookie Kennedy, City of Indian Rocks Beach, Chair
Commissioner Janet Long, Pinellas County, Vice Chair
Councilmember David Allbritton, City of Clearwater, Treasurer
Mayor Julie Ward Bujalski, City of Dunedin, Secretary
Commissioner Dave Eggers, Pinellas County
Commissioner Michael Smith, City of Largo
Councilmember Richie Floyd, City of St. Petersburg
Councilmember Gina Driscoll, St. Petersburg City Council
Councilmember Bonnie Noble, representing Belleair, Belleair Bluffs, Gulfport, Kenneth
City, Seminole, and South Pasadena
Commissioner Brian Scott, Pinellas County Commission (incoming)
Councilor Chris Burke, Seminole City Council (incoming)
Mayor Alan Johnson, City of St. Pete Beach (incoming)
Vice Mayor Jarrod Buchman, Oldsmar (incoming)

Board Members Not in Attendance:

Vice Mayor Patti Reed, City of Pinellas Park
Councilmember Brandi Gabbard, City of St. Petersburg
Commissioner Cliff Merz, City of Safety Harbor, also representing Oldsmar and Safety
Harbor

Others in Attendance:

Whit Blanton, Executive Director, Forward Pinellas
Chelsea Favero, Planning Manager, Forward Pinellas
Rodney Chatman, Planning Division Manager, Forward Pinellas
Tina Jablon, Executive Administrative Secretary, Forward Pinellas
Maria Kelly, Secretary, Forward Pinellas
Jared Austin, Planner, Forward Pinellas
Dana Santos, Communications & Outreach, Forward Pinellas
Mayor Costa Vatikiotis, City of Tarpon Springs
Mayor Frank Hibbard, City of Clearwater
Commissioner Denise Houseberg, Indian Rocks Beach

Commissioner Joe McCall, Indian Rocks Beach
Commissioner Jude Bond, Indian Rocks Beach
Mayor Woody Brown, City of Largo
Mayor David Will, Reddington Beach
Mayor Dave Gattis, Belleair Beach
Commissioner Tom Shelly, Town of Belleair
Councilmember Kathleen Beckman, Clearwater
Bryan Beckman, Chair, Suncoast Sierra Club
Cassandra Borchers, WSP (Consultant)
Cassandra Hadad-Broun, Assistant to Commissioner Janet Long
Barry Burton, Pinellas County Administrator
Rob Duncan, Town Manager Kenneth City
Michael Gagliardi, Florida Department of Transportation
Secretary David Gwynn, Florida Department of Transportation
Jensen Hackett, Florida Department of Transportation
Justin Hall, Florida Department of Transportation
Brian Hunter, Florida Department of Transportation
Chris Jadick, WSP (Consultant)
Martin Kehoe, Citizen Business Owner
Bobbie Shay Lee, Assistant to Commissioner Brian Scott
Marita Lynch, Forward Pinellas CAC member
Rebecca Moistner, St. Petersburg Planning
Greg Mims, City Manager Indian Rocks Beach
Derek Reeves, Pinellas Park Planning
Jeff Rosenfield, Tampa Bay newspapers
Mayor Dan Saracki, Oldsmar
Natalie Scott, Citizen Business Owner
Mayor Patrick Soranno, Indian Shores
Tom Whalen, St. Petersburg Planning

The workshop began at 1:00pm EST. Board Chair Mayor Kennedy provided welcoming remarks for participants.

Workshop Purpose and Outcomes

Whit Blanton, Executive Director

This workshop brought together elected leaders countywide to develop a vision and strategic goals that will lead to shared positive outcomes for Pinellas County. Discussion focused on identified key countywide initiatives which will ultimately help

inform the development of the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) as well as the agency's Strategic Business Plan.

Setting the Context – Countywide Issues and Opportunities

Forward Pinellas staff presentation

The following key topics for discussion were presented in terms of accomplishments and planned activities in the coming year:

- Workforce and Attainable Housing
- Environmental Resilience and Sustainability
- Redevelopment and Target Employment
- Transportation System Needs and Priorities
- Vision Zero/Safety

Countywide Vision and Desired Outcomes

Invited speakers, board members, and other elected officials

Mayor Frank Hibbard, City of Clearwater:

- Mayor Hibbard shared the challenge of maintaining continuity of identified initiatives as elected officials' term limits are reached and new office holders emerge.
- Our local governments must come together as a unified force. This will help get referendums passed.
- The CSX line is an opportunity for the county.

Mayor Alan Johnson, City of St. Pete Beach:

- The transportation needs of St. Pete Beach concern moving people to and from, rather than through the community. Rapid transit buses have been more advantageous than trolleys in moving people to and from the island.
- Housing on the island is generally not affordable, so there is a need to connect people working in the city to off-island housing that is affordable.

Mayor Woody Brown, City of Largo:

- Largo is primarily residential and there is desire to preserve neighborhoods. There is a need for more housing, jobs, and density. Density increases and investments have been focused to the "activity centers" (e.g., Tri-City, Largo Mall, and downtown). There is also a desire for more people to be able to walk to work and not have to use a car,
- The West Bay Drive Complete Street project is ongoing. The city wants to look at where Alternate US 19 meets West Bay Drive for increasing pedestrian safety, and along Clearwater-Largo Rd in front of Mildred Helms Elementary.
- The city has identified multiple other roads for improving safety, including East Bay Drive, Lake Ave., Rosary Rd.

- Current development examples include the installation of mid-block crossings on West Bay Drive, encourage downtown redevelopment, new mixed-use city hall, and 285 apartment complex units for mixed-use in downtown.
- The city approves of attainable housing and currently has a couple attainable housing builds that are apartment style buildings with 30% of space allotted to more affordable units.
- Largo has continued efforts in their Sustainability Action Plan. Examples have included moving the sanitary sewer lift stations out of the flood plain and attention to chemical safety and sustainability in golf course operation.

Secretary David Gwynn, FDOT:

- As a regional transportation agency, FDOT expressed desire to hear the local needs and work collaboratively across city lines.

Commission Janet Long

- Establishment of a regional MPO is an opportunity for the acquisition of competitive funding by speaking with one voice. Others in attendance concurred and provided examples of Orlando and locally, the Westshore interchange project, where having a regional voice enabled more statewide project support and funding.

Commissioner Dave Eggers

- He noted how issues such as housing, transportation, and work force needs are interlinked. Also, the perception of “affordable housing” terminology has negative connotations; terminology should be shifted to “attainable housing” or “workforce housing.”

Mayor Bujalski, City of Dunedin:

- There is a need for a consistent funding source for large scale transit projects and making those funding sources more accessible to smaller communities.

Mayor Dan Saracki, City of Oldsmar:

- Mayor Saracki noted the approval of Oldsmar’s theatre district project, which will include townhouses with mixed-use of retail and rental space, as well as development downtown.
- There is a need for the US 19 interchanges to extend up to Tampa Rd. to reduce traffic bottlenecks.
- He also expressed concerns for needing more workforce housing, since many people who work in the city do not live there and commute to work from neighboring communities, as well as concern regarding sea level rise.

Barry Burton, Pinellas County Administrator

- Mr. Burton further asserted the need for attainable housing. Pinellas County has yet to realize the density plans and bonuses set forth in the Advantage Pinellas Plan. He urged the cities to come together and sign the Housing Compact.

Roundtable Discussion on Opportunities and Partnerships

Open dialogue on identified key topics

- Whit Blanton inquired of all attendees to think of what Forward Pinellas can do to help their communities achieve their goals. He stressed that transportation funding and infrastructure can solve complimentary issues (e.g., storm water drainage, housing, etc.), but communities need to first bring those issues forward.
- Councilmember Kathleen Beckman noted it would be helpful if Forward Pinellas can help send notices to officials to help them attend other communities' meetings, hear about their projects, and voice opinions.
- Mayor Hibbard inquired about the CSX line. Secretary David Gwynn shared that CSX desires a clear plan and budget requirements before engaging in discussion, and that they are not interested in selling the tracks outright. Whit Blanton furthered that there will be Brightline higher speed rail system opening September or October 2023 to link Orlando International Airport with West Palm Beach. Their next plan is to go to Tampa/Union Station. So, we need to think of a plan for how to connect Pinellas County to that network.
- Mayor Costa Vatikiotis shared that the Complete Streets Program has been of significant benefit to Tarpon Springs, such as helping to evaluate a possible extension of Belcher Rd to help alleviate commute congestion. The city plans to use the program again in the future. He noted the city is interested in how to get visitors to and from Tarpon Springs for tourism and more emphasis on multimodal transportation.
- Mayor Dave Gattis noted Belleair Beach is plagued with traffic going to Clearwater Beach and suggested consideration of a new bridge linking the barrier islands to the mainland.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Opportunity to identify areas of consensus and plan for further actions

Whit Blanton shared that in Spring 2023 Forward Pinellas will be conducting community outreach to further inform development of the LRTP and other complimentary initiatives.

This was Councilmember Noble's and Chair Mayor Kennedy's last meeting on the Forward Pinellas Board. Whit Blanton presented them both with gifts in recognition of their service.

Chair Mayor Kennedy made closing remarks. The workshop concluded at 3:00pm EST.