

THE PLANNING COUNCIL AND METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION FOR PINELLAS COUNTY

The Forward Pinellas Board held this public meeting in person on October 12, 2022, at 1 p.m. in the Palm Room at the Pinellas County Communications Building.

Forward Pinellas staff presented draft recommendations for the Target Employment and Industrial Land Study (TEILS)

Since January 2022, Forward Pinellas, in partnership with Pinellas County Economic Development, Pinellas County Housing and Community Development, Renaissance Planning Group, and SB Friedman Development Advisors, has been working to update the TEILS to address present challenges. Challenges include market pressure for the development of residential and commercial uses rather than industrial development, an insufficient amount of developable target employment land for prospective employers, and passage of Senate Bill 962, which provides the governing body of a county or municipality the ability to approve residential development on any parcel regardless of designation.

TEILS has identified several key target industry clusters throughout the county that, in addition to paying higher than average wages, are export-oriented and contribute substantially to the gross regional product (GRP) of Pinellas County. The TEILS update has begun to narrow its focus on the market demand and suitability of existing class A office space and industrial lands, and their ability to support the identified target employment clusters. Some recommendations highlighted: the need to retain existing and designate new Target Employment Centers (TECs), each TEC will need a different strategy, and mixed use would be appropriate for many TECs.

- Commissioner Cliff Merz asked for the status of the part of the study that reviewed employee skill sets. Jared Austin responded that SB Freidman had one-on-one calls with targeted employers, outreach was done to smaller-scale employers by survey, and there is data from PCED that needs to be reviewed. Thus far, one major theme is that employers are having trouble finding and retaining people for jobs, but they are not necessarily seeing a lack of needed skills and experience.
- Mayor Julie Bujalski asked if areas identified as most suitable for target employers would have more flexible zoning. Jared clarified that the target employment centers were identified as most suitable for target employment uses and lands outside those centers will have a hands-off approach. Mayor Julie Bujalski inquired if the Pinellas Economic Development Department will continue to maintain its position that all industrial lands should be protected, regardless of location. Jared noted the Pinellas Economic Development Department's interest in industrial lands is not determined by whether it is in a target employment center, and they are open to further discussion on existing policy positions.

Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority (TBARTA) staff and consultants presented on the Pinellas Aerial Gondola Feasibility Study

In May 2021, the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority (TBARTA), in partnership with Forward Pinellas, began the Pinellas Aerial Gondola Feasibility Study using funding allocated to TBARTA by the Florida Legislature. The first half of the study considered two corridors - one in downtown St. Petersburg, and another in Clearwater connecting downtown to Clearwater Beach. The second half of the study focused exclusively on the Clearwater to Clearwater Beach connection. The study results show that:

- gondolas are well-suited to the Tampa Bay area
- suitable alignments exist to connect Clearwater to Clearwater Beach
- the routes are technically feasible
- the project is financially viable
- the public is supportive of the project

An overview of the study results and public engagement outputs were presented.

- Whit Blanton noted that Forward Pinellas will defer to the City of Clearwater to indicate its desire and make a request to prioritize this project. Mayor Julie Bujalski asked how it was received by the City of Clearwater in past meetings. Councilmember David Allbritton responded that it was well received with most of the council in favor of moving forward. They will be revisiting it, tentatively, by the end of the year.

The board unanimously approved the establishment of a nominating committee for board leadership

The Forward Pinellas Executive Committee is comprised of board officers that include the chair, vice chair, treasurer, and secretary. Each officer serves for a one-year term. As prescribed in its Operating Procedures, each year the Forward Pinellas Board must decide the way it wishes to elect its officers for the following year. The board has the option of directly electing its officers from the entire board membership or convening a Nominating Committee to develop a slate of candidates for consideration by the full board.

The Nominating Committee will meet before the November board meeting and recommend a slate of officers for approval by the full board. With a Nominating Committee, any board member may still express their interest in serving as an officer or may recommend other members for an officer position before the Nominating Committee makes its official recommendations. The election of 2023 officers will be handled in November.

- The board approved Councilmember Bonnie Noble, Commissioner Cliff Merz, and Mayor Cookie Kennedy serving as the Nominating Committee.

The board unanimously approved the election of Mayor Bujalski as Secretary

With the departure of Commissioner Seel from the board last month, a vacancy has been created in the secretary position. Board Operating Procedures dictate that a vacant office shall be filled by the board at its first regular meeting following the vacancy. The officer so elected shall serve the remainder of their predecessor's term in office. The newly appointed secretary will hold office until a new Executive Committee is established at the November board meeting and takes office in January.

SPOTlight Updates

- Whit Blanton reported that efforts are being made to resolve the Gulf Boulevard sidewalk issue in the Town of Indian Shores for safety and beach community access. The FDOT cost estimate for the project concept plan was prohibitively high, given the right-of-way requirements. Forward Pinellas is meeting on October 19 with FDOT and the Mayor and staff of Indian Shores to discuss different concepts for consideration that would reduce the project cost.
- Waterborne Transportation
 - FDOT has nearly completed a new policy regarding the increased flexibility of using District Dedicated Revenue (DDR) for transit operating costs. Waterborne transportation projects would likely qualify for consideration as “premium transport service.” The DDR program may be used for transit operating costs under the pending new policy, with those costs covered 100% by the state in the first year and de-escalating to 0% by the end of the five-year period, when local funds would need to fully fund transit operations. A local funding commitment and prioritization by Forward Pinellas would be necessary to obtain the DDR funds for a transit project.
 - Manatee County is moving forward with plans to purchase two watercraft vessels, at \$350,000 each, to create a water taxi service that connects downtown Bradenton to Anna Maria Island. The service will operate Friday – Sunday 10:30 am- 10:30 pm. The fare will be about \$10. There would be a \$300,000 per year subsidy of that service. Tourist development tax revenue will be used for funding, as well as food and beverage commissions. It will not be self-sustaining and will need public support for continuation. Manatee County may be invited to present on this at a future Waterborne Committee Meeting.
 - Mayor Julie Bujalski expressed her frustration that the process to approve and fund waterborne transportation plans cannot be expedited and why the recent Waterborne transportation plan, submitted to the County in February, did not receive a response.
 - Commissioner Pat Gerard noted the plan submitted included numerous other capital projects and routes, in addition to waterborne service, that added up to a large sum of money. The County is not particularly motivated to spend operating funds for ferries out of the County budget as operating funds are a completely separate matter from capital money.

- Mayor Cookie Kennedy proposed an idea that members of the Waterborne Committee could speak to county commissioners and the county administrator.
- Councilmember David Allbritton added that it was a pricey project, yet what was thought to be an approachable number. Clearwater will be redoing the Clearwater marina next year and are considering placing a couple of slips for the updated ferry, as well as the current ones. It will still take time to push the waterborne plan fully forward; similar to how transit plans take years to actualize. Councilmember David Allbritton plans to bring this forward to City Council in Clearwater.
- Commissioner Pat Gerard mentioned interest in the Tourist Development Council (TDC) funds for operating given that has not been an option for Pinellas County. Even if allowed by statute, it will need to go through the TDC, then the county commission, and then raise specific projects.
- Commissioner Dave Eggers noted that the county wants to be part of the strategic review of plans and projects, rather than just allotting the funds to them. The approach needs to be methodological. Could also look at this as more piecemeal – instead of doing all of it at once, you can do piece bit by bit which makes sense in the overall picture. He agreed with Commissioner Pat Gerard that more understanding is needed regarding the use of TDC funds.

Other Items

- Legislative Committee Update
 - The committee selected Councilmember Patti Reed as chair of the legislative committee. The board unanimously voted in favor of the selection
 - The committee is beginning to look into its proposed legislative priorities, potentially including an exception to advisory boards and committees from having a physical quorum present to allow voting by virtual communications technology. Mayor Will from Redington Beach talked about a preemption bill that will allow local governments to opt-out of preemption if it comes from Tallahassee by local referendum within a designated amount of time after the preemption has passed.
- PSTA Activities
 - A public hearing was held to approve the FY23 millage resolution and budget resolution. Both were unanimously approved with no public comment.
 - Abhishek Dayal, Director of Project Management gave a presentation on a land swap agreement with the City of Clearwater for the new downtown Clearwater transit center at Court Street and Myrtle Avenue. PSTA will lease the current site to maintain

operations until the new transit center is complete. The agreement was unanimously approved.

- Board members conducted a CEO Performance Evaluation and unanimously approved a motion for a merit adjustment for Mr. Brad Miller, consistent with the adjustment for all other PSTA employees.

- TBARTA Activities
 - A CSX Rail Corridor Assessment of the Brooksville and Clearwater corridors is planned to identify improvements needed for passenger services. Staff continues with the Request for Qualifications in the event that the board decides to advance the study. The RFQ was issued on July 8. The TBARTA Board is interested in hearing more from CSX before approving. CSX will be attending the next TBARTA meeting in November.
 - US 19 Regional BRT Project connecting Pasco County and Pinellas County along US 19. Work on the study is complete. After evaluation, the BRT service was shown to not be cost-effective. Thus, changes were made to the scope of service to consider an express bus service instead. The new analysis showed appealing results and will be presented to the TBARTA Board on October 21.
 - For the I-275 Regional BRT, all environmental and cultural assessment work is complete and TBARTA submitted the Documented Categorical Exclusion worksheet and supporting materials to FTA on October 7. Staff anticipates a response from FTA by year-end. A final presentation to TBARTA's Board is expected in November.
 - Demand for the vanpool program, Commute Tampa Bay, continues to grow, driven mostly by James Haley VA Medical Center and MacDill AFB. There were 193 vanpools in September, one more than the all-time high in August and 25% more than in September 2021.

- The board welcomed returning board member Commissioner Gerard.

- The board unanimously approved the Consent Agenda.

- The board unanimously approved the scope of work and fee for a Piggyback Contract for Audit Services, and gave authorization to Whit Blanton to complete negotiations on the draft contract. Forward Pinellas is piggybacking on an existing PSTA contract with auditor Cherry Bekaert to complete the agency's two audits for this one-year period.

- Other upcoming events:
 - PSTA Board Meeting October 26, 2022, at 9 am.
 - Commissioner Pat Gerard: Oct 22nd at 2 pm, SunRunner grand opening

Action Sheet
October 12, 2022

At its October meeting, the Forward Pinellas Board took the following official actions:

- **Consent Agenda** (vote: 11-0; Councilmember Floyd had not yet arrived)
Approved to include the following:
 - A. Approval of Minutes of the September 14, 2022 Meeting
 - B. Approval of Committee Appointments
 - C. Approval of Complete Streets Interlocal Agreement with Pinellas County
 - D. Approval of the Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan Update (TDSP)
 - E. Approval of Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Amendment

- **Approval of Agreement to Piggyback Contract for Audit Services**
This item was pulled from the consent agenda to be handled separately. After explanation by the Executive Director regarding the status of the agreement, the board approved the scope and fee and authorized the Executive Director to finalize the agreement. (vote: 11-0; Councilmember Floyd had not yet arrived)

- **Establishment of Nominating Committee**
Following an introduction by the Executive Director, three board members volunteered to serve on a Nominating Committee and the board approved those members to serve. The Nominating Committee will include Mayor Kennedy, Commissioner Merz and Councilmember Bonnie Noble. (vote: 12-0)

- **Election of Secretary**
Following an introduction by the Executive Director, the board selected Mayor Bujalski to serve as the Secretary for the duration of 2022. (vote: 12-0)

- **Legislative Committee Update**
Following an update by the Executive Director, the board affirmed the selection of Vice Mayor Reed as the committee chair for 2023. (vote: 12-0)