



## Board Meeting Summary & Action Sheet

September 9, 2020

*Please note that this summary has not been approved as the official minutes of the board.*

### THE PLANNING COUNCIL AND METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION FOR PINELLAS COUNTY

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The Forward Pinellas Board held this public meeting virtually on September 9, at 1 p.m. to ensure public safety in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please see the following link for more information about virtual meeting [policies and procedures](#).

Forward Pinellas Director Whit Blanton introduced Austin Britt as the new Forward Pinellas Intern, who will be with the agency for the 2020-21 academic year through an agreement with the University of South Florida College of Arts and Sciences. Austin is in his 2<sup>nd</sup> year in the Urban and Regional Planning graduate program.

Commissioner Eggers congratulated Whit Blanton on being elected APA Florida President-Elect. Whit's two-year term begins January 1st; after which he will serve two years as APA Florida Chapter President.

### **PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS**

#### **The board unanimously approved the roll forward of amendments to the FY2020/21-FY2024/25 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).**

- This roll forward amendment is a routine annual process to assist Forward Pinellas in identifying projects that were not committed in the previous Fiscal Year and have automatically rolled into FY2020/21 of the FDOT Work Program. This amendment ensures that the previously adopted TIP matches the current FDOT Work Program.

#### **The board approved the following land use amendment to the Countywide Plan with a vote of 10-2, Commissioner Donovan and Mayor Bradbury dissenting:**

- Pinellas County seeks to amend properties from Residential Very Low to Residential Rural.
  - Location: East Lake Tarpon Community
  - Area Size: Approximately 2,919.5 acres
  - Existing Uses: Residential
  - Surrounding Uses: Preservation, Recreation/Open Space

The purpose of this amendment is to recognize the rural low density character of the East Lake Tarpon Community. The board voted to approve this land use category for use by local governments at a prior meeting this year.

### **Discussion**

Commissioner Donovan brought up concerns that this amendment causes unnecessary road blocks for any future annexations and feels a precedence is being set for the County to affect land uses within potential city annexation planning areas. In addition, this amendment will remove any incentive for future developers to annex into the City of Tarpon Springs. Donovan also reinforced that a community will never be forced to annex into Tarpon Springs and the process will always be legal and voluntary.

Commissioner Eggers stated that this amendment merely restores the former land use category of Residential Rural, which allows for a lower density than the East Lake Tarpon Community had prior to the 2015 adoption of the new Countywide Plan. The discussion also clarified that there is no intent to minimize or impede what cities can do within their planning areas.

Members of the public spoke both for and against the amendment. Those for it encouraged the board to preserve the low density originally planned for the East Lake Overlay. Those against this amendment felt that this amendment would lower property values if they ever chose to annex into the City of Tarpon Springs.

**The board unanimously approved the following two land use amendments to the Countywide Plan:**

- Pinellas County seeks to amend properties from Activity Center, Retail & Services, Employment, Office, Public/Semi-Public, Residential Medium and Residential Low Medium to Activity Center.
  - Location: Downtown Palm Harbor
  - Area Size: Approximately 63.8 acres
  - Existing Uses: Residential, Retail, Office, Automobile repair
  - Surrounding Uses: Residential, Retail, Recreation/Open Space

The purpose of this amendment is to expand the existing Downtown Palm Harbor Neighborhood Activity Center.

- The City of Largo seeks to amend property from Public/Semi-Public to Retail & Services.
  - Location: 4825 East Bay Drive
  - Area Size: Approximately 4.36 acres
  - Existing Uses: Church owned property
  - Surrounding Uses: Residential, Commercial

The purpose of this amendment is to allow for the development of retail commercial uses.

**PRESENTATIONS AND/OR ACTION ITEMS**

**The Forward Pinellas Board unanimously approved staff recommendations for construction of the US 19 North Planned Pedestrian Thruway and affirmed the ¼ to ½ mile spacing policy of pedestrian crossings with reconstruction of US 19 North to Pasco County.**

- FDOT is designing US 19 from SR 580 to CR 95 as a partially controlled access expressway, replacing traffic signals at Republic Drive and Curlew Road with an overpass and an interchange. The design includes pedestrian/bike crossings (underpasses and overpasses) about every ½ mile to fulfill a request for connectivity by Forward Pinellas in 2018. Several businesses adjacent to the pedestrian thruway (or underpass) planned for just south of Republic Drive requested that it not be included in the design due to visibility and demand concerns.
- The executive director presented information on the long-term value of the underpass with the construction of the Duke Energy Trail and as properties near the US 19 corridor redevelop. The board also supported safety and multimodal accessibility improvements along the US 19 frontage roads and closing key east-west gaps over time for bicycle and pedestrian travel.

Discussion

Several commercial businesses adjacent to US 19 raised objections over diminished visibility from the thruway and cited a lack of pedestrian demand. They raised concerns over the cost effectiveness of the design and said it was not needed. Other members of the public spoke in favor of staff recommendations for the pedestrian thruway as an important point of access for people who walk, bicycle or use a wheelchair. The discussion addressed issues of safety, accessibility and connectivity, and how longer-term transportation projects and redevelopment in the Countryside area would likely make pedestrian connections more important over time.

**Commissioner Long presented updates for the PSTA Activities Report.**

- PSTA held the groundbreaking for the “SunRunner” Bus Rapid Transit project in August 2020.
- Autonomous vehicles are being tested on Bayshore Blvd. beginning in November 2020 - February 2021. She said we could also see this program expand to Dunedin and Clearwater over the next year.

**Commissioner Seel presented updates for the TBARTA Activities Report.**

- TBARTA approved a resolution to support a transit service development grant application for improved service on Route 99 that connects Sarasota and Manatee County along US 41.
- SCJ Alliance presented on aerial cable car technology.

**Scott Pringle, of the consulting firm WSP, presented the TBARTA Regional Rapid Transit Project.**

- Pringle introduced the TBARTA Regional Rapid Transit (RRT) Project, a 41-mile regional transit service that would connect downtown St. Petersburg, Gateway, Tampa, USF and Wesley Chapel in Pasco County.
- TBARTA is evaluating several design alternatives concerning the extent of dedicated lanes in the I-275 corridor and the associated ridership and cost implications of each. The next step is to go into further detail on the impacts of the alternatives, including routing and service options, local transit service connectivity, station locations and station area design options.

**Mike Meidel presented the Pinellas County Economic Development Update.**

- With the Penny for Pinellas funding, Pinellas County is able to create over \$80 million of projects. At this time, 18 funding applications have been received for the housing component. These projects will help attract quality workers to Pinellas and ensure they cannot only work in Pinellas County, but also live here. In December, Pinellas Economic Development will launch the economic development portion of the projects and open for applications. Meidel introduced Teresa Brydon as a newly hired team member responsible for this aspect of the Penny for Pinellas initiative.
- Meidel also addressed general COVID impacts:
  - Industrial space and multi-family dwellings are still in demand.
  - Office space demand is currently down. However, after COVID, office space is expected to be about the same due to the need for larger communal spaces that will allow patrons to maintain social distancing.

**Whit Blanton provided an update on the Annual Call for Projects - Transportation Alternatives, Complete Streets, and Multimodal Priorities.**

- The Annual Call for Projects is open for applications for Transportation Alternatives, Complete Streets, and Multimodal Priorities through December with a staggered series of deadlines for each program. Applications will be presented to the board for approval in March 2021.

The Forward Pinellas Board unanimously reaffirmed the appointments of the four committee members who previously served on the Legislative Committee, including Commissioner Dave Eggers, Mayor Cookie Kennedy, Councilmember Brandi Gabbard and Vice Mayor David Allbritton.

### **SPOTlight Update:**

#### **US 19 Corridor Workshop**

- Forward Pinellas is planning a US 19 Corridor Workshop with the board in early 2021. We will complement this with public engagement and outreach after the workshop. The primary discussion at the workshop will focus on innovative intersection alternatives for US 19 North and recommendations for improvements to the existing frontage road network from Clearwater south to Pinellas Park.

#### **Aerial Cable Transit Update**

- As a result of the August TBARTA board meeting, Forward Pinellas is working with TBARTA staff to confirm interest and develop a scope of work to conduct a more in-depth study of a potential aerial cable transit project in Pinellas County. In recent years, both St. Petersburg and Clearwater have shown interest in aerial cable car technology. Forward Pinellas staff will meet local governments and key stakeholders to determine their current interest and develop a s scope of work by the end of the year. TBARTA has funding in place. The goal is to be ready to begin a study of the concept, its operating and capital requirements and potential funding strategies in early 2021.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

- **Virtual Bike Your City 2020**

Jump on your bicycles and enjoy riding around beautiful Safety Harbor while finding enchanting scavenger hunt locations! Forward Pinellas is pleased to announce our reinvented virtual Bike Your City Scavenger Hunt through our host city of Safety Harbor. From October 16, 2020 – October 31, 2020, residents will be challenged to find all 20 locations on our scavenger hunt map and submit a “selfie” or picture of their bike at the landmark using our interactive form. For more information or to register, visit: [bit.ly/BYCRRegister](http://bit.ly/BYCRRegister)

- **Tampa Bay TMA Leadership Group Meeting - September 18, 2020 (Virtual)**
- **Forward Pinellas Waterborne Transportation Subcommittee - October 9, 2020**
- **Gulf Coast Safe Streets Summit - November 16-19, 2020**

The next board Meeting will be October 14, 2020. Virtual options for participation will be available. Please visit our website for more information: [www.forwardpinellas.org](http://www.forwardpinellas.org)

## **Action Sheet September 9, 2020**

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

- **Consent Agenda** (roll call vote: 12-0)  
Approved to include the following:  
A. Approval of Minutes of the July 8, 2020 Meeting

- B. Approval of Committee Appointments
- C. Acceptance of Quarter Three Financial Report
- D. Map Adjustment – City of Safety Harbor – Official Acceptance
- E. Approval of Procurement #20-01 Planning Consultants Agreements
- F. Approval of Interlocal Agreements for Planning & Place-Making Grants
  - City of Pinellas Park
  - City of St. Petersburg for Demonstration and Pilot Project Policy and Guide
  - City of St. Petersburg for Missing Middle Lending Analysis
- G. Approval of Interlocal Agreement for Complete Streets Grant with the City of Pinellas Park
- H. Approval of Amendment to Corridor Enhancement Grant Agreement with City of St. Petersburg
- I. Cancellation of the December Forward Pinellas Meeting

- **Approval of Amended Resolution 20-05 and Annual Budget for FY21** (roll call vote: 12-0)  
This item was pulled from the consent to be acted on separately after further clarification and discussion.
- **Roll Forward Amendment(s) to the FY 2020/21-FY 2024/25 Transportation Improvement Program** (roll call vote: 12-0)  
Following a presentation by FDOT and public hearing, the board, in its role as the metropolitan planning organization, approved the roll forward amendment(s) to the TIP.
- **Countywide Plan Map Amendment(s)**  
Three cases were recommended for approval:
  1. **CW 20-13 – Pinellas County** (Residential Rural)  
(roll call vote: 10-2, Commissioner Donovan and Mayor Bradbury dissenting)
  2. **CW 20-14 – Pinellas County** (Downtown Palm Harbor)  
(roll call vote: 12-0)
  3. **CW 20-15 – City of Largo**  
(roll call vote: 12-0)
- **US 19 North Planned Pedestrian Underpass** (roll call vote: 12-0)  
Following a presentation by Executive Director Blanton, the board affirmed its agreement with the four staff recommendations as outlined, which included:
  - Reinforce the ¼ to ½ mile spacing goal for US 19
  - Support the inclusion of the Pedestrian Thruway south of Republic Drive for US 19 from SR 580 to CR 95
  - Support safety and multimodal accessibility improvements along the US 19 frontage roads
  - Support closing key east-west gaps over time for bicycle and pedestrian travel
- **Forward Pinellas Legislative Committee Appointments** (roll call vote: 12-0)  
Following minimal discussion, the board reaffirmed the appointments of the four committee members who served the previous year to include Commissioner Dave Eggers, Mayor Cookie Kennedy, Councilmember Brandi Gabbard and Vice Mayor David Allbritton.