

**PINELLAS COUNTY
WORKFORCE WORKSHOP
John Morroni EMS & Fire Administration Building
12490 Ulmerton Rd., Rm 130/132, Largo, FL 33774**

**MEETING MINUTES
September 20, 2023**

The Workforce Workshop met in person on this day at 9:00 a.m. with the following attendees present:

Jennifer Poirrier, City of Clearwater
Matt Spoor, City of Safety Harbor
Chief Scott Ehlers, Clearwater Fire and Rescue
Chief Isaac Humphreys, Clearwater Fire and Rescue
Chief Anthony Tedesco, Clearwater Fire and Rescue
Chief Nathan Vasquez, Clearwater Fire and Rescue
David Sowers, Clearwater Firefighters Association Local 158
Chief Mark Zipeto, Dunedin Fire Department
Penni Eggers, HCA
Chief Terry Tokarz, Largo Fire Rescue
Chief Richard Graham, Lealman Fire Rescue
Chief Allen Smay, Lealman Fire Rescue
Elisa De Gregorio, Pinellas County Human Services
Danyelle Green, Pinellas County Human Services
Krista McIlhaney-Isaacs, Pinellas County Human Services
Aubrey Phillips, Pinellas County Office of Management and Budget
Sophia Romeus, Pinellas County Office of Management and Budget
Dr. Michael Lozano, Office of the Medical Director
Dr. Andrew Smith, Office of the Medical Director
Dr. Anthony Ottaviani, EMSAC-Pinellas County Osteopathic Medical Society
Mark Hunt, Pinellas County Schools
Michael McCullough, Pinellas County Schools
Chief Josh Stefancic, Safety Harbor Fire Department
Robert Stanley, School of EMS
Steven Marfongella, St. Petersburg College
Ralph Sibbio, St. Petersburg College
Sarah De La Torre, St. Petersburg Fire Rescue
Francisco Velez, Sunstar Local 257
Richard Schomp, Sunstar Paramedics
Jeremy Tinter, Sunstar Paramedics
Jazmin Soloman, Sunstar Paramedics
Shalisha Preston, Sunstar Paramedics
Malachi White, Sunstar Paramedics
Chief William Barrs, Treasure Island Fire Rescue

Also Present:

Krishna Gandhi, SES Financial Services
Craig Hare, Director, EMS & Fire Administration
Mark T. Eggers, Clinical Manager, EMS & Fire Administration
Michelle Slawinski, EMS & Fire Administration
Lynn Abbott, EMS & Fire Administration
Jennyfer Peters, EMS & Fire Administration

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Craig Hare welcomed the attendees representing diverse community sectors for coming together to discuss local healthcare and public safety staffing challenges, the extent and urgency of the problem, assess current and future workforce needs, and strategic direction for sustainable solutions.

SYSTEM STATUS

Mr. Hare related that there are currently 1,900 frontline Paramedics/Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) with approximately 100 open positions in Pinellas County's 18 Fire Rescue agencies and Sunstar Paramedics. The challenge of healthcare and public safety staffing extends nationally, statewide, and regionally. While the community is in a relatively better position, it still needs to address open positions and ensure sustainability for the future. Factors such as county redevelopment, increasing call and transport volumes, and a high workload make addressing these challenges imperative.

DISCUSSIONS FOR BRAINSTORMING

Mr. Hare referred to documents titled *EMS & Fire Workforce Workshop Brief* and *White Paper on Recruitment & Retention in the Florida Fire Service* and provided statistical information on Sunstar applications received, interviews given, and monthly hires; St. Petersburg College Emergency Medical Services and Fire Academy program enrollees/graduates; School of EMS EMT and Paramedic pass rates; Pinellas County Government EMS & Fire Administration Agency Workforce Survey results; and recruitment and retention best practices for the Florida Fire Service.

Members were grouped in six tables of eight and asked to collaborate on the nature and scope of the labor shortage, identify potential solutions most impactful/most feasible to implement, and rank order those ideas and concepts through a weighted voting process. The top three themes were:

1. Establish a County Fire/EMS Academy and Cadet Program.
2. Create a navigator website and program coordination to recruit countywide for all Fire/EMS agencies.
3. Address affordable housing for Fire/EMS personnel.

Members were then asked to develop the next steps for the high-priority initiative identified by each group and consider short- and long-term goals and steps necessary to achieve that goal. He noted that the aim is to have a sustainable Fire/EMS workforce, maintain service levels, and have a reasonable work schedule and workload. Lengthy discussion ensued.

NEXT ACTION PLAN FOR TOP IDEAS FOR CRITICAL RESOLUTION

Mr. Hare indicated that County Commissioners and the County Administrator have been briefed on the critical healthcare and public safety staffing challenges, noting that today's workshop has started the problem-solving dialogue. He shared that the EMS Medical Control Board, EMS Advisory Council, and Pinellas County Fire Chiefs' Association will be apprised of the outcome of this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.