

PINELLAS COUNTY COUNCIL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
MEETING MINUTES

March 4, 2024, at 10:00 AM
Pinellas County Extension, Magnolia Room
12520 Ulmerton Rd, Largo FL 33774

Call to Order – Jody Armstrong, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

Roll Call –

Present

Jody Armstrong, Chair (Disability Achievement Center)
Kerry Carlisle (Peters)
Michelle Detweiller (PARC)
Deborah Figgs-Sanders (Flowers)
Linsey Grove (Justice)
Jack Humburg (Boley Center)
Todd Jennings (Scott)
Angel Overly (PVA)
Kimberly Rankine (Long)
Stuart Strikowski, Area on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas

Not Present – Excused/Unexcused

Ross Silvers, Vice Chair (Eggers) – Excused Absence
Misti Pollaro, Secretary (Family Network on Disabilities) – Excused Absence
Doreen Caudell (Latvala) – Unexcused Absence

Others Present

Betina Baron, Compliance Manager, Pinellas County Office of Human Rights
Keegan Julius, Fulbrighters with Disabilities, Guest Speaker
Carol Strickland, Pinellas County Office of Human Rights
Keiah Townsend, Pinellas County Assistant County Attorney
Other interested guests

Approval of Minutes – A quorum was met at this meeting. The minutes from December 4, 2023, were unanimously approved.

Certificate of Appreciation – Bright Futures Scholarship community service, acknowledging Dillon Cornelius surveyed beach access maps in Pasco and Pinellas for the Sportsability Alliance effort to catalog accessibility features throughout the State of

Florida for the benefit of residents and tourists who visit our World Class beaches. The Council approved unanimously.

Guest Speaker: Fulbrighters with Disabilities – Keegan Julius of Fulbrighters with Disabilities spoke on Autism. Autism is a development disability that affects 1 in 36. That means that over 25,000 people in Pinellas County have autism. April is Autism Acceptance month. Fulbrighters would really love to see autism training to first responders. 63% of autistic children are bullied, and their siblings are bullied at 12%. Autistic persons are 9 times more likely to take their own lives than the general public, with women being 13 times more likely. Fulbrighters offers free training to educators and training to kids to help them understand differences. In employment, when you accommodate those who have autism, it not only aides the autistic employee, but it also helps all of the other employees as well. There was discussion about CARD offering one free Distract Pak to anyone who asks. Beyond that, it is up to you to build one. Many locations already have them: Dali Museum, Ruth Eckerd Hall, etc. Tampa Bay Rays have been making their own. It's about \$30 to make.

Pinellas County Parks Accessibility –From Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) – the playgrounds that were submitted for review by the council did not meet the accessibility requirements. How are they getting through the inspections? The playgrounds are not compliant as they shall be vertically accessible. Angel referred to a section of the law. The playground in Ft DeSoto is opening today (March 4, 2024). Perhaps it may have more impact if the council makes the recommendation(s), including the reason(s) why the proposed plans do not work. The council asked, would it be possible for Legal (Keiah) to provide a letter to the BCC as an advisory item? A motion was made to have Jody put on the BCC agenda to give a 5-year update on the PWD, was seconded, and approved unanimously. Keiah asks for recommendations for the letter to Parks and Conservation Resources, which will include the letter from PVA. Betina will update the Office of Human Rights (OHR) Board. A council member asked about accessible playgrounds in municipalities parks and at schools. One step at a time. Send suggested language to Keiah to draft the letter and to bring back to the next meeting for vote.

Sportsability Alliance – Jody met with Fran, Executive Director who stated they have received a lot of data that they are working on, and nothing is published yet.

Mobimats – Several of the mats were taken up for dune restoration after the last hurricane. Indian Rocks and Indian Shores are still being worked on. The municipalities want the mats down by spring break. There is a pending Mobimat for St. Petersburg Beach at Treasure Island.

Open Discussion/Announcements – Emergency Management is being proactive to having shelters be more disability-friendly, including having a place for those with autism.

Jody is in regular communication with Denise Barnes with CARD – is there an interest in having her come out with kits, and to answer questions, etc. on how we can become more autism-friendly?

Public Comment – Fire fighters, first responders, etc., all need training to deal with the deaf community. They're not able to communicate with those who are deaf.

Open Discussion – A council member stated there needs to be some consistency with regards to utilizing those with wheelchairs, golf carts, etc., and whether or not one can use them on sidewalks or on the road. You can cross from one city to another and be in violation with one or the other.

Jody mentioned receiving an email from David who is coordinating the sail-ability effort on the Impossible Dream. Anyone who uses a wheelchair and would like to go sailing, please reach out as spaces are filling up fast.

Betina mentioned the Tampa Bay Fair Housing Consortium has a symposium coming up in April. Please feel free to share the flyer.

Ross shared a presentation on Ableism electronically.

City of Clearwater ADA Committee update – pursuing hard and fast for a committee creation in Clearwater, pending mayoral election. Tarpon Springs has one, Palm Harbor had one.

Next meeting is June 3, 2024. Meeting adjourned at 11:19 a.m.