



# Employees' Advisory Council



to continually improve the Pinellas County classified employees' quality of work life

## Employees' Advisory Council Representative & Appointing Authorities Meeting Minutes

315 Court St, Clearwater, FL, 4th Floor Clerk's Conference Room

Wednesday May 21, 2025, 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Prepared by Zach Bloomer

### Call to Order

The Employees' Advisory Council (EAC) Representatives & Appointing Authorities (AAs) meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by Chair Lisa Arispe.

### Introductions

- Lisa Arispe asked everyone to introduce themselves and specify their associated organization.

### County Campus Update – Claretha McClendon

- Claretha McClendon requested a progress update on the new Pinellas County headquarters complex.
- County Administrator Barry Burton gave most of the updates regarding the complex campus.
  - Currently negotiating with a new design firm to ascertain and implement the most effective use of space. Many aspects are being evaluated:
    - Do we want a one-stop-shop for customers? What does that look like?
    - Not all employees / operations currently located downtown need to be at the campus, or at least, not customer facing.
    - Interdepartmental / Appointing Authority locations / Collaboration.
    - Parking.
    - Security.
- What will be done with the real estate Pinellas County owns in downtown Clearwater?
  - Reminder that the decision to relocate was based on the cost to renovate the existing location was less than the cost to rebuild to specific use, function, and location. This is being looked at as an economic development opportunity for Clearwater. The county will work with the city and partners, as needed, for the most effective outcome for the county.
- What is the expected timeframe to break ground?
  - About one year with design, then about one two after that. Three years is a realistic goal.
- Did the remote work policy affect the design due to physical space needs?
  - Not really. There are new concepts that will be employed, but there is no intention on having an individual shared workspace for multiple employees.

### Admin Leave - Holidays – Presented by Leena Delli Paoli

- Leena Delli Paoli presented the current language of Rules 3E.1b.1a and 4.A.3. (overtime compensation, holiday pay and administrative leave with pay). The primary topic was how the interpretation of the rules regarding certain administrative leave periods does are treated differently.
- While thankful for the admin leave that is given, for example, Juneteenth or Christmas Eve, because of the language for admin leave in the way hours are worked, an employee that is forced to not work when they normally would, it can cut into their holiday/overtime rate for the time they do end up working on a designated holiday in the same pay period.
- The AAs understood the issue and appreciated the clear presentation by Leena.

- Clerk of the Circuit Court, Ken Burke asked if a certain number of admin leave hours were given for a certain allowed timeframe could be helpful for the employee, rather than a specific, forced date.
  - Yes, a specified timeframe to use the hours would help the employees in many cases.
- The Appointing Authorities were amiable to the issue. They asked Chief Human Resource Officer (CHRO) Wade Childress to draft a rule re-write so they can evaluate it, have management review its impact and eventually, if possible, propose a relevant rule change to the EAC.

### **Budget – Katiah Fitzpatrick**

- Katiah Fitzpatrick asked the AAs to address the state of the county regarding budget, wage increases, layoffs, etc. to give concerned employees an idea of what to expect in the near future.
- Barry Burton acknowledged we were coming into a new budget season and they would all be meeting with and proposing their budgets to the county commissioners soon.
- AAs made clear that we are not in a situation similar to the late 2000s financial crisis; There are no layoffs planned. If anything, a slowdown in hiring would be adequate, if needed.
- They also made it clear, based on inflation coming down and the strained budget, not to expect as big of a general increase as we have had in the past.
- Property Appraiser, Mike Twitty informed the EAC that there was about \$2,100,000,000 in taxable property value removed from the 2025 tax roll, mostly from hurricane damage and the new construction coming on would not be nearly enough to compensate for that reduction. This is a reversal of fiscal situation for Pinellas County.
- Discussion about impact cities annexing county parcels, the initial budget impact and follow-up issues like sewer and utilities and the confusion it can cause with the property owners, county workers, and cities.
  - The initial tax impact is low because every parcel pays a substantial amount towards county-wide operations and authorities.
  - Several EAC Representatives discussed the confusion that citizens had when they had a utility issue and were told by the city it was not said city's responsibility. If a citizen sends in a "SeeClickFix" report, county employees know how to get the relevant responsibility / ownership information to the proper city personnel.
- Discussion about electricity sale deal expiring with Duke Energy. Pinellas County has been planning for the cessation of the deal and there will not be a major budgetary impact.
- However, continued fiscal strain is expected with no additional budget dollars to be added this year.
- Florida Retirement System rates have not yet been provided.
- Grants from outside sources that expire or cease are not expected to be covered by the county.
- Property Tax Reform Discussion
  - There were no reforms passed this legislative session.
  - It is not likely that a total elimination of property taxes would happen, as there would be a major disruption to all functions of government-based services, as the Florida tax system is already regressive.
  - The property tax reform discussion is sliding more toward helping residents, such as enhancing homestead.
  - Ken Burke said their office has already provided a very large amount of information to budget oversight officials per their request.
  - Barry Burton said the commission really did the county a favor by passing their version of government efficiency, as it allows the county to get ahead of higher-level initiatives and prove their high-quality governance.
- Barry Burton emphasized that the employees should not be panicking. Do not take what is coming out from the federal level ethos and apply it here. This is not 2008. The tax base is still growing, just not as fast as we are used to.

### **Pre-Disciplinary Hearing (PDH) – Documented Narratives – Lisa Arispe**

- Lisa Arispe told the AAs about recent occurrences where management wrote PDHs with extreme accusations that were then proven to be false.
- It was posited that there should be a period for verification of facts before a public record is created that is then not able to be altered. The recent occurrence had language that was damaging to the individual's reputation and was proven to be false shortly after the PDH was created.
- At the very least, in situations like the recent case, there needs to be a remedy, such as an addendum clarifying the findings where details of the initial discipline are found to be different, but it should never get to that point if management due diligence is taken.
- Barry Burton said he would meet with Workforce Relations Director, Amanda Smith to discuss a plan for this issue.

### **Adjournment**

Thanks were exchanged between AAs and EAC Representatives for participation.

Chair Lisa Arispe adjourned the meeting at 4:31 p.m.

\*EAC Representatives in attendance at this meeting:

Jeff Albenzio\*

Lisa Arispe\*

Melissa Bancroft\*

Jordan Blendinger\*

Zach Bloomer\*

Samuel Chambray\*

Cierra Chin\*

Leena Delli Paoli\*

Cara Duck\*

Katiah Fitzpatrick\*

Gretchen Keehn\*

Claretha McClendon\*

Maggie Miles\*

Michael Polizzi\*

Christian Wright\*