

Human Rights Board  
Pinellas County  
March 11, 2025 Meeting Minutes

The Human Rights Board (HRB) met in regular session at 10:02 AM on this date in the Fifth Floor Conference Room at the Office of Human Rights (OHR), 400 South Fort Harrison Avenue, Clearwater, Florida.

Present

Mike Twitty, Chair, Property Appraiser  
René Flowers, Vice-Chair, County Commissioner  
Lisa Arispe, Employees' Advisory Council Representative  
Wade Childress, Chief Human Resources Officer  
Ricardo Davis, Unified Personnel Board Representative  
Teresa Del Rio, representing Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller  
Susie Morse, representing Julie Marcus, Supervisor of Elections  
Jeff Rohrs, Chief Information Officer, Business Technology Services (BTS)  
Adam Ross, Tax Collector  
Amanda Smith, representing Barry A. Burton, County Administrator

Not Present

Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller  
Barry A. Burton, County Administrator  
Julie Marcus, Supervisor of Elections

Others Present

Jeffery Lorick, Director, OHR  
Betina Baron, Compliance Manager, OHR  
Keiah Townsend, Assistant County Attorney  
Jessica Oakes, Board Reporter  
Other interested individuals

*All documents provided to the Clerk's Office have been filed and made a part of the record.*

**CALL TO ORDER/ATTENDANCE**

Chair Twitty called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM; whereupon, staff conducted a roll call of those present.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 2025 MEETING**

Upon Chair Twitty's call for a motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Ross made a motion. The motion was seconded by Ms. Arispe and carried unanimously.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No one responded to the Chair's call for public comment.

## **ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY**

Mr. Lorick indicated that the Anti-Harassment Policy has been reviewed by legal staff and the Unified Personnel Board (UPB) attorney. Attorney Townsend, with input by Mr. Lorick, also provided clarifying information regarding the approval process by the UPB and each Appointing Authority, following approval by the HRB; whereupon, Mr. Lorick discussed sections of municipal code pertaining to the requirement for the County to have an Anti-Harassment Policy and the OHR's powers and duties.

*Commissioner Flowers arrived at 10:06 AM.*

Responding to queries by Mr. Ross, Attorney Townsend indicated that the OHR receives much of their guidance from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Florida Commission on Human Relations; whereupon, she referenced a previous query by Mr. Burke and related that the OHR is strictly a fact-finding body which does not issue any decisions on behalf of Appointing Authorities or the Board.

In response to a query by Ms. Del Rio, Attorney Townsend confirmed that a vote by the Board is being requested today; whereupon, Ms. Del Rio indicated that Mr. Burke has asked that this item be tabled since he has been unable to discuss the Policy with the County Attorney.

Responding to queries by Commissioner Flowers, Attorney Townsend, with input by Mr. Lorick, provided brief comments regarding discussions with County Attorney Jewel White related to the Policy and proposed updates and indicated that she does not believe that there is any urgency associated with voting on the item.

Mr. Childress provided suggestions regarding potential revisions and clarifications for various sections of the Policy. Following clarifying input by Attorney Townsend and Mr. Lorick, Mr. Childress indicated that he will send them his comments via email.

Upon the Chair's call for a motion, Mr. Ross made a motion to table the item to the next meeting, which was seconded by Ms. Arispe and carried unanimously.

Chair Twitty referenced a previous query by Mr. Burke regarding the ability to opt out of the Policy and requested that Mr. Lorick elaborate on the topic; whereupon, Mr. Lorick discussed the process through which allegations of harassment are reported and investigated and reiterated that the OHR is not involved in final determinations made by individual departments regarding potential violations.

Responding to queries by Ms. Del Rio and Mr. Ross, Attorney Townsend provided brief comments regarding the ability to schedule a special meeting to vote on the Policy, if needed, and confirmed that an electronic vote would likely not be possible due to Sunshine Law requirements.

## **2025 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

Mr. Lorick indicated that the next item on the agenda is the demographic data report, which was previously known as the diversity report; and that it provides demographic information pertaining to race and gender categories and details related to hiring practices since 2020; whereupon, he expressed appreciation to Mr. Rohrs and his staff for their work related to gathering information for the report.

Ms. Baron, with input from Mr. Lorick, provided an overview of the report and discussed specifications related to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) categories, a workforce analysis, and analyses of the gender, race, and ethnicity of employees hired within the past five years. She indicated that the report also contains information pertaining to the gender, race, and ethnicity of all current employees for each individual department or Appointing Authority; whereupon, Ms. Baron noted that the statistical information provided in the report does not include temporary employees, transfers, and rehires.

In response to a query by Mr. Twitty, Ms. Baron clarified that terminations are reflected in the report; and that the next phase of the report will include data regarding employee transfers.

Mr. Lorick indicated that the next phase of the report will also contain more granular data and an underutilization report regarding hiring practices as they relate to gender and race; whereupon, discussion ensued related to attracting talented candidates and the use of data from the underutilization report to inform recruitment efforts.

## **BUDGET**

Mr. Lorick indicated that the OHR is in the process of developing the budget and will be presenting a flat budget, as requested by Mr. Burton; whereupon, he briefly discussed the process for budget approval by the Board of County Commissioners and the HRB.

## **SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES 2024**

Referencing a document titled *Annual Report 2024*, Mr. Lorick indicated that it contains a summary of the OHR's activities for 2024; and that some of the outreach activities reflected in the document are mandated through contracts with the EEOC and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

## **EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM (EEO) / UTILIZATION REPORT**

Noting significant changes and upheaval at the federal level, Mr. Lorick indicated that the OHR has received less communication from its federal partners; that the OHR was notified that it will no longer be compensated to conduct investigations related to sexual orientation and gender identity; and that protections in the County's local ordinance will enable the OHR to continue performing these investigations; whereupon, he related that he is expecting slightly lower revenue from the EEOC and HUD.

In response to a query by Commissioner Flowers, Mr. Lorick clarified that HUD funding merely subsidizes the OHR.

## **FAIR HOUSING MONTH**

Later in the meeting, Ms. Baron indicated that April is Fair Housing Month; that the OHR is part of a consortium that plans a symposium each year; and that the annual symposium is scheduled to take place on April 23 at the Coliseum.

## **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

In response to Chair Twitty's call for nominations for the position of Chair, Mr. Ross made a motion to select Commissioner Flowers. The motion was seconded by Mr. Davis and carried unanimously.

Upon Chair Twitty's call for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair, Commissioner Flowers nominated Mr. Burke. Commissioner Flowers' motion was seconded by Mr. Ross and carried unanimously.

## **DISCUSSION**

Mr. Lorick and Mr. Childress discussed efforts to continue engaging in conversations regarding inclusion and belonging among the County's workforce, as well as the potential utilization of Lily Zheng's FAIR model that focuses on fairness, access, inclusion, and representation.

Chair Twitty expressed his appreciation to the Board for the opportunity to serve as Chair and Vice-Chair over the last two years.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Upon the Chair's call for a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Flowers made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Ross. Seeing no opposition, Chair Twitty adjourned the meeting at 10:53 AM.