



Employees' Advisory Council



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

Employees' Advisory Council – Delegate Meeting Minutes

Extension Services, Magnolia Room, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL

Thursday, July 24, 2025, 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Prepared by Zach Bloomer

Call to Order/Pledge

The EAC Delegate meeting was called to order at 8:11 a.m. by Chair Lisa Arispe.

Guest Speaker – Oliver Kugler, Community Relations Manager, Convention & Visitors Bureau

- Oliver Kugler introduced himself.
- Mr. Kugler explained the purpose of the Convention & Visitors Bureau, officially branded as *Visit St. Pete-Clearwater* (Visit SPC), a “Destination Marketing Organization,” also known as a “D.M.O.”
- As the official D.M.O. of Pinellas County, Visit SPC is a department within Pinellas County Government with the primary purpose of developing, enhancing and promoting tourism for the entirety of Pinellas County.
 - Regarding the choice of the name of the organization, market research indicates that “St. Petersburg” & “Clearwater” are more recognizable by potential visitors, but there is no preferential treatment for these cities, and Visit SPC works with any willing municipalities, many private partners, and unincorporated Pinellas County.
- Visit SPC originated from competing hotels organizing in the early 1980s into a single non-profit organization to consolidate marketing prior to becoming a government entity in 1998.
- Visit SPC uses no property tax dollars for funding. They are fully funded by the “Tourist Development Tax” (TDT), informally known as the “bed tax,” an additional 6% fee on most short-term lodging, defined as less than six-month duration overnight accommodations.
 - This applies to hotels, motels, private STRs, resorts, RV Parks, and campgrounds.
- The primary targets are:
 - Leisure and vacation
 - Group events
 - Conventions and conferences
 - Sports
 - Film & Print Production (electronic video/visual entertainment)
 - Elite events (I.e. Valspar, St Pete Grand Prix). There were 17 elite events in 2024.
- According to Visit SPC, in Pinellas County during fiscal year 2024:
 - There were 15.4 million total visitors with 5.8 million overnight guests
 - International visitors accounted for 912,860 room nights.
 - Visitors spent \$6.8 Billion, \$3 Billion of that total into restaurants and retail, contributing more than \$3.56 Billion to visitor-generated wages that helped support 109,000 tourism related jobs.
 - \$96.7 million dollars generated in TDT revenue, going back into the community for reinvestment and reducing the tax burden to residents.
 - Roughly one third of the *Penny for Pinellas* revenue is from visitors
- Top international markets (visitor origination):
 - Canada: 59.8% | Northern Europe (UK, Ireland, Scandinavia): 19.8% |
 - Central and Western Europe (Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, etc.): 10.4%
 - Latin America: 4.2% | Other European: 3.3% | Other international: 2.5%

- After the 2024 hurricanes, Visit SPC launched an advertising campaign to counter the impression that Pinellas County was not a viable location to visit, supporting the businesses that were able to reopen shortly after the storms.
- Visit SPC relies on local hospitality. They run a volunteer program for locals to be named “Ambassadors.” They are given free access to events that are worked to promote the area and assist visitors. Other perks include, but may not be limited to, local establishment discounts perks that vary depending on destination or event that is worked.

HR Update – Wade Childress, Chief Human Resources Officer

- Wade Childress introduced Judith Petersen, new HR Recruitment Manager.
- Brennan Atwood announced an update about the new ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) software. The request for proposal (RFP) process is ongoing.
 - Rollout will take several years, with HR and Payroll anticipating use in early 2027 and gradually expand it through 2028.
 - The new platform replaces OPUS, Taleo, SplashBI, and OBIEE.
 - Please hold off on questions for now; HR will be proactive with communications as information becomes available.
- General Increase (GI) announcement:
 - Proposed GI is 3% based on actual salary and salary ranges are being raised by 2%.
 - Subject to budgetary approval by the Board of County Commissioners on July 22, 2025.
 - If approved as scheduled, the first payday with new rates will be October 24, 2025 for employees hired prior to September 21, 2025.

Benefits & Wellness:

- Biometric Screening reminder. Announcement of upcoming on-site locations that still have open slots. Walk-ins welcome, but we do not want to be reliant on them.
- Clarification of “on-site” for purpose of performing approved wellness events on work time.
 - On-site does not have to literally be at the same building or address.
 - A reasonable distance away from the work location, as determined by a supervisor from the work location is within the spirit of the allowed rule.
 - All on-site wellness events and donations of blood through OneBlood’s *Big Red Bus* completed during working hours must be approved in advance by your supervisor.
- The *micro-learning apps* “*uptime” and “Calm” are available to all employees, dependents, and members of their household. This is an offering from Optum’s EAP (Employee Assistance Program) and no enrollment with the county’s medical plan is required.
 - The apps are free; the premium subscriptions are the benefit (a \$69.99/year value each).
 - See www.pinellas.gov/uptime and www.pinellas.com/calm for more information.
- Reminder to utilize deferred comp contributions and FSA spending as we reach year’s end.
- Onsite massage chair is coming back at managers’ request and at employees’ expense.
 - The massage therapist is not FSA eligible.

Employee Communications & Volunteer Services:

- The biennial *Employee Voice Survey* begins Monday, August 18, 2025 and can be taken through 11:59 p.m. on Monday, September 8, 2025.
 - Polco, an outside vendor is conducting the survey, and it will be similar to 2023’s survey.
 - Responses are anonymous and small groups (fewer than 10) will be rolled up into the next level of employees to maintain anonymity.
 - Virtual Sessions for 2025 Voice Survey will be held:
 - August 18, 11:30 a.m.
 - August 26, 3:00 p.m.
 - September 3, 8:30 a.m.

- Typed responses will **not** be generalized or altered. Full answers will be provided from Polco to appointing authorities and/or executive leadership. Do not use unique identifiable language in written answers to open ended questions if your goal is to not be identified.
- An executive summary will be released to all employees and appointing authorities will release specific reports at their discretion, which may or may not include survey comments.
- See <https://pinellas.gov/employee-voice/> for more information.
- Missy Kracher, Human Resources is working with the EAC Chair consider potential changes to EAC Representative Groups for more equal representation.

Learning & Development:

- Updated New Employee Orientation began June 30, 2025 with new speakers (adding safety and wellness), revised content, and is now biweekly.
- HR has paused accepting new applications for Learning Plans while the program is being updated to include self-paced and virtual instructor-led classes but will still include in-person classes.
 - Existing students may continue with the courses that are available.
 - If a class can't be completed due to schedule or cancellation; an alternate may be able to be found. Reach out to HR. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- HR is currently reviewing applications for three positions in the Learning and Development (L&D) area; L&D Instructional Designer, L&D Instructional Designer for Leadership and Development, and L&D Program Consultant.

HR Operations & Recruitment (Classification & Compensation / Contracts, Budget & Logistics)

- Time-to-fill in June 2025 was 69.8 days.
 - 45 new hires in June 2025.
 - 66 promotions in June 2025.
- There were 33 separations in June 2025:
 - 7 terminations, 17 resignations, 9 retirements
- Year-to-date annualized turnover was 14.7%. Rolling 12-month turnover is 13.7%

Open Discussion/Meet with Delegates

Adjourned

Meeting adjourned at 9:55 to meet with Representatives.

*EAC Representatives in attendance at this meeting:

Jeff Albenzio*
 Lisa Arispe*
 Melissa Bancroft*
 Jordan Blendinger
 Zach Bloomer*
 Cierra Chin*
 Leena Delli Paoli*
 Cara Duck*
 Katiah Fitzpatrick
 Gretchen Keehn*
 Claretha McClendon
 Maggie Miles
 Michael Polizzi*
 Robyn Sparrow*
 Christian Wright