

**Human Rights Board
Pinellas County
June 3, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

The Human Rights Board (HRB) met in regular session at 10:00 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

René Flowers, Chair, County Commissioner
Ken Burke, Vice-Chair, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller
Wade Childress, Chief Human Resources Officer
Ricardo Davis, Unified Personnel Board Representative
Maggie Miles, representing Lisa Arispe, Employees' Advisory Council Representative
Susan 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
Mike Twitty, Property Appraiser

Not Present

Lisa Arispe, Employees' Advisory Council Representative
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
Ashley Pabilonia, 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 Flowers called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM and led a moment of silence for those affected by recent acts of violence; whereupon, staff conducted a roll call of those present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 2025 MEETING

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

Chair Flowers indicated that the members should have received a copy of the Anti-Harassment Policy; whereupon, Attorney Townsend, with input by Mr. Lorick, noted that while a non-substantive typographical error was found in the Policy, the error has been corrected in the copy provided to the members. In response to queries by Mr. Ross, Attorney Townsend indicated that the OHR structured the Policy to mirror federal guidance issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

Upon Chair Flowers' call for a motion, Mr. Ross made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Mr. Twitty.

Mr. Burke expressed concern regarding the Policy and indicated that he does not believe that the Policy is needed since there are existing Federal and State statutes that address anti-harassment in the workplace; whereupon, Attorney Townsend clarified that there will be a form that the Appointing Authorities will utilize to formally adopt this process for use in their offices. Upon Chair Flowers' call for the vote, the motion carried 8 to 1, with Mr. Burke dissenting.

In response to queries by Messrs. Ross and Lorick, Attorney Townsend provided additional information related to the Anti-Harassment Policy adoption form and indicated that next steps include the Policy being addressed at meetings of the Unified Personnel Board and the Appointing Authorities.

LEGAL AUTHORITY OF THE BOARD

Mr. Lorick indicated that since Mr. Burke requested information related to the Board's history and jurisdictional authority, a memorandum was created and distributed to the members for their review.

In response to comments and queries by Mr. Burke, Attorney Townsend, with input from Mr. Lorick, provided historical information regarding the origin of the HRB, its powers and

duties under Chapter 70 of the Pinellas County Code of Ordinances, and the structure of other human rights agencies. Brief discussion ensued wherein Mr. Burke suggested that the HRB's authority, under its governing documents, be added as a topic for discussion at the next HRB meeting; whereupon, Chair Flowers indicated that, at Mr. Burke's request, a copy of Chapter 70 of the Pinellas County Code of Ordinances will be distributed to the members prior to the next meeting.

BUDGET/DECISION PACKAGES

Mr. Lorick indicated that staff is preparing the OHR budget for submittal to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC); that the OHR is required to submit a flat budget; and that, in order to do so, certain line items were removed from the budget and converted into decision packages by the Office of Management and Budget; whereupon, he summarized the decision packages for interpreting services, laptops and monitors, and postage. Mr. Lorick also related that Mr. Burton approved the decision packages for presentation to the BCC.

Chair Flowers noted that the request for a flat budget does not include budget increases related to employee salaries; whereupon, following brief discussion, Mr. Twitty made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Davis. Chair Flowers indicated that the motion is for the Board's support of the three decision packages, including \$18,000.00 for interpreting services, \$17,000.00 for laptops and monitors, and \$1,300.00 for postage. Upon her call for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Thereupon, discussion ensued related to interpreting services, including technological advancements and the variety of languages that have been translated.

HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD) / EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION (EEOC)

Mr. Lorick indicated that the case processing periods for HUD and EEOC are ending on June 30 and September 30, respectively; whereupon, he related that the OHR has conducted a less-than-normal number of case investigations for HUD and EEOC, which will impact revenues; and that this is primarily due to receiving fewer federal referrals from HUD and EEOC. He noted that staff is still conducting investigations; and that the OHR is on track to meet contract.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES UPDATE

Ms. Baron provided information regarding a recent Persons with Disabilities Council meeting and indicated that the BCC recently appointed new members; and that a video was displayed which highlighted progress related to beach access mats. Chair Flowers suggested that the aforementioned video be displayed during a future HRB meeting; whereupon, brief discussion ensued wherein Ms. Baron responded to comments and queries by the members and discussed the beach access mats, including funding sources, installation, and reinstallation.

FUTURE OF OHR

Mr. Lorick indicated that he is retiring; and that, since his last day working for the County will be July 31, this will be his last HRB meeting. He requested that the Board allow Ms. Baron to serve as Interim Director, but that the permanent position be posted for external applicants to apply as well; whereupon, he related that opening the position to external applicants would demonstrate to OHR staff that this is an open process. Mr. Lorick also noted that he hopes that, if the Board approves Ms. Baron as Interim Director, she would be compensated for the extra duties.

Chair Flowers expressed support for opening the permanent position to external applicants, appointing an internal applicant as Interim Director, and providing a modicum of pay for the Interim Director's additional duties; whereupon, discussion ensued, with input from Mr. Lorick, regarding compensation for the Interim Director, external recruitment process, and timeline for next steps.

Mr. Burke indicated that he does not support the idea of an individual serving in an interim role being considered for the permanent position since it may deter prospective applicants. He related that he would like to hold a special meeting, which would allow the members to interview Ms. Baron; that, if the Board agrees that Ms. Baron is the appropriate candidate, she could be offered the Director position; and that, if not, a search for additional candidates could be conducted; whereupon, discussion ensued, with input by Mr. Lorick, regarding various topics, including succession management within the County.

Chair Flowers invited Ms. Baron to provide input; whereupon, Ms. Baron expressed appreciation to Mr. Lorick for his leadership and efforts to boost morale within the OHR. She provided information regarding her credentials and experience and indicated that, should she be selected for the Director position, she would request that her compensation align with that of other directors in the County.

Following brief discussion, Chair Flowers suggested that the Board could meet to review Ms. Baron's resumé and allow her the opportunity to answer questions from the members; whereupon, discussion ensued, with input from Mr. Lorick and Attorney Townsend, regarding succession management within the County and HRB meeting quorum requirements.

Mr. Burke made a motion to schedule another meeting, prior to July 1, to consider Ms. Baron for the permanent OHR Director position. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rohrs; whereupon, Chair Flowers noted that Ms. Baron's resumé will be distributed to the members. Upon the Chair's call for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Following brief discussion, Chair Flowers indicated that the meeting will be scheduled for 10:00 AM on June 23.

DISCUSSION

Mr. Twitty and Chair Flowers expressed appreciation to Mr. Lorick for his hard work in the OHR.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Flowers adjourned the meeting at 11:10 AM.