

Unified Personnel Board
Pinellas County
March 5, 2026 Meeting Minutes

The Unified Personnel Board (UPB) met in regular session at 2:00 PM on this date in the County Commission Assembly Room at the Pinellas County Courthouse, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida.

Present

Ricardo Davis, Chair
Kenneth Peluso, Vice-Chair
Jeffery Kronschnabl
William Schulz II
Mark Strickland

Not Present

Craig Bostock

Others Present

Wade Childress, Chief Human Resources Officer
Lisa McMurray, Employees' Advisory Council Representative
Jennifer Monroe Moore, Ogletree, Deakins, et. al., P.C., Board Counsel
Jessica Oakes, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk
Other interested individuals

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Davis called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

No one responded to the Chair's call for citizens to be heard.

EMPLOYEES' ADVISORY COUNCIL (EAC) REPRESENTATIVE

Ms. McMurray indicated that she is continuing to search for an individual to serve as the UPB's second EAC appointee; whereupon, she provided brief comments regarding information she submitted for the Chief Human Resources Officer Performance Appraisal.

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes of the Regular Personnel Board Meeting Held February 5, 2026

Chair Davis indicated that the next item on the agenda is a request for approval of the minutes for the regular Personnel Board meeting held on February 5, 2026: whereupon, Mr. Peluso made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Mr. Schulz and carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Chief Human Resources Officer Performance Appraisal

Chair Davis introduced the item and noted that information related to the item was distributed to the members; whereupon, Mr. Strickland indicated that he believes that Mr. Childress provided good insight and responses to the scoring. Mr. Peluso also provided supportive comments regarding Mr. Childress' performance.

Upon the Chair's call for a motion to approve the evaluation as presented, Mr. Peluso made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Strickland and carried unanimously.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Appointment of the Following Personnel Board Member for 2025-2026:

CRAIG BOSTOCK BY THE CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICIALS

Mr. Childress reported that while Mr. Bostock was unable to attend today's meeting, he has been appointed to the Board and will be replacing Peggy O'Shea as the second constitutional appointee.

Office of Human Rights

Chair Davis indicated that he requested that Office of Human Rights (OHR) Director Betina Baron provide an update regarding discussions surrounding the OHR; whereupon, Ms. Baron indicated that, over the summer, a recommendation was made to eliminate the OHR; and that, since then, OHR staff have held one-on-one meetings with Commissioners to explain the value of the services provided and the potential impacts to the community if those services were no longer available. She related that, as requested by the County Administrator, an analysis is also being conducted with regard to the OHR's services and the potential impacts associated with discontinuing those services.

Responding to a query by Mr. Peluso, Ms. Baron indicated that the analysis of the OHR's services is being performed by an outside consultant.

Later in the meeting, Chair Davis indicated that that he believes the Board would be a strong voice if the members ever desired to take a position regarding the recommendation to eliminate the office; and that while the Board has no direct authority over the OHR, the UPB does not need to remain silent regarding the matter.

HR Update

Mr. Childress indicated that he would be happy to answer any questions related to the *HR Update*; whereupon, he provided an update regarding recent steps taken following receipt of the Employee Voice Survey results, including details related to the development and planned implementation of potential action plans within the HR Department.

Action Taken Under Authority Delegated by the Personnel Board

No one responded to Chair Davis' call for questions regarding the item.

The meeting was recessed at 2:11 PM and reconvened at 2:17 PM.

LISA CARTER V. PINELLAS COUNTY SOLID WASTE DEPARTMENT

Grievance Appeal: Motion for Reconsideration (Appeal No. 25-3)

Chair Davis indicated that the Board will now address the motion for reconsideration of a grievance appeal, which the Board voted on at the last UPB meeting; whereupon, statements were provided by Karmika Rubin, representing the Appellant, and Senior Assistant County Attorney Kelly Vicari, representing the Solid Waste Department.

Mr. Peluso made a motion not to accept the reconsideration or reverse the Board's action. In response to a query by Chair Davis, Mr. Peluso confirmed that his motion is to deny the motion for reconsideration; whereupon, his motion was seconded by Mr. Strickland.

Responding to queries by Mr. Schulz, Ms. Rubin explained that, if the motion for reconsideration is granted, the Appellant would be able to dispute the ruling made by a previous committee, which she has not been able to do prior to today; and that, if the motion for reconsideration is not granted, the Appellant would seek, through a motion in limine, to limit the County's evidence to matters related to the basis for the termination.

Thereupon, the motion to deny carried by a vote of 4 to 1, with Mr. Schulz dissenting.

Termination Appeal Hearing (Appeal No. 25-4)

In response to queries by Ms. Rubin and Mr. Schulz, Attorney Moore provided information regarding today's appeal proceedings and the documents distributed to the members; whereupon, responding to a query by Attorney Moore, Ms. Rubin indicated that the Appellant has filed one motion in limine and one motion to strike; and that she will begin by arguing the former.

Ms. Rubin explained that the motion in limine was filed in order to ensure that the scope of the termination appeal is limited to items which refer to the Appellant's termination; whereupon, she cited language within Personnel Rule 6: Discipline which relates to dismissals, pre-disciplinary hearings, and written notices of intent to administer discipline. Ms. Rubin also referenced a Pre-Disciplinary Hearing Notice given to the Appellant on October 21, 2025, and related that the request is to limit the scope of the termination appeal and exhibits to the specific issues and time period identified in the notice; whereupon, responding to a query by Mr. Strickland, Ms. Rubin confirmed that the time period in question is July 1 through September 30, 2025.

In rebuttal, Attorney Vicari referenced the Appellate Procedure Rules and explained that the personnel file held by Human Resources is a standard exhibit in appeals of termination and grievance; and that the Appellant did not file any exceptions to the exhibits during the pre-hearing conference. She also related that while relitigating a final written warning is not the purpose of today's proceedings, it remains relevant as part of the progressive discipline process.

Following brief comments by Chair Davis and Mr. Schulz, Mr. Peluso made a motion to deny the motion in limine and indicated that he believes it would be wrong to limit the scope of the termination appeal to a three-month period when the Board has already reviewed all submitted documentation; whereupon, Mr. Peluso's motion was seconded by Mr. Strickland.

Chair Davis indicated that he is reluctant to consider information outside of the period during which the determination to terminate the Appellant was made; and that he would like to believe that the termination decision is fully supported on its own merit, without the need to consider everything in the Appellant's past; whereupon, Mr. Peluso's motion carried by a vote of 4 to 1, with Chair Davis dissenting.

Attorney Moore noted that the next motion is the Appellant's motion to strike; whereupon, Ms. Rubin explained that the Appointing Authority has disclosed certain witnesses which the Appellant believes lack direct involvement in the investigation or termination decision associated with the appeal; and that permitting testimony from individuals without

meaningful decision-making authority would unnecessarily expand the scope of the hearing and produce collateral matters, which would prejudice the Appellant; whereupon, she related that the Appellant is requesting to strike or limit testimony from four witnesses; and that the Appellant would also ask that the four witnesses be sequestered.

Responding to a query by Mr. Strickland, Attorney Moore stated that, since this is a public meeting, witnesses are not sequestered; whereupon, in rebuttal, Attorney Vicari referenced the four witnesses which the Appellant has requested to strike or limit and indicated that one of the witnesses is not present. She also related that another of the witnesses was involved in the creation of the Appellant's Performance Improvement Plan; and that the other two witnesses worked directly with the Appellant and are mentioned in her Quarter 4 review, which is the document upon which the disciplinary action, pre-disciplinary hearing, and subsequent termination are based.

Mr. Peluso made a motion to deny the motion to strike, which died for lack of a second; whereupon, Mr. Strickland made a motion to retain the list of witnesses, as listed in the appeal packet. In response to a query by Attorney Moore, Mr. Strickland confirmed that his motion is to deny the motion to strike witnesses. The motion was then seconded by Mr. Peluso and carried unanimously.

Attorney Moore indicated that the final matter is the Appellee's exception to the pre-hearing conference statement; whereupon, Attorney Vicari explained that the Appellant has requested relief in the form of awarding backpay, benefits, and seniority and removing the termination from her personnel file; that, under the Personnel Rules, the only action that the Board will take is to determine whether the termination will be upheld or if there will be a remand for the department to make a recommendation for alternative disciplinary action; and that removing the termination from the Appellant's personnel file would violate Chapter 119 of Florida's public records laws; whereupon, she related that the Appellee filed the exception and desired to bring this to the Board's attention since the requested relief is not achievable as a result of this hearing.

In rebuttal, Ms. Rubin noted that this topic was discussed at the pre-hearing conference; whereupon, Attorney Moore provided additional details regarding the discussion held at the pre-hearing conference, including that the Appellant was informed that the requested relief was outside the scope of the Board's authority; that the requested relief was retained in the pre-hearing conference statement at the Appellant's request; and that it was understood by all counsel that the Board would not make determinations regarding the requested relief since it is outside the scope of the UPB's authority. She further indicated that the Appellee's exception to the pre-hearing conference statement appears to be unopposed and could be acknowledged as stipulated by the parties without the need for a formal ruling; whereupon, Ms. Rubin confirmed her agreement.

Thereupon, the appeal of termination filed by Ms. Carter, formerly of the Pinellas County Solid Waste Department, was presented by Ms. Rubin, representing the Appellant, and by Attorney Vicari, representing the Appointing Authority.

Attorney Moore requested that those planning to testify be sworn in by Ms. Oakes; whereupon, following opening statements, Attorney Moore read the following stipulated facts:

1. Appellant began her employment with Pinellas County on August 4, 1997.
2. Appellant received the disciplinary notice dismissal on November 7, 2025.

Thereupon, testimony, cross-examination, and questioning of the parties and witnesses began.

*The meeting was recessed at 4:17, 5:34, and 7:11 PM
and reconvened at 4:27, 5:42, and 7:31 PM, respectively.*

During cross-examination, Ms. Rubin objected to a query asked of the Appellant by Attorney Vicari; whereupon, Attorney Moore explained that it is within the Board's discretion whether to entertain this line of questioning, which relates to motivation for retaliation, as referenced in the Appellant's testimony. Following brief discussion, with input by Attorney Moore, Mr. Peluso made a motion not to pursue this line of questioning. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kronschnabl and carried by a vote of 4 to 1, with Mr. Schulz dissenting.

Attorney Moore queried as to whether the Board would like to entertain closing arguments or proceed directly to deliberations; whereupon, Mr. Peluso made a motion to proceed directly to deliberations, which was seconded by Mr. Schulz and carried unanimously.

Thereupon, Chair Davis indicated that the Board shall decide the following issues:

1. Does the Board find that the Appellant committed the activities for which she was terminated?

Mr. Peluso made a motion that the Board find that the Appellant did commit the activities for which she was terminated. The motion was seconded by Mr. Strickland and carried by a vote of 3 to 2, with Chair Davis and Mr. Schulz dissenting.

2. Does the Board find that cause existed for the disciplinary action in that the above-mentioned activities violated the Personnel Rules cited by the Appointing Authority?

Chair Davis noted that the Personnel Rules cited by the Appointing Authority are Personnel Rule 6: Discipline, Paragraph B, Infractions D1: Substandard quality or quantity of work and D3: Failure to perform assigned duties.

In response to Chair Davis' reference of the Personnel Rules cited by the Appointing Authority, Mr. Peluso made a motion with the same reasoning as D1: Substandard quality or quantity of work; whereupon, in response to a request by Attorney Moore to clarify the motion, he indicated that his motion is that the Board find that cause existed for the disciplinary action in that the above-mentioned activities violated the Personnel Rules cited by the Appointing Authority. The motion was seconded by Mr. Strickland and carried by a vote of 3 to 2, with Chair Davis and Mr. Schulz dissenting.

3. Does the Board find that the disciplinary action taken by the Appointing Authority toward the Appellant was appropriate?

Mr. Peluso made a motion that the Board find the disciplinary action taken by the Appointing Authority toward the Appellant was appropriate. The motion was seconded by Mr. Strickland and carried by a vote of 3 to 2, with Chair Davis and Mr. Schulz dissenting.

Attorney Moore restated the Board's decision regarding the appropriateness of the Appointing Authority's disciplinary action toward the Appellant; whereupon, she noted that, if one of the parties desires to file a motion for reconsideration, it should be filed within the timeframe provided for in the rule from the announcement of the findings today.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:36 PM.