

Unified Personnel Board
Pinellas County
August 6, 2026 Meeting Minutes

The Unified Personnel Board (UPB) met in regular session at 2:01 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
Craig Bostock
William Schulz II
Sabina Soler
Mark Strickland

Not Present

Jeffery Kronschnabl

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
Ashley Pabilonia, 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 2:01 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 expressed appreciation to those involved in making changes to Personnel Rule 6: Discipline. She also noted that she is eligible for re-election this year and intends to seek another term.

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes of the Regular Personnel Board Meeting Held July 9, 2026

Chair Davis indicated that the next item on the agenda is a request for approval of the minutes for the regular UPB meeting held on July 9, 2026; whereupon, Mr. Peluso made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Bostock and carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Revisions to Personnel Rule 6: Discipline

Mr. Childress reviewed proposed revisions to Personnel Rule 6: Discipline, including changing the term "final warning" to "level three warning" and adding language requiring employees who must maintain a commercial driver's license or operate a County vehicle to authorize annual review of their motor vehicle records. He explained that the annual motor vehicle record review is required for workers' compensation insurance purposes; that the requirement reflects a long-standing practice not previously stated in the Personnel Rules; and that employees who do not authorize the review may be unable to perform duties requiring operation of a County vehicle.

Mr. Peluso made a motion to accept the changes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Strickland and carried unanimously.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Revisions to Anti-Harassment Policy

Office of Human Rights Compliance Manager Jay Burkey reviewed revisions to the Anti-Harassment Policy, indicating that the changes modernize the language and expand certain definitions to promote clarity and consistent application; and that the scope of the policy remains unchanged; whereupon, Mr. Childress noted that the item is informational and does not require Board approval; and that the revised policy has already been approved by the Human Rights Board and presented to the Appointing Authorities.

HR Update

Mr. Childress referred to a document titled *HR UPB Update for August*, which is included in the agenda packet, and related that it provides information regarding the Department's activities during the previous month. He also noted that, in the past month, no job changes were made under the Board's delegated authority.

The meeting was recessed at 2:07 PM and reconvened at 2:12 PM.

APPEAL OF TERMINATION

Michael Newton v. Pinellas County Public Works

Attorney Moore indicated that the first item before the Board is a motion from the department; whereupon, Senior Assistant County Attorney Andrew Keefe indicated that, on behalf of the County, he filed an objection to a Tax Collector receipt submitted by Mr. Newton and to two of Mr. Newton's proposed witnesses; and that the County is requesting that the exhibit and witnesses be excluded based on lack of relevance to the issues before the Board. Mr. Newton then responded to the County's motion and provided information regarding the purpose of the exhibit and the testimony he expected from the two witnesses.

In response to a query by Attorney Moore, Attorney Keefe indicated that, if the date of the transaction associated with the Tax Collector receipt becomes relevant for impeachment purposes, he would not object to use of the receipt for that purpose; whereupon, responding to a query by Attorney Moore regarding the two proposed witnesses, Mr. Newton indicated that one had left County employment approximately one year prior to his termination; and that the second witness left approximately three to four years prior.

Following brief discussion, Mr. Strickland made a motion to deny the request by the County. In response to comments by Attorney Moore, he confirmed that his motion is to deny the County's motion and allow the Tax Collector receipt and testimony from the two witnesses; whereupon, the motion was seconded by Mr. Schulz and carried by a vote of 4 to 2, with Messrs. Peluso and Bostock dissenting.

Thereupon, the appeal of termination filed by Mr. Newton, formerly of the Pinellas County Public Works Department, was presented by Mr. Newton, the Appellant, and by Attorney Keefe, representing the Appointing Authority.

Attorney Moore requested that those planning to testify be sworn in by Ms. Pabilonia; whereupon, following testimony, cross-examination, and questioning of the parties and witnesses, Attorney Moore indicated that the Board can either hear closing arguments or

defer. Mr. Peluso related that he would like to defer, and Ms. Soler and Chair Davis concurred.

Thereupon, Attorney Moore read the following stipulated facts:

1. As a Crew Chief 1, Mr. Newton was responsible for leading field employees, assigning or directing work, using County vehicles and equipment, maintaining accurate work and time records, interacting with the public, and supporting efficient crew performance and morale.
2. Mr. Newton drove the County vehicle with his two crew members to the Tax Collector's office at 2500 34th Street North, St. Petersburg, 33713, on March 4, 2026.
3. Mr. Newton removed his County uniform and changed his shirt before entering the Tax Collector's office on March 4, 2026.
4. Mr. Newton conducted personal business in the Tax Collector's office on March 4, 2026.
5. Mr. Newton spent 2 hours and 20 minutes conducting personal business in the Tax Collector's office on March 4, 2026.
6. Mr. Newton's two crew members were not able to complete any work while he spent over 2 hours conducting personal business in the Tax Collector's office on March 4, 2026.
7. Mr. Newton was paid for the time spent conducting personal business in the Tax Collector's office on March 4, 2026, after submitting his timecard submission.
8. Mr. Newton drove the County vehicle with his two crew members to the Tax Collector's office at 2500 34th Street North, St. Petersburg, 33713, on March 5, 2026.
9. Mr. Newton's conduct impaired crew morale, efficiency, good order, or discipline.
10. That the GPS is assigned to Mr. Newton, and reflects the movement of the vehicle.

Attorney Moore then outlined the issues for the Board's consideration, indicating that the County has the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence that Mr. Newton committed the activities for which he was disciplined and, in doing so, violated the cited Personnel Rules; and that, if the County meets its burden, Mr. Newton has the burden of demonstrating that termination was not appropriate; whereupon, she related that the Board shall decide the following issues:

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

Mr. Peluso made a motion that, given the stipulated facts, the Appellant did commit the activities for which he was terminated. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bostock and carried unanimously.

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?

Attorney Moore noted that the Personnel Rules cited by the Appointing Authority are as follows:

Personnel Rule 6:

F. Property or Equipment Damage/Misuse

Misuse of public/County property or equipment.

G. Negligence / Poor Judgement

Decision/action resulting in serious consequences, including operational disruption.

I. Theft

Misappropriation or personal use of County funds or property; illegal disposition of County property; illegal possession of a coworker's or member of the public's property; and time paid where the employee intentionally falsified a time record or made a false claim for leave.

K. Conduct Unbecoming of an Employee of the County / Violation of Pinellas County Statement of Ethics

Conduct unbecoming of a County employee or other behavior that affects the public trust or is a poor representation of a County employee.

L. Conduct / Behavior

Offensive or antagonistic conduct toward management, fellow employees, or the public; verbal abuse, intimidation, profane or obscene language; conduct that interferes with cooperation among coworkers or impairs workplace efficiency, morale, good order, or discipline; and violation of the Anti-Harassment Policy.

Mr. Peluso then made a motion that cause existed for disciplinary action. In response to a query by Attorney Moore regarding which Personnel Rules were included in the motion, he confirmed that the motion applies to Personnel Rule 6. F, G, I, K, and L. The motion was seconded by Mr. Strickland and carried unanimously.

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 disciplinary action taken by the Appointing Authority toward the Appellant was appropriate. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bostock and carried unanimously.

Attorney Moore stated that the Board's decision is to uphold the termination; whereupon, she noted that the Appellant has the right to appeal the decision via a motion for reconsideration; and that the motion would need to be filed within 15 days.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:59 PM.