

PINELLAS COUNTY COUNCIL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES MEETING MINUTES

June 1, 2026, at 10:00 AM
Pinellas County Extension, Magnolia Room
12520 Ulmerton Rd, Largo, FL 33774

Call to Order

Jay Burkey, Compliance Manager, Pinellas County Office of Human Rights (OHR), called the meeting to order at 10:02 am.

Roll Call

Present

Brian Rothey, Vice Chair (PARC Center for Disabilities)
Nicole Cheney, Secretary (Disability Achievement Center)
Connor Carlisle (Commissioner Peters)
Deborah Figgs-Sanders (Commissioner Flowers)
Angel Overly (FL Gulf Coast Paralyzed Veterans of America)
Stuart Strikowsky (Area Agency on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas)

Not Present - Excused/Unexcused

Ross Silvers, Chair (Commissioner Eggers) – Excused
Doreen Caudell (Commissioner Latvala) – Unexcused
Jack Humburg (Boley Centers) – Excused
Todd Jennings (Commissioner Scott) – Unexcused
Bradlee McCoy (Commissioner Nowicki) – Unexcused
Jacqueline Stalker (Commissioner Scherer) – Unexcused

Others Present

Betina Baron, Director, Pinellas County Office of Human Rights (OHR)
Jay Burkey, Compliance Manager, OHR
Keiah Townsend, Pinellas County Assistant County Attorney
Other interested guests and members of the public.

Approval of Minutes

A quorum was met at this meeting. The minutes from March 2, 2026, were presented for approval. **Motion:** Deborah Figgs-Sanders, **Second:** Brian Rothey
The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

Beach Access Mats

No significant updates were reported regarding beach access mats since the previous meeting.

New Business

Guest Speaker – Scott Jenkins, AccessRec

Scott Jenkins with AccessRec provided an overview of accessibility products designed for beaches, parks, and recreational facilities. Products discussed included beach access

mats, modular decking systems, grass mats, beach wheelchairs, beach walkers, erosion-control fencing, and wet mat systems for pools, showers, and kayak launches.

Mr. Jenkins discussed the design and maintenance advantages of AccessRec products and highlighted installations throughout Florida and other locations nationwide. Council members discussed maintenance responsibilities, warranty considerations, accessibility transitions between mats and sand surfaces, risk management concerns, and ensuring accessible routes from parking areas to recreational amenities. Discussion emphasized the importance of proper maintenance and long-term accessibility planning.

Guest Speaker – Megan Young, ADA Coordinator, City of St. Petersburg

Megan Young introduced herself as the City of St. Petersburg's ADA Coordinator and provided an overview of her responsibilities. Ms. Young oversees ADA compliance for city facilities, programs, services, digital accessibility, and employee accommodations. She also coordinates disability awareness and ADA training efforts for city staff.

Ms. Young shared information regarding the Community to Advocate for Persons with Impairments (CAPI) committee and encouraged public participation in future meetings. Discussion included accessibility at city facilities and events, ADA complaint processes, collaboration between the City of St. Petersburg and the Office of Human Rights, and efforts to educate businesses regarding ADA compliance.

Guest Speaker – James Culp and Stephen Holland, Abilities of Florida

James Culp and Stephen Holland presented information regarding the Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) program and Families Achieving Self-Sufficiency Together (FAST). The program provides employment support and case management services for individuals with disabilities while also addressing barriers such as housing instability, food insecurity, transportation, educational needs, and benefits counseling.

The presenters discussed partnerships with Vocational Rehabilitation, Job Corps, and community organizations throughout Florida. Council members asked questions regarding referral sources, eligibility requirements, benefits counseling, Social Security benefits, Medicaid, ABLE accounts, and employment planning. The presenters emphasized the program's holistic approach to helping individuals with disabilities achieve long-term stability and independence.

Park Accessibility Update

Representatives from Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources (PCR) provided an update regarding playground improvement projects, concept plans were presented for Council review and feedback.

Council members expressed concerns regarding the level of accessibility and inclusivity reflected in the proposed playground designs, particularly for children who use wheelchairs. Discussion focused on ensuring children with disabilities have opportunities for meaningful participation through accessible play equipment, including wheelchair-accessible swings, spinners, and other inclusive features. Members emphasized the importance of designing playgrounds that allow children of all abilities to play together and independently participate in recreational activities.

PCR staff agreed to review the feedback and explore additional inclusive design options. Council members were asked to provide any additional feedback within approximately two weeks so it could be incorporated into the review process and shared with the appropriate county departments prior to project completion.

Council Transition and Future Initiatives

Betina Baron introduced Nicole Cheney as the Executive Director of Disability Achievement Center and discussed the transition following the retirement of former Chair Jody Armstrong. Ms. Baron noted that the Council will need to consider how beach accessibility initiatives will be championed moving forward and explained that while the Office of Human Rights continues to maintain information regarding beach access mats, many of the mats are now managed by individual municipalities. Members were encouraged to consider future priorities and initiatives for the Council as it moves forward under new leadership.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Update

Betina Baron reported that the federal deadline for compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) has been extended by one year. She noted that local governments and agencies have been actively preparing for compliance and welcomed the additional time to complete implementation efforts.

Council Elections

Members were asked to update their contact information to ensure accurate Council records and communications.

Following the retirement of former Chair Jody Armstrong and changes in Council membership, elections were conducted for Council officers.

Chair

Ross Silvers was nominated and elected Chair.

Motion: Deborah Figgs-Sanders

Second: Nicole Cheney

The motion passed unanimously.

Co-Chair

Brian Rothey was nominated and elected Co-Chair.

Motion: Deborah Figgs-Sanders

Second: Angel Overly

The motion passed unanimously.

Secretary

Nicole Cheney was nominated and elected Secretary.

Motion: Deborah Figgs-Sanders

Second: Angel Overly

The motion passed unanimously.

Member Updates and Open Discussion

Angel Overly shared accessibility concerns raised by veterans and individuals using mobility devices, particularly related to transportation infrastructure, public

accommodations, and hotel accessibility. Members discussed challenges related to hotel bed heights, shower access, transfer equipment, and the need for clearer accessibility standards within the hospitality industry. The importance of documenting accessibility barriers and utilizing available complaint processes was also discussed.

Nicole Cheney reported that Disability Achievement Center has established a Smart Home Demonstration Site featuring voice-activated and assistive technology devices available for public demonstration and education. The site includes a variety of smart home technologies designed to increase independence for individuals with disabilities.

Brian Rothey shared that he recently completed Leadership St. Pete and would be graduating later that week.

Council members congratulated the Office of Human Rights on the support received from the Board of County Commissioners and community stakeholders during recent discussions regarding the future of the department.

Office of Human Rights Update

Betina Baron shared the outcome of the recent Board of County Commissioners meeting regarding the future of the Office of Human Rights. She expressed appreciation for the support shown by community members, partner organizations, and Council members who attended the meeting or otherwise advocated on behalf of the department. Ms. Baron noted that the Board of County Commissioners demonstrated support for the Office and its mission, and she thanked those who participated in the process.

Jay Burkey thanked Council members and community partners for their advocacy and support and discussed the positive impact community engagement had on the process.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:38 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole Cheney, Secretary

Pinellas County Council for Persons with Disabilities