

**MINUTES  
CITY OF INDIAN ROCKS BEACH  
CITY COMMISSION MEETING  
TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2025 @ 6:00 P.M.  
CHURCH OF THE ISLES  
200 24<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE INDIAN ROCKS BEACH, FLORIDA 33785**

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Mayor-Commissioner Houseberg called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor-Commissioner Denise Houseberg, Vice-Mayor Commissioner Janet Wilson, Commissioner John Bigelow, and Commissioner Hilary King. Commissioner Jude Bond phoned in.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** City Manager Gregg Mims, City Attorney Randy Mora, Finance Director Dan Carpenter, City Clerk Lorin Kornijtschuk, and Planning and Zoning Consultant Hetty Harmon.

*For continuity, items are listed in agenda order, although not necessarily discussed in that order.*

**1 A. REPORT OF Pinellas County Sheriff's Office.**

- The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office submitted a written crime analysis report for March 2025.

**1 B. REPORT OF Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue District.**

- **Leadership:** Chief Grimes, formerly with Pinellas County EMS, is the new PSFRD Chief.
- **March Calls:** 46 medical emergencies, 20 fire-related incidents, 732 training hours.
- **New Station:** Plans are underway for a 4th station at Church of the Isles to better serve the north end, including Belleair.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS.**

**Diane Daniel**- 309 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue- shared an update on her nonprofit efforts to collect leftover food from vacationers with good results and hopes to expand next year.

**Linda Newton** – 438 Harbor Drive North, questioned why the short-term rental listing on the city's website has not been updated since September 2024. She suggested that police and fire reports note whether incidents involve properties that are vacation rentals.

**Kellee Watt** – 431 Harbor Drive South, voiced concerns about the lack of licensing processes for short-term rental businesses.

**Jerry Newton** – 48 Harbor Drive North, questioned why short-term rentals are allowed to operate without fire inspections and proper safety checks.

**Bob Coplen** – 447 20th Avenue, voiced concerns with the lack of proper enforcement of regulations.

**John Pfanstiehl** – 448 Harbor Drive South, praised the county's proactive actions and stressed the importance of more staff and faster responses for enforcement. Expressed concerns over state legislative actions that might erode local decision-making power.

**Eddie Bie** – 497 20th Avenue, voiced concern with the long compliance windows given to violators.

**R.B. Johnson**, 1206 Beach Trail, has concerns about the beach's current state after the storm. While it seems in decent shape, it still needs significant work to restore it to pre-storm conditions.

**Matthew Barrowclough** – 211 11th Avenue, asked the Commission to act smarter in addressing the housing crisis as people continue to live in campers. He expressed concern that there are a few people who continue to push the agenda that all tourism is bad.

### **3. REPORTS OF:**

#### **A. City Attorney- Randy Mora**

#### **Legislative Session Update**

- The legislative session is approximately halfway complete and will continue into the following month.
- Key proposals include preemption measures, attorney fee-shifting provisions, compliance requirements, and challenges for local governments.
- A Senate amendment proposes raising the sovereign immunity cap from \$200,000 to \$500,000 or potentially \$1 million, which may impact municipal insurance premiums and liability exposure.

#### **Local Legislative Concerns**

- Legislative proposals affecting redevelopment near religious institutions are being tracked.
- The City is working with Local Voices United to remain informed and engaged on these developments.

#### **Ongoing Litigation**

- The City is involved in seven (7) federal lawsuits. One case, AP 6, was recently reopened.
- The City is also defending two (2) lawsuits in state court.

**Mayor-Commissioner Houseberg** inquired about House Bill 1209 and House Bill 247.

**Attorney Mora** noted these bills include criteria for such housing and stated he would provide further analysis if local impacts are identified.

**Commissioner Bigelow** inquired whether code enforcement complaints submitted through the City's new hotline are considered public records.

**City Attorney Mora** confirmed that code enforcement complaints are generally public records. He noted that the timing and manner of public disclosure are subject to administrative protocols, though the legal presumption is that such complaints are public.

**B. City Manager- Gregg Mims**

**Recycling Efforts:**

- City Manager Mims highlighted the city's ongoing efforts to improve recycling programs, including a quarterly newsletter sent to property owners outlining what can and cannot be recycled.
- The city's website provides detailed recycling information, including a link to the county's recycling website and locations for drop-off.
- Decals for recycling bins have been ordered, and replacements for lost bins due to hurricanes are in progress.

**Insurance and Legislation Update:**

- City Manager Mims shared concerns about a proposed bill that would raise the liability limit for government entities, which could result in a 25% increase in insurance costs for the city.
- The city is advocating against this bill.

**Code Enforcement and Parking:**

- The city has issued 82 parking citations, in addition to county citations.
- City Manager Mims acknowledged the passing of Jean Scott, a former city commissioner who served for many years.
- Changes in city staffing: Dan Carpenter has been reclassified as the Administrative Director, overseeing various departments, including code enforcement and vacation rental compliance.

**Building and Permitting Updates:**

- Permitting issues are seeing improvement, with fewer individuals visiting City Hall for assistance.
- The city is making progress on the rebuilding of City Hall, with work on the floor leveling underway. Completion is expected by June or July.
- FEMA funding processes are ongoing, though it may take up to two years to receive financial assistance.

**Parking on the Beach:**

- City Manager Mims reminded the Commission that a work session will be held to discuss paid beach parking and city parking, topics discussed before the hurricane but still under consideration.

**Land Development Code and Mixed-Use Study:**

- The city is continuing a study with Forward Pinellas to review the land development code and consider mixed-use development incentives.
- A presentation will be made tonight, with no immediate action expected from the Commission. City Manager Mims suggested referring the topic to the Planning Commission for further discussion due to its complexity. The study had been paused due to the hurricane but is now resuming.
- The city entered into an interlocal agreement with Forward Pinellas in July of 2024 to review and evaluate its Land Development Code.

**Mayor Commissioner Houseberg** inquired why the city's short-term rental list on the website had not been kept up to date.

**City Manager Mims** explained that the process had been delayed due to the aftermath of the hurricanes, which caused property damage and led to staff shortages, including the resignation of a code enforcement officer. The city had to focus on emergency responses and permits before resuming regular duties. City Manager Mims assured the Commission that the process is now back on track, with updates underway and an accurate list expected to be posted on the website by the end of the month. The list will include disclaimers to account for registration and inspection issues. He emphasized that the data will be thoroughly verified for accuracy.

#### **C. City Commission.**

**Commissioner King** reported that the city recently hosted an event to assist residents with permitting issues, but only one person attended, who required significant help. She encouraged those still struggling with the process to take advantage of another opportunity on April 24th at the Holiday Inn, with details available on the city website. She emphasized that city staff, including City Manager Mims and his team, are always available for walk-ins and assistance, and she hopes more people will take advantage of these opportunities to get the help they need.

**Vice Mayor Commissioner Wilson**, reported the "Taste of IRB" event will be held on April 26th, with tickets being sold from 3 to 5 P.M., and encouraged everyone to stop by and support IRB Homes.

**Mayor-Commissioner Houseberg** spoke about the loss of Jean Scott, praising her deep love for Indian Rocks Beach. She shared that Jean, was a dedicated businesswoman and volunteer, contributing to numerous local organizations such as the Beach Art Center and Friends of the Library. Jean also served as a commissioner for two terms and was reappointed for another.

**Commissioner Bigelow**, no report.

**Commissioner Bond**, no report.

#### **4. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS. None**

#### **5. CONSENT AGENDA:**

- A. APPROVAL OF** March 27, 2025, Swearing In Ceremony Minutes.
- B. APPROVAL OF** March 27, 2025, Regular City Commission Meeting Minutes.

**C. PROCLAMATION-** National Public Works Week- May 18<sup>th</sup> ~ May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

**City Attorney Mora read Consent Agenda items 5 A – 5 C by title only.**

**Motion made by Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson, seconded by Commissioner King to approve the consent agenda, consisting of agenda items 5 A – 5 C.**

**Unanimous approval by acclamation.**

**6. PUBLIC HEARINGS:** None

**7. OTHER LEGISLATIVE MATTERS:** None

**8. WORK SESSION ITEMS:** Forward Pinellas Mixed-Use Strategy Recommendations-Presentation.

**A PowerPoint presentation was done by Rodney Chatman and Nousheen Rahman of Forward Pinellas.**

**Commissioner's Discussion.**

**Commissioner Bigelow** inquired about any ongoing mixed-use projects in the area and whether the public would have the opportunity to provide input on such developments. He emphasized the importance of gauging resident sentiment before moving forward with any zoning or code changes. He stated each project should be evaluated individually.

**Forward Pinellas** responded that they were not aware of specific projects under construction but noted that recent changes in regulations could potentially encourage such developments.

**City Attorney Mora** clarified that any changes to land development codes would go through public hearings, planning and zoning board reviews, and multiple commission meetings with public comment opportunities

**Commissioner King** raised concerns about whether the recommendations for mixed-use projects considered the impacts on infrastructure. She expressed the need to assess these impacts before proceeding with zoning changes. She wants scenario planning to understand the impact before decisions are made

**Forward Pinellas** clarified that the presentation focused on regulatory changes, not specific projects, and infrastructure evaluations would be part of the development approval process. They also offered to conduct further analysis on potential infrastructure impacts based on different development scenarios.

**Mayor Commissioner Houseberg** added that the city may need to modify its land use codes to accommodate future developments, especially as older buildings may need to be rebuilt or repurposed. Updating the code could allow redevelopment of aging or non-conforming

properties in line with modern needs, some commercial buildings could not even be rebuilt under current rules due to limitations on required retail space.

**Vice Mayor- Commissioner Wilson** emphasized that any development opportunities would be evaluated for their impact on infrastructure before being approved. She showed support for exploring mixed-use development as a strategic tool to help the city guide growth in a more controlled and community-beneficial way. Giving developers an “option available” that aligns with the city’s goals. She noted that some parcels will inevitably be developed, and under the current regulations, the city does not have much influence unless the development exceeds height limits or similar thresholds. By introducing a mixed-use option, the city could regain some influence over what gets built.

**Mayor Commissioner Houseberg opened Public Comment.**

**Kelly Cisarik** - 448 Harbor Drive South, opposed to giving developers automatic incentives like extra height or density. She stated that current rules already allow mixed-use with Commission approval. She urged keeping local control and reviewing projects individually.

**John Pfanstiehl** - 448 Harbor Drive South had concerns about losing Indian Rocks Beach’s small-town charm to larger developments. He stated that traffic is already bad and would get worse.

**Kellee Watts** - 431 Harbor Drive South, stated that this plan does not seem to be initiated by the city. She expressed concern about short-term rentals, potential traffic, and infrastructure impacts.

**City Attorney Mora** clarified that the City Commission requested the Forward Pinellas study in response to resident questions and outreach. Some citizens had asked why the city had not taken further action or followed up on the 2020 planning efforts. As a result, at the July 2024 City Commission Meeting, the Commission directed staff to revisit the topic and explore potential options.

**Diane Daniel** - 309 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue - supported mixed-use but has concerns about short-term rentals. She would like safer walking and biking areas, as well as improved traffic flow.

**Bert Valery** - 2000 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue Parkway, said current rules limit useful mixed-use development and he supports updating zoning to help revitalize the area.

**R.B. Johnson** - 1206 Beach Trail, pointed out current small mixed-use projects that work well and showed concern that larger buildings would change IRB’s character. He asked the Commission to focus on scale and traffic impacts.

**Bob Copelan** - 447 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue, showed concern with traffic congestion and suggested infrastructure studies before any new development.

**Matthew Barrowclough**, 211 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue, showed support for the study for a chance to improve the area for the future.

**Mayor Commissioner Houseberg Closed Public Comment.**

**Unanimous approval to have the Planning and Zoning Board explore options with Forward Pinellas.**

9. OTHER BUSINESS. None

10. ADJOURNMENT.

**Motion was made by Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson and seconded by Commissioner King to adjourn at 8:25 p.m. Unanimous approval by acclamation.**