

**OFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION
PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA**

JANUARY 28, 2019

**MONDAY
2:05 P.M.**

**LAKESIDE MEDICAL CENTER
BELLE GLADE, FLORIDA**

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. WELCOME REMARKS

III.1. Representative Matt Willhite, Chair; Palm Beach County Legislative Delegation

Chair Willhite welcomed everyone to the Glades region and said that today's meeting would be the third and final public hearing for the 2018-2019 Legislative Delegation (Delegation) session.

III.2. Mayor Steve Wilson; City of Belle Glade

Mayor Wilson welcomed everyone to the Glades and introduced local and County officials who were sitting in the audience.

(CLERK'S NOTE: Senator Gayle Harrell joined the meeting.)

III.3. Karen Harris, Vice President of Field Operations; Health Care District of Palm Beach County

Ms. Harris said that:

- Lakeside Medical Center (Lakeside) was a rural acute care hospital and 1 of Florida's few rural teaching hospitals.
- Lakeside was nationally recognized in 2018 as A-rated in patient safety and held the Blue Distinction Center award for maternity care, with primary care and dental clinics being offered soon.

- The Health Care District (HCD) was an independent special taxing district and a public health care system that filled the gap in local health care.
- HCD's mission was to extend health care access without duplicating health care services offered through State and federal programs.
- The HCD provided 200 registered nurses in 170 public schools, oversaw the County's trauma care system, and offered medical, dental, behavioral, women's health, and pharmacy services to adults and children at 9 C.L. Brumback clinics.
- The Edward J. Healy Rehabilitation and Nursing Center was a 120-bed skilled nursing and rehab facility that provided short-and-long-term care for residents with traumatic injuries.
- In 2018, the HCD launched its mobile health care clinic, and an addiction stabilization center would open this year.
- The HCD would be expanding its private health information exchange and a program for patients with substance abuse disorders.

Commissioner McKinlay said that:

- Agricultural jobs sustained the Glades' economic viability, and 1 out of 4 jobs nationwide were held by someone in the agricultural industry.
- The Delegation should continue to ensure that the William E. Sadowski Affordable Housing Trust Funds (Sadowski Trust Fund) were actually spent on affordable housing.
- Senator William Montford introduced a bill on rural development.
 - A loan fund would be developed with eligibility based on average salaries countywide, which were significantly lower in the Glades.
 - The Delegation should consider language that allowed flexibility when including communities located in larger urban areas.

IV. ROLL CALL

DELEGATION MEMBERS:

State Representative Matt Willhite, Chair
State Representative Rick Roth, Vice Chair
State Senator Lori Berman
State Representative Mike Caruso – Absent
State Representative Joseph Casello – Absent
State Senator Gayle Harrell
State Representative Al Jacquet – Absent
State Representative MaryLynn Magar – Arrived later
State Representative Tina Polsky
State Senator Bobby Powell Jr. – Absent
Senator Kevin Rader
State Representative David Silvers – Absent
State Representative Emily Slosberg – Arrived later

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF:

Legislative Delegation Executive Director Christine Shaw
Legislative Delegation Aide Rachel Zara
Deputy Clerk Julie Burns, Clerk & Comptroller's Office

V. DELEGATION BUSINESS

(CLERK'S NOTE: Item V.3. was presented at this time.)

V.3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Willhite said that speakers would have 3 minutes to speak and a comment card should be filled out and submitted.

(CLERK'S NOTE: Item V.1. was presented at this time.)

V.1. Member Introductions

Chair Willhite asked that the Delegation members introduce themselves and their staff.

(CLERK'S NOTE: Representative MaryLynn Magar joined the meeting.)

Chair Willhite announced that Christine Shaw, Delegation Executive Director, would be leaving for another job opportunity, and today was the last public hearing that she would be attending.

V.2. See later in the minutes.

VI. PRESENTERS

VI.1. President Ava Parker, J.D.; Palm Beach State College

Ms. Parker said that:

- She commended the Delegation for supporting a job growth grant that awarded \$2 million to Palm Beach State College (PBSC) to create a mechatronics engineering lab at the Glades campus.
- The dental hygiene and dental assistance programs, as well as a dental clinic, were being moved to the Loxahatchee Groves campus.
 - PBSC anticipated offering a physical therapy assistant and surgical technician program at the dental and medical services building.
 - PBSC received \$5 million of its requested \$16.7 million in Public Education Capital Outlay funds.
 - A response from the Florida Department of Education was expected soon on an additional funding request to support the 2 additional programs and to expand the building.

VI.2. Gabrielle Finley-Hazle, CEO; St. Mary's Medical Center and the Palm Beach Children's Hospital

Ms. Finley-Hazle said that:

- St. Mary's Medical Center (St. Mary's) recently invested \$10 million to expand its trauma center, and she commended the Delegation for supporting recently passed legislation on regulating the expansion of trauma centers.
- With the Delegation's support, a regional perinatal intensive care center was recently approved for St. Mary's.

(CLERK'S NOTE: Representative Emily Slosberg joined the meeting.)

VI.3. Charles Duval, Director Corporate Partnership; CareerSource Palm Beach County

Maria Rios, CareerSource Palm Beach County (CareerSource) Center Manager, said that Mr. Duval was unable to attend. She added that:

- During the past 5 years, CareerSource helped 9,100 Glades area residents with job placement and provided \$935,000 in job training funds to local employers and residents.
- About 20% of CareerSource's budget, including 12% in job training funds, was spent on serving Glades residents.
- Outreach was conducted on actual and potential Glades projects resulting in 3 new employers and 1 prospective employer that could provide more than 300 jobs.
- A \$1.5 million State grant was secured for the Everglades Restoration Agricultural Community Employment Training Program to support job training in nonagricultural employment opportunities.
- CareerSource staff recently submitted a Florida Job Growth grant fund proposal to provide 1-stop workforce job training and placement services at the West Technical Educational Center in the City of Belle Glade (Belle Glade).
 - The center would provide training for high-demand jobs in key industries that were identified in the Glades Regional Master Plan.
- The Delegation's support was requested in helping CareerSource and the Glades communities move toward a brighter future.

VI.4. Lisa Williams-Taylor, Ph.D., CEO; Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County

Ms. Williams-Taylor said that:

- The Delegation's support was requested to help appropriate more State dollars for mental health services in schools.

- Children’s Services Council (CSC) worked with the School District of Palm Beach County (School District) and mental health agencies to provide early mental health intervention and prevention.
- CSC currently funded licensed mental health professionals in 10 elementary schools for approximately \$560,000.
- Since October 1, 2016, CSC’s mental health programs increased by almost 30% but the Delegation’s support was needed to secure additional mental health funding.

Responding to Delegation questions, Ms. Williams-Taylor said that the 10 elementary schools were chosen through the Bridges program, which identified schools located in neighborhoods with low graduation rates and high domestic violence, child abuse, and infant mortality. She added that the School District determined that elementary schools should be prioritized for services provided by mental health professionals.

(CLERK’S NOTE: Item V.2. was presented at this time.)

V.2. Approval of Minutes

- **November 15, 2018**
- **December 6, 2018**

UPON CALL FOR A SHOW OF HANDS, the November 15, 2018 and December 6, 2018 minutes were approved.

(CLERK’S NOTE: Item VI. was continued at this time.)

VI.5. Mayor Daniel Comerford; Palm Beach Zoo and Conservation Society

Mr. Comerford said that the Palm Beach Zoo was celebrating its 50th anniversary.

VI.6. Kathleen Breland, CFO; Palm Beach Zoo and Conservation Society

Ms. Breland said that:

- The Palm Beach Zoo housed 500 animals on 23 acres, and its mission was to inspire people to act on behalf of animals and wildlife.

- Animals were brought to community schools to allow children to connect with wildlife.
- The zoo was 1 of 233 accredited zoos nationwide.
- The Delegation's support was requested in sponsoring a bill that would fund the creation of a vehicle license plate celebrating the zoo's 50th anniversary.

Senator Lori Berman said that she would sponsor the bill.

VI.7. Commissioner Justin Katz, CTA President; PBC Classroom Teacher Association

Mr. Katz said that:

- Last year's public school funding allocation equated to under \$0.50 per student.
- For the past several years, the legislature rolled back the millage rate, which reduced revenue from property value gains to zero.
- Requiring a continuous local funding effort would produce \$180 million yearly for public schools.
- Current allocations in the Best and Brightest scholarship program could be diverted to the School District's general revenue.
- The Delegation's support was requested to appropriately allocate increased revenue at the State level for public education.

Responding to Delegation questions, Mr. Katz said that the Best and Brightest scholarship program provided State bonuses to teachers based on evaluations and test scores from the Scholastic Assessment Test and the American College Testing. He added that some of the funds diverted to the School District's general revenue could be earmarked for teacher compensation.

VI.8. Michele Canaday, Circuit Director; Guardian ad Litem

Ms. Canaday said that:

- Florida statutes specified that courts were required to appoint a guardian ad litem representative for abused, abandoned, or neglected children.
- The Guardian ad Litem program had over 10,000 volunteers statewide.
- 637 local volunteers helped 1,300 children in the dependency system.
- The Delegation's support of the program was greatly appreciated.

VI.9. Courtney Stafford Hickey, President; Junior League of the Palm Beaches

Ms. Hickey said that:

- The Junior League of the Palm Beaches (JLPB) helped to improve the community, develop women's potential, and promote volunteerism through the actions and leadership of over 800 trained volunteers.
- The JLPB's 4 legislative priorities included:
 - improving education to help students become productive members of the local community;
 - helping at-risk youth by protecting, preserving, and enhancing their stability and quality of life;
 - advocating for better access to quality health care and for awareness and prevention programs to improve the mental and physical health of local and State residents; and
 - keeping local and State residents safe by finding solutions to increased violence and advocating for the wellbeing of children and youth.
- The JLPB supported an advocacy committee that would ensure representation of the 4 priorities in State and local legislation.

VI.10. Don McKenna, President & CEO; Jupiter Medical Center

Mr. McKenna said that:

- Jupiter Medical Center was a 327-bed acute-care hospital serving the northern and central parts of the county.
- Legislation was needed to prevent deregulating certificate-of-need (CON) documents, which would increase costs and provide less access to health care.
 - Some believed that eliminating CON would create more competition and drive down costs, but the opposite was true.
 - The health care industry was already highly regulated with little opportunity for negotiating costs with managed care entities.
 - If CON was not regulated, there would likely be an influx of community health care services and hospitals, and independent hospitals would be forced into potential mergers.
 - Deregulating CON would hamper Jupiter Medical Center's ability to provide nonprofit services, such as diabetic education.

VI.11. Maura Nelson; Meals on Wheels of the Palm Beaches

Ms. Nelson said that:

- The Meals on Wheels program was created to serve the unmet needs of homebound seniors.
- In 2018, 52,000 meals were served by 230 volunteers.
- Seniors were provided nutritious, well-balance meals, companionship, and a watchful eye on their safety.

- 22% of Florida’s seniors were isolated and living alone, and 1 in 6 were food insecure.
- The program received no government funding because it was a privately funded 501(c)(3) organization.
- The Delegation’s support was requested in helping the program reach its goal of installing a kitchen that could serve 1,000 meals per day.

VI.12. Melody Page, Board Chair; Florida Medical Rights Association

Ms. Page said that:

- If someone was unmarried, did not have children under the age of 25, and died due to a medical error while under a doctor’s care, that person was qualified under the “free kill” law, which precluded adult children and parents from filing medical negligence grievances in a court of law.
- The Delegation’s support was requested in repealing or amending Florida Statute 768.21, Section 8, which was also known as the “free kill” law.

Responding to Delegation questions, Ms. Page said that Florida was the only state to limit the filing of a lawsuit for medical negligence under the specified circumstances.

VI.13. Pam Weiner, Ph.D., President; Partnership for Aging PBC and FCOA

Ms. Weiner said that:

- The county had the largest number of older adults in Florida.
- Without additional funding, many seniors would face institutional care up to 10 times the cost of home and community-based care.
- Diverting funds from the Sadowski Trust Fund resulted in an affordable-housing crisis, and the Delegation’s support was requested in using the funds for its intended purpose.

Senator Kevin Rader requested a moment of silence to honor the 33rd anniversary of the Challenger explosion and Barbara Katz, who passed away.

VI.14. Kelly Wilson; Area on Aging – ADRC Palm Beach and Treasure Coast

Ms. Wilson said that:

- The counties of Palm Beach, Indian River, St. Lucie and Martin ranked highest in the number of seniors aged 60-plus and 85-plus.
- The counties also ranked highest for seniors aged 60-plus who lived alone and for seniors aged 65-plus who had Alzheimer's Disease.
- The Delegation's support was requested in securing ADRC funding to handle the workload of Medicaid's statewide, long-term managed care program.
 - The Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) was entering the 6th year of its phase-in transition to restructure AHCA's \$90 billion procurement process.
 - In 2018, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services granted AHCA a waiver to eliminate retroactive Medicaid eligibility effective February 1, 2020.
 - The waiver would expire at the end of the fiscal year unless lawmakers permanently changed the law governing the procurement process.

VI.15. Edward Bender, Regional Captain RC9; Convention of States Action – Not present

VI.16. Betty Argue, President, Board of Supervisors; Indian Trail Improvement District

Ms. Argue said that:

- Indian Trail Improvement District (ITID) encompassed 110 square miles of unincorporated Palm Beach County.
- Infrastructure in the ITID was aging, and the Delegation's support was requested to secure funding for several projects.

- Completing the levy located in the J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area (Corbett) would provide proper drainage in the ITID.
- Providing \$400,000 for the Moss pilot project would provide ITID residents with additional property drainage.
- Funding was also requested for the local mitigation strategy and the M-O Canal outfall gate projects located in the Corbett.

Responding to Delegation questions, Ms. Argue said that ITID and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) would collaborate in requesting State funding to complete the levy. She added that \$5.7 million was requested for the above-referenced projects and that Representative Rick Roth agreed to sponsor the 3 bills.

VI.17. Davicka Thompson, Board Chairwoman; Children’s Home Society – Palm Beach Division

Ms. Thompson said that:

- Children’s Home Society (CHS) was best known for providing services to children who were removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect.
- Most of Florida’s child welfare funding came from the federal government through the Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstrations (waiver), which would expire in September 2019.
- The waiver funds were used for a variety of child welfare services.
- CHS was working with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to ensure that elected officials were adequately prepared for the waiver’s expiration.
- CHS supported DCF’s \$24 million budget request, which was needed to fill the projected funding gap.

VI.18. Kathi Gundlock, League of Women Voters PBC

Ms. Gundlock said that:

- The legislature has failed for years to uphold adequate provisions for a uniform, efficient, and safe system of free public schools that provided a high-quality education to students.
- Florida ranked in 42nd place for overall educational funding, 44th place for kindergarten-through-12th-grade funding, and 50th place for educational staff salaries.
- Since its inception, the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship (FTCS) program has caused the loss of almost \$7 million in revenue.
- In 2018, legislation was passed that allocated over \$150 million in capital funds to charter schools that taught only 10% of Florida's students, while traditional schools only received \$50 million.
- The reduction of school property tax over the past 3 years eliminated \$1.7 billion in potential funds for public schools.
- The League of Women Voters requested that the Delegation:
 - examine the legislature's conflicts of interest regarding charter schools;
 - demand FTCS program oversight; and
 - provide adequate funding to public schools.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

VII.1.

DISCUSSED: Student Aces Athlete Center.

Buck Martinez said that:

- He and his daughter created the Student Aces program that provided training, education, leadership, and values to high school athletic students.

- Commissioner McKinlay and Belle Glade officials helped secure an asset donation from Bank of America (BOA) so that the old BOA Belle Glade office building could be transformed into a Student Aces athletic center.
- The Delegation's support was requested in securing \$1.5 million to add 3,000 square feet to the building for a high-performance training facility.

VII.2.

DISCUSSED: Cultural Council of Palm Beach County.

Rick Sartory said that:

- The Cultural Council has provided art, culture, science, and history sectors to the county since 1978.
- Over 5.4 million adults and children attended at least 1 sector venue or performance during 2017.
- The sectors provided the county with an economic impact of more than \$633 million, and accounted for over 14,000 full-time equivalent jobs.
- The Delegation's support was requested in securing \$62 million in the form of a matching-funds program to support over 650 cultural organizations statewide and over 65 cultural organizations locally.

VII.3.

DISCUSSED: Home-Rule Governance.

Daniel Sohn said that:

- The Florida League of Cities was comprised of more than 400 cities, towns, and villages that supported home-rule governance.
- The home-rule concept included the right to make local decisions on opioids and substance abuse, sober homes, vacation rentals, water quality and supply, community redevelopment areas, effective growth management, and transportation.

- The 2018 Florida legislative session included many attempts to halt home rule protection, and the Delegation's continued support of home rule was requested.

VII.4.

DISCUSSED: School Board Member Term Limits.

Austin Sekul said that:

- U.S. Term Limits was a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocated for term limits of all local government officials.
- The organization requested that the Delegation support a ballot question amendment asking whether term limits of School Board members at the county and State levels should be established.
- Previous polling of constituents and voters determined that 70% of them supported the term limits.
- The organization would be awarding 23 State senators and representatives, including Representatives Rick Roth and Mike Caruso, with a Champion of Term Limits award.

VII.5.

DISCUSSED: Senate Bill (SB) 10.

Tammy Jackson-Moore said that:

- Some activists forgot that SB10 was intended to keep farmland in production until the land was needed to build an Everglades agricultural area (EAA) reservoir.
- The Guardians of the Glades activists and local Glades residents met with legislatures to develop a compromise that would meet SB10's environmental goals while protecting the jobs and livelihood of residents living south of Lake Okeechobee.

- The Delegation’s continued support was needed to:
 - fund and complete community emergency response team projects,
 - convert septic tanks to the central water sewer system, and
 - address harmful discharges and pollution that were flowing into the Lake Okeechobee area.

VII.6.

DISCUSSED: Everglades Restoration.

Phil Flood said that as a result of funding:

- the C-43 reservoir project continued to move forward;
- restoration strategies to clean, send, and store water south of Lake Okeechobee were ongoing;
- Phase 1 of the Stormwater Treatment Area 1-West expansion project was wrapping up; and
- work would continue on the EAA reservoir.

Responding to Delegation questions, Mr. Flood said that:

- The SFWMD was awarded a construction contract to build an emergency estuary deep-injection well on the Kissimmee River, and a Department of Environmental Protection permit would be issued soon.
- SFWMD agreed to test the Okeechobee Utility Authority’s seldom-used well.
 - If the well was suitable, a long-term agreement would be entered into to move water from Taylor Creek to the Authority.
- SFWMD was meeting the State’s water quality requirements in the Everglades, but legal discussions were still ongoing regarding a federal lawsuit.

VII.7.

DISCUSSED: Cost of Care for Alzheimer's Disease Patients.

Lisa Wiese said that in 2016, the average cost of care for someone with Alzheimer's Disease residing in a Florida assisted-living facility was \$4,275 per month.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

At 4:04 p.m., the chair declared the meeting adjourned.

APPROVED:

Chair/Vice Chair