

## MINUTES

**September 4, 2025**

**Council Members Present:** Beth Hovind, Carmen Lake, Michael Arendall, Maria Amado, Mark Hopkins, Adriana Palacio, Deputy Ryan Skalko, John White

**Council Members Absent:** Dawn Handley, Mary Sharrow, Nadine Spring Nickeson, Niko Stergiotis

**Council Member on Leave of Absence –** Eric Clark

**Guests:** Lacey Deans – Boley Centers, Stephanie Espier – Pinellas County Housing Authority, Carolyn Otero Torres & Allison Miller – Hispanic Outreach Center, David Hale & Shelden Smoote-Caesar – Mattie Williams Center, Jennifer Riegel – Eleos Wellness, Allie Chandler-Baier – City of Clearwater.

**JWB Staff:** Joanne M. Reich

**I. Call to Order:** Beth Hovind - Chair called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.  
A quorum of the Council was present.  
Introductions: Council Members and guests introduced themselves briefly.

**II. Special Presentations:** David Hale, Executive Director of our host, the Mattie Williams Neighborhood Family Center, introduced himself and his team, and shared that the Council was meeting in Hooper Hall, part of the newly expanded MWC, named in honor of retired MWC Executive Director Janet Hooper, which opened in June. David explained that the MWC operates with a combination of public dollars, including block grants, and private donors, and that the meeting room was full of hurricane supplies prepared for quick delivery into the community in case of a storm. David mentioned that MWC operates a Food Pantry that serves 8-10 new families each week. MWC's Food Pantry distributes food on Thursdays from 9-11 a.m. and 5-6 p.m.. Council Member Maria Amado mentioned that she volunteers with the Food Pantry and volunteers are welcome. David introduced Sheldon, who works on the Family Support Team with Council Member Adriana Palacio, and the Family Support Team is designed to provide wrap around services for families. MWC has helped link families with utility and other financial assistance, and it recently hosted Achieva Credit Union for a finance workshop for families, with more workshops in the planning stages. MWC also partnered with St. Petersburg College recently to create a hurricane resource fair, including creating supply kits, supported by JWB's Community Events Funding Program. MWC has followed up with families after the fair to continue to provide support where needed. MWC has an after-school care program for families of working parents. Among other things, MWC's goal is to help families get ahead of challenges before they materialize. MWC helps to connect service providers and local charities, and David mentioned that MWC serves families in Safety Harbor, Oldsmar, and two western zip codes of Clearwater.

Carolyn Torres of the Hispanic Outreach Center shared information with the Council about HOC's back to school program held on July 19, with JWB as a sponsor. HOC expected approximately 125 attendees, and over 620 attended. At the Back to School event, 500 backpacks filled with school supplies were distributed, haircuts and health screenings were offered, and food was distributed to attendees. Carolyn shared a written report of the Back to School event with the Council. HOC is currently in the process of moving locations in approximately the next 2 weeks, and its Food Pantry is scaling up. There was a short discussion about the impact on HOC's services of the nationwide focus on immigration, as well as the potential that the needs of the hispanic community may grow.

Beth asked if the community can support either of the Food Pantries at MWC or HOC, and David replied that support is always appreciated, especially paper towels, toilet paper, and shelf-stable milk products.

### **III. Open Agenda: Community Partners Updates**

Stephanie Speer of the Pinellas County Housing Authority shared that a new affordable housing community for seniors, Heritage Oaks, near Ulmerton Rd. and Walsingham Rd. in Largo, is opening in November. The community is comprised of 82 units and it is at capacity already due to high demand.

Deputy Skalko shared that the Sheriff's Office has seen an improvement in safety in the area around Heritage Oaks over the last several years due to redevelopment efforts.

### **IV. Council Business**

- A. Michael asked unanimous consent to postpone consideration of the minutes from the Council's June 5, 2025, as the draft minutes look different from the ones that he prepared. Without objection, the unanimous consent request was agreed to.
- B. Beth presented a map to each Council Member and circulated a binder with details of JWB-funded programs serving the North County region of the county. The binder was given to JWB Board Members recently with granular performance and demographic data.
- C. Joanne explained the need for appointment of members of the Nominating Committee to present a slate of proposed officers for the 2025-2027 term. A short discussion followed whereby Adriana volunteered to serve and Mark offered to not be a candidate for re-election as an officer and instead serve on the Nominating Committee. Michael moved that Adriana Palacio and Mark Hopkins be appointed to the Nominating Committee. Carmen seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.
- D. Beth asked Council Members to prepare for discussions on the Council's next Work Plan. After discussion, the Council agreed to take up the Work Plan at a meeting after elections are held in October and after the November Joint Council Meeting.

## **V. JWB Updates**

- A. Joanne announced that there will be a joint meeting of all of the Community Councils at the JWB offices on November 6, 2025, which will replace each individual council meeting in November. The Joint Council Meeting will include a discussion about JWB's priorities for serving children and families throughout the county.
- B. As an information item, Beth shared that based on publicly-announced information and on her computations, she believed that approximately \$5,200 in programming funds are spent per client served, and when JWB programming funds are isolated, the figure becomes \$2,800 per client served.
- C. Joanne and Michael shared a brief update on recent discussions, including at a recent August 26th meeting at JWB that included a representative of each council, involving the community council bylaws. There is an effort underway to prepare a single set of Bylaws that will govern each of the individual councils, and after review by JWB General Counsel, the draft will be presented to each of the councils and the JWB Board for consideration.
- D. Joanne reminded the Council that JWB is in the midst of TRIM hearings for the fiscal year that begins on October 1. There is a TRIM hearing on Monday, September 22 on the proposed JWB millage rate for 2025 ad valorem property taxes. JWB expects to make the TRIM hearing available on YouTube.
- E. Joanne mentioned that the Council may have a new member soon, as a Council applicant is going before the JWB Board for approval. There was a short discussion about the Council's role in considering applicants to join the Council, as well as why the councils are not invited to help decide on funding requests under the Community Events Funding Program.
- F. Joanne shared that Dawn's organization, Speak Up for Mental Health, will host an event on October 4, 2025 at Mt. Moriah Church. Funding for the event is provided by JWB's Community Events Funding Program.

There being no further business, on a motion by John that was seconded by Adriana, the Council adjourned without objection at 7:20 p.m. The Council's next meeting is Thursday, October 2, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. at the Mattie Williams Neighborhood Family Center, 1003 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Street North in Safety Harbor.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Arendall  
Secretary