

MINUTES

I. Call to Order and Introductions. The October 2, 2025 meeting of the North County Community Council, Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County, was called to order by Chair Beth Hovind at 6:35 p.m.

In attendance were Council Members Beth Hovind, Carmen Lake, Michael Arendall, Maria Amado, Mary Sharrow, Dawn Handley, Adriana Palacio, and Niko Stergiotis.

Absent were: Council Members Nadine Nickeson, John White, Mark Hopkins, and a deputy with the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office.

Guests: David Hale and Lamar Woods of the Mattie Williams Center, Kristina Garcia of Dunedin Cares, Thomas Payne Evara Health, Yaridis Garcia, Jerome Kynard, and Joanne Reich of JWB, Devon McTier Fatherhood Collaborative, Stephanie Espier Pinellas County Housing Authority, Larissa Jones of St. Pete College, Andrea Vendetti of Hispanic Outreach Center, Darice Flournoy, Melanie Callahan of Empath Health, Dorothy Shipe of R'Club, Mistine Dave of Pinellas County Schools

A quorum of the Council was present.

Introductions: Council Members and guests introduced themselves briefly.

Niko moved that the minutes of the June 2025 meeting be approved, and the motion was seconded by Dawn. The motion carried unanimously.

Mary moved that the minutes of the September 2025 meeting be approved, and Michael seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

II. Election of Officers

Adriana provided the report of the Nominating Committee, which met last Thursday to discuss a slate of proposed officers for the 2025-2027 Fiscal Year Term. Adriana thanked the Council members who have served and who have been nominated for their commitment to serve. Ballots were distributed to Council members and then collected by Adriana. Adriana reported the results of the election of officers as follows:

Chair:	Beth Hovind
Vice Chair:	Carmen Lake
Secretary:	Michael Arendall
KidsFirst Representative:	Maria Amado

Joanne shared that Mark was not able to be at tonight's meeting, but he is willing to work with Maria as she transitions into her role as the Council's KidsFirst Representative.

III. Council Business

- A. Beth asked the Council to spend some time considering what action items and focus objectives we can include in a Work Plan for the next fiscal year, acknowledging that the Council agreed to consider the Work Plan after the joint council meeting in November. Beth brought to Council Members' attention the Community Council 25 years historical brochure from 2019 that was attached to Joanne's email about tonight's meeting, and Beth suggested that a subcommittee could be formed to analyze data and put together some recommendations for the Council to focus on and to present during its advocacy. Yaridis Garcia of JWB briefed the Council on the joint community council meeting next month with the JWB Executive Team, including Interim CEO Mike Mikurak, and the opportunity to vocalize data requests and to assess community needs. JWB is developing a dashboard to increase the availability of data on statistics and programming. Beth, Dawn, and Adriana agreed to serve on a data subcommittee. Maria asked if the focus was on access to resources, and the Council agreed that is one of the focus areas of the subcommittee, in addition to assessing unmet needs of children, family, and elderly. Devon McTier from the Fatherhood Collaborative asked how often the community councils gather together to discuss the county's needs, and Yaridis answered that the councils met regularly prior to COVID, but since COVID there have not been regular joint meetings. The councils will gather jointly at JWB's Office on the first Thursday of next month, and JWB intends to continue the joint meetings annually or biannually. A short discussion about transportation needs and potential solutions, including partnerships between PSTA and Uber/Lyft, as well as increasing PSTA bus pass availability. Kristina Garcia shared that some Medicare policies have Uber/Lyft benefits, for use beyond just medical needs, and the Council was interested in promoting awareness. David shared that MWC views food insecurity as being alarming, with the need up double digit percentages in recent months. Dunedin Cares spends upwards of \$20,000 per month in food for its Pantry. David mentioned that there are families picking up food on their own behalf and for others who are not able to make it to the Pantry. Joanne recognized Dawn's organization for its remarkable work on mental health and youth in just the four years of its existence, and emphasized that we should remember to lift up our organizations that are succeeding. Dawn shared that there is a significant need to interface with young people about mental health challenges given there is a reluctance among adults to have those conversations with our youth. Dawn emphasized that needs can often vary based on demographics and regional areas. Mary echoed those sentiments and the need to challenge assumptions in order to address what is most important to young people. Beth asked Council Members to provide input on what the Council can mention during its time at next month's Joint Community Council Meeting.
- B. The Council passed on its Bylaws discussion item for a future meeting.
- C. Joanne described the Council's past approach to the December meeting was to treat it as more celebratory and lifting up community members with food, gift card, or other gifts for community partners. Carmen has offered up the space at Mt. Moriah Church for its holiday gathering if the Council wishes to meet there for its December 4 meeting. One idea was to decorate, one idea was to have an ugly sweater theme, one idea was a pot luck.

IV. JWB Updates

- A. Joanne reminded the Council of the Joint Community Councils Meeting at the JWB offices on November 6, 2025, which will replace each individual council meeting in November. The Joint Community Council Meeting with JWB's Executive Team will include a discussion about JWB's priorities for serving children and families throughout the county.
- B. Joanne recognized Yaridis for having recently assembled, with Jomar Lopez, a presentation and reported to the JWB Board on the Grand Families Events in 2025. Yaridis shared that the Grand Families Event presentation was thorough, giving the Board data and anecdotes from the three events, including messages that JWB heard routinely about isolation and access to services. Yaridis distributed the presentation handout and walked the Council through some of the highlights. The 2025 Grand Families Events benefitted from key feedback received during the three inaugural 2024 Grand Families Events, including food and hurricane and other supplies.
- C. Joanne asked Jerome to share a short update on the Fatherhood Collaborative. Jerome mentioned that JWB is promoting a collaboration event on November 8, 2025 between the Fatherhood Collaborative and Turbo Babies, focused on birth to age 3, emphasizing to fathers that they are their children's best first teachers. There will be vendors, Kona ice, health screenings, and activities. On October 25, 2025, from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, the Fatherhood Collaborative will have a Family Fun Day event in South St. Pete. Fliers were distributed. Jerome invited Council Members to continue building relationships and a partnership agreement with the Fatherhood Collaborative, including supporting families that move throughout the county. Jerome announced the next Fatherhood Collaborative meeting on October 17 at 11:00 a.m. There is an objective to build and enhance a referral network, with a goal of creating One Pinellas for Fathers. Joanne recognized Mr. Thomas Payne, a member of the Fatherhood Collaborative, who is pending approval to join the Council.
- D. Joanne shared an update on Make a Difference Day. It is a national day held the fourth Saturday in October annually, with different service projects being included. Andrea shared that the Hispanic Outreach Center will be having its Make a Difference Day event physically and virtually on November 6, 2025, a collaborative effort to provide free services focused on health. There will be free health screenings and vendors offering resources at locations in Clearwater and Tarpon Springs, with "watch parties" virtually for community members who cannot travel. Hispanic Outreach Center is seeking "watch party" sponsors from among churches and community centers. Yaridis shared that Mid-County Council will be doing its Make a Difference Day on November 1, a beautification project, and South County Council has adopted the Sanderlin Center to beautify on October 25.

V. Community Announcements

- A. Dawn shared that her organization, Speak Up for Mental Health, will be having an event at Mt. Moriah this Saturday, October 4. In November, the organization will be doing another community art mural with youth participation, at Marshall Street Park. The organization's major fundraiser is in November at the Dunedin Elk Club.
- B. St. Petersburg College will be hosting Debt-Free College planning events in November, with

a flier distributed, with support for financial aid applications and processes.

- C. Maria announced that on November 14, 2025, the Hispanic Leadership Council will be hosting an event titled “Embracing Our Changing Community” at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Largo focusing on the importance of education. Council Members should expect circulation of a flier in the near future.

There being no further business, on a motion by Adriana that was seconded by Maria, the Council adjourned without objection at 7:26 p.m. The next meeting will be held jointly with the other councils on Thursday, November 6, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. at JWB’s Offices, 14155 58th Street North, Suite 100, in Clearwater.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Arendall
Secretary