

MINUTES

March 6, 2025

Council Members Present: Cristine Britt, Jeanne Lafler, Fidel Johnson, Caterina Tassara, Brenda Carvalho, Angel Addison, Deputy Studt, Carol Weideman, Carlos Mercado, Julianne Pérez, Dianelys Ruiz, Julianne Pérez

Council Members Absent: Richard Rock, Harold Paxton Jr., Carol Bumiller, Keith Sabiel, Cheko Carter, Fred Green

Guests: Honorable Judge Patrice Moore, Arelys Escalera, Audrey Ables, Maya Goldstein, Angie Ader, Alpha Parker

JWB Staff: Yaridis L. Garcia, Jerome Kynard, Cristen Curley

I. Call to Order: In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair, Caterina Tassara, the Secretary called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

- A. Welcome – Member and guest introductions.
- B. Approval - February Minutes were approved.

II. Presentations

- **Summer Program Overview:** *Ericka Reckenwald, ESOL Family Outreach Coordinator.* She was not available to present.
- **JWB Community Collaborations Overview:** *Jerome Kynard, Community Collaborations Coordinator-Fatherhood Initiative and Community Collaborations Coordinator. Cristen Curley Childhood Hunger Initiative*

The Community Collaborations unit has 3 collaborations/initiatives focused on improving the lives of children and families:

Childhood Hunger Initiative – Cristen’s focus is on meeting gaps in feeding for Pinellas County’s children. She does advocacy and meets with local partners to fund WIC, SNAP, and local summer programs. She also collects data to ensure the program partners are meeting gaps. This summer they are focusing on teen-food insecurity and the teen food boxes.

Grade Level Reading – This initiative focuses on setting up students to be early readers and future leaders to get kids to read at grade level by 3rd grade because at this age reading shifts from learning to read to reading to learn. The book bus will begin their work this year from June 30th – July 3rd / July 7th – 10th / and July 14-17th. Please email Brianna to

volunteer: bray@jwbpinellas.org.

The Fatherhood Collaborative – Does not provide direct services they offer technical assistance to organizations that provide services to fathers directly. They support the service providers. March 28th at the EpiCenter, Fatherhood Initiative will host a training on father engagement strategies. If interested in joining the collaborative, please email Jerome: jkaynard@jwbpinellas.org.

Question by Julianne: If an agency has events that are open for anyone, can they partner with JWB on one of the initiatives? Can it also be non-profits or also other partners like cities or for profits? Yes, all partners are welcome.

- **Youth Leadership Committee (YLC):** *Mikal Morris, YLC member and Jordan Moore, YLC member*

The YLC was started in 2017, when the Mid-County Council wanted to ensure the voice of youth was heard. The YLC currently has 13 youth from South, Mid and North County. Applications for the YLC are accepted in September. Students must be in grades 9-12 with a minimum of 2.0 GPA and live in Pinellas County. The purpose of the YLC is to amplify the youth voice and promote community involvement along with advocacy on youth issues. Meetings are virtual and in-person. They have grown substantially this year. Volunteering opportunities this year have encompassed a mobile food truck last October, the St. Pete Ronald McDonald House dinner in November, the MCCC Holiday Celebration, and the Mindfully Unwinding event in February. Coming up, they will be creating Teen Food Insecurity kits at the Grand Families events. Their tagline is “Youth are the leaders of today, NOT tomorrow”. Both students presenting received the Ralph Young Scholarship. The Mid-County members and guests applaud these great achievements!

Question by Carol Weideman: Is the YLC committee open to all students? The committee is open to all students in both private and public schools that meet the above-mentioned requirements. More questions, feel free to contact staff lead Kelly Roy: kroy@jwbpinellas.org.

III. Open Agenda- Community Partner Updates

- BayCare will be having a car seat distribution event for families at the Morton Plant campus in clearwater on March 13th from 3 – 5 pm.
- Dianelys met a grandmother caring for her 9 grandchildren. If anyone knows or wants to sponsor one of the kids for graduation, please let her know. The grandmother is also in need of substance abuse recovery support for her daughter. Those present shared several resources to include Children’s Home Network has a Caregiver Support Services program that offers respite care for grandma and that the Central Florida Behavioral Health may also offer a connection to recovery service providers throughout Tampa Bay multi-county region (depending on where the mother is located). It was also shared that if the mother is involved in the courts system that they may connect her or expect her to access treatment. If anyone else has any other resources to share, please let Dianelis know.

- Pinellas County Citizens University will be held April 23 - May 29th and is open to residents to learn about all of the departments in the county that serve residents. Check out the County website for more information or contact Arelys Escalera.
- Elevate Florida is a program through the state that is available to individuals that need to elevate their home because they are in a flood plain.
- CDBG-DR (disaster relief) is also coming to Pinellas County. The community is invited to give input to Pinellas County on how to use funds. Meeting information will be sent out to the council when it becomes available.
- AM Skills offers an 18+ manufacturing upskilling bootcamp (10 days at \$35 to attend) to obtain a career in the manufacturing field. They also offer students in high school (14-18 yr olds) robotics boot camps. Registration is through AmSkills.org
- Kaiser University is offering 2 free classes to juniors and seniors for free (only have to pay for books) and they will receive credit. They are having an open house by US 19 on March 22nd from 10-1 pm.
- Community Tampa Bay has a free summer camp at Eckerd College for 9th – 12th graders. It's a 5-day camp focusing on identity and inclusive leadership and they can also earn volunteer hours. Applications will close on May 2nd. Contact communitytampabay.org/ANYTOWN for more information.
- In Largo, the Public Library is still providing tax services. The Central Park Performing Arts has a theater production in Spanish and English focused on Flamingos for young children – Julianne has tickets.
- Lutheran Services, the VPK program, is open for signing up.
- Hispanic Outreach Center – March 19th there will be a community health fair.
- LANFC's tax filing with VITA is going great again this year. Appointments through them are booked solid through April.
- The KidsFirst Cooperman Bogue award applications are being received. The final deadline will be July 25th for nominations. Please put in comprehensive details so the committee can really get to know the nominees. The winners will be celebrated in October.

IV. Council Business

- Grand Families Event: Celebrating the Heroes of Caregiving 2025

Flyers are available in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. This event is for grandparents and extended families caring for children. The Mid-County event is on May 10th at the Pinellas Park Performing Arts Center. Every family will leave with a food box along with cereal and milk. Families in need will also receive diapers, baby wipes, toothpaste, and hand sanitizer and everyone will receive a folder with emergency preparedness information and a JWB bag. There will also be free haircuts for kids. There are resource table opportunities available.

- Next Meeting: Barbara S. Ponce Public Library, Thursday, April 3rd 6 – 7:30 pm.
- Future JWB Board meeting: Thursday April 10th, 2-4:00 PM @ JWB 14155 58th Street N, Clearwater, FL 33760 & YouTube

V. JWB Updates

- Strategic Plan – The Community Councils will be part of the focus groups so that the community voice can be heard.

- JWB Children's Summit – Julianne, Caterina and Richard attended. The summit was called “For the Love of Kids” and was held on Valentines Day. It was well attended; a lot of good information was shared and everyone received books to bring back to a child in their life.
- Community Events Funding – Funding is available for any non-profit organization who is coordinating a small grassroots event. Grant amounts vary between \$500 - \$3,000 per applicant and more information can be found on the JWB website under the Community Council's informational page. Questions can also be answered by Yaridis Garcia.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was called at 7:28 pm. Carol Weideman motioned, and Christine Britt seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 pm by Chair Julianne Pérez.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Council Secretary, Caterina Tassara