Pinellas County, Florida
Citizens’ Guide to County Finances
for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2017
Citizens of Pinellas County:

It is my pleasure to present the Citizens’ Guide to County Finances (Citizens’ Guide) for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2017. As your elected Clerk, I serve as the Chief Financial Officer of the Board of County Commissioners and share fiscal responsibility for county funds with them. This report provides you, the citizens, a brief analysis of where county revenues came from and where those dollars were spent during the last fiscal year. It also shows trend information on revenues and expenditures for the last three fiscal years. It is designed to give you an easy-to-read synopsis of the County’s financial health.

The Citizens’ Guide summarizes the financial activities of the primary government of Pinellas County. The reports included in the Citizens’ Guide condense and simplify the format used in our Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) as of September 30, 2017 described below. The Citizens’ Guide does not conform to generally accepted accounting principles and governmental reporting standards. The report is prepared in this format so that the non-financial reader can easily understand it. The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) awarded Pinellas County the Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2016 for its Citizens’ Guide for the eleventh consecutive year.

In addition to the Citizens’ Guide, the Finance Division produces the CAFR which contains more detailed financial information. The GFOA awarded a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to Pinellas County for its CAFR for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2016, the 36th consecutive year that we have achieved this prestigious award.

The CAFR, as well as this report, are accessible on the Clerk’s website www.mypinellasclerk.org. A copy may also be obtained by contacting the Clerk’s Finance Division at (727) 464-8300. If you have any comments or suggestions on how we may improve this report, please contact my office at (727) 464-3341.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Clerk and may you find this Citizens’ Guide informative and useful in enhancing your understanding of our county’s finances.

Sincerely,

Ken Burke, CPA
Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller
About This Report

This Citizens’ Guide provides an overview of the areas of responsibility and the operations of Pinellas County’s Constitutional Officers as listed below and excludes component units:

- Board of County Commissioners (BCC)
- Property Appraiser
- Sheriff
- Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller
- Supervisor of Elections
- Tax Collector

The financial information presented here is summarized and does not substitute for the county’s Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). The CAFR outlines the county’s financial position and operating activities for the year in great detail and in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

This report reflects the Sources and Uses of county funds as well as a summary of the governmental activities and business-type activities. They are distinguished as follows:

- Governmental activities include most of the basic services offered to citizens, including tax assessment and collections, fire and law enforcement protection, judicial services, emergency medical services, civil emergency services, construction and maintenance of highways, streets and other infrastructure, economic development, social and human services, and cultural and recreational services. Property and sales and use taxes, intergovernmental revenues and various user fees finance these operations.
- Business-type activities include the water, sewer, solid waste and airport systems that are financed by fees charged to customers.

Information on revenues and expenditures of the General Fund for the last three years is shown on pages 10 through 11 of this report. Information on the county’s investments, capital assets, and outstanding bond issues are included on pages 14 through 16.
Pinellas is an urban county, on a peninsula on the western coast of Florida, bounded on the east by Tampa Bay and on the west by the Gulf of Mexico. Pinellas County is the most densely populated of all sixty-seven Florida counties. The County is the second smallest in land mass in Florida; measuring up to thirty-eight miles long and fifteen miles wide. The sparkling water of the Gulf of Mexico, award winning beaches, stunning sunsets and balmy weather make Pinellas an inviting destination for visitors and home to a diverse population of residents.

Pinellas County has an abundance of leisure and recreational activities to offer residents and visitors year round. Baseball is one of the County’s favorite attractions as the proud home of the major league baseball team, the Tampa Bay Rays in St. Petersburg. Both the Philadelphia Phillies and the Toronto Blue Jays maintain their spring training quarters in Pinellas County in the cities of Clearwater and Dunedin. Surrounded on three sides by water, opportunities for fishing, boating and outdoor activities are plentiful. The numerous parks and preserves throughout support these recreational activities.

St. Petersburg and Clearwater beaches continually earn accolades for their white soft sand, sparkling blue waters and activities to delight beachgoers of all ages and interest, with both being voted into the Top 10 of TripAdvisor’s Traveler’s Choice Awards of the Top U. S. Beaches for 2017. St. Pete Beach, known for its laid-back appeal, home to the world famous “Pink Palace,” The Don CeSar Hotel was voted number 3 on the list. Beautiful Clearwater Beach with its brilliant white sands and lots of hubbub came in at number 4. These two beaches were ranked number 4 and number 1 respectively in 2016. The readers of USA Today ranked four area beaches, Clearwater Beach, Pass-A-Grille, Fort De Soto Park and Caladesi Island State Park in its Top 10 in Florida in 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRINCIPAL EMPLOYERS</th>
<th>Percentage of Total County Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pinellas County School District</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay Pines VA Medical Center</td>
<td>4,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond James</td>
<td>4,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of St. Petersburg</td>
<td>3,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Children’s Hospital</td>
<td>3,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinellas County Sheriff</td>
<td>2,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Petersburg College</td>
<td>2,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morton Plant Hospital</td>
<td>2,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Shopping Network</td>
<td>2,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mease Hospital Inc. Trustees</td>
<td>2,304</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pinellas County is a charter county established under the Constitution and laws of the State of Florida in 1911. In 1968, the Florida Constitution was amended to provide home rule powers for counties and municipalities. The voters of Pinellas County approved the first home rule charter in 1980. Pinellas was the first county in Florida to operate under a Board of County Commissioners/Administrator form of government. The elected Constitutional Officers include the Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller, Supervisor of Elections, Tax Collector, Property Appraiser and Sheriff. The seven member Board serves as the legislative body, and budgets and provides the funding for its departments, the entire operations of the Sheriff and the Supervisor of Elections and portions of the operations for the other Constitutional Officers.
The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) has given an Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting to Pinellas County, Florida for its Popular Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2016. The Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting is a prestigious national award recognizing conformance with the highest standards for preparation of state and local government popular reports.

In order to receive an Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting, a government unit must publish a Popular Annual Financial Report, whose contents conform to program standards of creativity, presentation, understandability, and reader appeal.

An Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting is valid for a period of one year only. We believe our current report continues to conform to the Popular Annual Financial Reporting requirements, and we are submitting it to the GFOA.
Pinellas County receives its revenue to fund governmental activities from many sources including property taxes, sales and other taxes, charges for services, fees, fines and assessments, grants, and interest income. Total revenues for the County increased 3.7 percent over last year. Approximately 47.0 percent of the County’s total revenues come from property taxes and 17.8 percent from other taxes. Fees, service charges, revenues from other governments and unrestricted interest earnings account for 35.2 percent of all revenues. Total expenses increased 7.6 percent over the prior year.

Revenues in the County’s governmental activities increased $35.6 million or 3.7 percent over the prior year. Key factors attributing to these changes are described below.

Property tax revenues increased by $31.5 million, or 7.2 percent over last year for all governmental activities due to an increase in property tax values of 7.2 percent. The countywide millage rate remained unchanged from the previous year.

Charges for services amounted to $229.0 million for the current year compared to $222.7 million realized in the prior year, an increase of $6.3 million. The primary contributors to this increase include additional revenues generated from ambulance services as a result of increased transports provided as well as increased rates associated with ambulance transports.

Capital grants and contributions decreased by $11.5 million from the prior year, due primarily to 1) $2.2 million less federal and state funding in support of road and highway construction and advanced traffic monitoring systems projects, 2) reduced grant funding of $1.5 million in support of various water-control initiatives, and 3) a decrease in state funding of $8.2 million related to beach renourishment projects.

Sales tax revenue increased by $7.2 million; or 5.1 percent, reflecting signs of continued economic improvement in the area.
Property taxes help support programs and services that do not have offsetting revenues or pay for themselves. Examples include law enforcement, social services, parks and environmental programs. Other tax rates controlled by the county include Emergency Medical Services and fire districts in unincorporated areas.

**Property Taxes**

Property tax revenues increased by $31.5 million (7.2 percent) for FY2017, and increased by $57.6 million (14.0 percent) from FY2015.

**Taxable Assessed Values**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Value (in thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$56,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>$60,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>$63,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taxable assessed values increased by 7.2 percent countywide for FY2017 and 14.2 percent from FY2015.

**Property Tax Revenues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Value (in thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$410,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>$480,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>$570,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Property tax revenues increased by $31.5 million (7.2 percent) for FY2017, and increased by $57.6 million (14.0 percent) from FY2015.
GENERAL REVENUES

Property taxes are ad valorem taxes levied on an assessed valuation of real and/or personal property. These taxes are collected annually and are computed as a percentage of the fair market value of locally assessed real estate, and tangible personal property. Property taxes are considered general revenue for the county.

Sales taxes and other taxes are comprised of the following:
The 1 cent infrastructure sales tax or the Penny for Pinellas is imposed for funding infrastructure projects that normally would have to be funded by increased property taxes or other revenue sources. The Penny for Pinellas is earmarked for capital improvement projects for roads, flood control, park improvements, preservation of endangered lands and public safety. The Penny for Pinellas is paid by all who spend money in the county, including tourists and visitors.

The tourist development tax is a local tax imposed on most rentals or leases, which have been contracted for periods of six (6) months or less, or living accommodations in hotels, motels, apartment houses, rooming houses, and mobile home parks. The revenues are used for tourist development, beach re-nourishment, debt service and promoting and advertising tourism internationally, nationally and in the State of Florida.

Fuel tax (local option gas tax) is a tax on every net gallon of motor and diesel fuel sold in Pinellas County. It is a county imposed tax for the purpose of paying the cost of establishing, operating and maintaining a transportation system and related facilities and the cost of acquisition, construction, reconstruction and maintenance of roads and streets.

Communication service tax is comprised of two components: a state communications services tax and a local communication services tax. The tax is imposed on retail sales of communications services which originate and terminate in the state, or originate or terminate in the state and are billed to an address within the state. Tax proceeds are transferred to the county. Communications services are defined as voice, data, audio, video or any other information or signals, including cable services.

Unrestricted interest is the revenue earned from investments.

PROGRAM REVENUES

Charges for services are made up of fees collected from the public for services rendered (e.g. court costs, building permits, park fees, animal licenses, etc.)

Operating grants and contributions are monies received to fund the operating expenses of a specific program or project. Operating expenses can include salaries and wages, rent, utilities and more.

Capital grants and contributions are monies received for the acquisition of capital assets, such as buildings, land or equipment.
Governmental activities include most of the basic services offered to citizens, including tax assessment and collections, election services, fire and law enforcement protection, judicial services, emergency medical services, civil emergency services, construction and maintenance of highways, streets and other infrastructure, natural resources conservation, economic and community development, social and human services, and cultural and recreational services. Property and sales and use taxes, intergovernmental revenues and various user fees finance these operations.

During the year, expenses for governmental activities increased by 7.6 percent or $69.7 million from the prior year. The largest increases were in public safety of $35.9 million and transportation of $28.8 million.

**Public safety** expenses increased by $35.9 million, primarily as a result of 1) personal services and operational costs related to Hurricane Irma totaling approximately $3.8 million, 2) net pension expense associated with the Florida Retirement System plans, which saw a $10.4 million increase from the previous fiscal year, 3) increased personal services costs of $12.0 million for salaries and fringe benefits of the Sheriff’s Office due to a 3 percent increase for non-sworn employees, continuation of the step plan raises for special risk members that went into effect in 2015, and increased employer-funded premiums associated with the health benefits plan, and 4) additional funding of $2.6 million over the prior year provided to local municipalities under the First Responder program, primarily to support the funding of six additional responder units.

**Transportation** expenses for the fiscal year amounted to $86.5 million compared to $57.7 million the prior year, an increase of $28.8 million. During the fiscal year, the County provided Penny for Pinellas funding of $4.3 million to the City of St. Petersburg to support a project for street and traffic improvements and $24.0 million was contributed as a portion of the County’s share of the Gateway Express project, a jointly funded (County, State, Federal) toll road project in Pinellas County.
The general fund is the primary operating fund of the county that accounts for all financial resources of the general government, except for those that are required to be accounted for in another fund. Appropriations for the General Fund for FY2017 including reserves totaled $662.9 million.

Key financial factors for the year were as follows:

- Overall General Fund revenues and other financing sources increased by $30.7 million or 5.8 percent from last year.
- Tax revenue increased by $25.2 million, due primarily to the 7.2 percent increase in taxable property values.
- Intergovernmental revenues were up by $3.6 million or 5.1 percent. The increase was due mostly to additional funding recognized during fiscal year 2016-2017 from the local half-cent sales tax, a reflection of continued economic recovery.
- Charges for services were down by $1.0 million, attributable mostly to a $1.1 million decrease in intergovernmental charges for providing support services that benefit multiple functions across the County and an approximate $0.8 million decrease from the prior year in revenues for law enforcement services.
The General Fund is used to pay the regular operating and administrative expenditures not accounted for in other funds. General fund expenditures rose by $35.0 million (6.6 percent) in FY2017. From FY2015 to FY2017, general fund expenditures increased $67.1 million (13.5 percent). The following expenditures for the departments are paid from the General Fund (including transfers of funds):

**GENERAL GOVERNMENT**
- Board of County Commissioners, County Administrator, Public Defender, State Attorney, County Attorney, Court Technology, Technology, Communications, Office of Management and Budget, Developmental Review Services, Purchasing, Engineering and Technical Support, Administrative Office of the Courts, Planning, Law Libraries and Human Resources.

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

**TRANSPORTATION**
- Transportation Engineering and Design

**ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT**

**HUMAN SERVICES**
- Animal Services, State Mandates-Medicaid and Burials, Administration, Coordination and Quality Assurance, Healthcare Services, Behavioral Health Services, Homeless Prevention and Self-Sufficiency, Eligibility Services and Mosquito Control.

**CULTURE AND RECREATION**

**TRANSFERS OUT**
- Appropriated fees to fund Constitutional Officer budgets and other funds
- Financial support to other funds
Enterprise fund or business-type activities offer goods and services to the citizens of the county and are intended to be self-supporting. In FY2017, revenues in business-type activities increased 4.3 percent over the prior year by $12.7 million. Expenses were up by $10.5 million or 4.4 percent. From FY2015 to FY2017, revenues increased by $14.2 million (4.9 percent) and expenses decreased $5.1 million (2.0 percent). The following charts reflect the enterprise fund revenues and expenses for the last three years.
The Business-type activities of the county are:

**WATER SYSTEM**
- Total program revenues for the Water System, including interest revenue, miscellaneous revenue and capital contributions, increased by $0.6 million (0.6 percent) over the prior year.
- Charges for services to retail and wholesale customers were up by $0.8 million or 1.0 percent due primarily to additional revenues ($5.2 million) from water sales to retail and wholesale customers, offset by an allocation of $4.4 million in late fees to the Sewer System.
- Operating expenses of the Water System increased slightly by 0.6 percent or $0.5 million from previous year.

**SEWER SYSTEM**
- Total program revenues increased by $6.3 million or 8.2 percent over the prior year. Charges for services to customers increased by $5.0 million or 6.8 percent. The largest contributing factor to this increase was the reallocation of $4.4 million in late fees from the Water System Fund. Revenue from retail sewer charges was up slightly from the prior fiscal year, with $1.5 million in additional revenue being recognized, offset in part by less revenue realized from sewer treatment charges.
- Annual operating expenses increased $3.0 million or 5.0 percent due primarily to increases in maintenance and repairs to the sewer system.

**SOLID WASTE SYSTEM**
- Total program revenues of the system increased by $4.8 million or 5.0 percent over the prior year. Electrical sales revenue was up by $1.6 million resulting from a combination of additional demand and an annual rate increase, while charges for electrical capacity resulted in additional revenues of $3.0 million over the previous fiscal year due to contractual rate increases. Other revenues of the Solid Waste System were relatively consistent between the two years.
- Operating expenses for the system were up by $4.1 million or 5.2 percent over the prior year. Costs for personal services increased by $1.4 million as a result of reorganizations of personnel among the utilities functions of the County in order to better align staff with operational needs. Other operating expenses were up by $2.3 million as a result of negotiating a final payment to the former Waste-to-Energy Facility contractor. In addition, depreciation expense was up by $0.9 million as a result of capital additions to the Solid Waste System.

**ST. PETERSBURG/CLEARWATER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**
- Total program revenues for the Airport increased by $13.5 million (49.4 percent) over the prior year, primarily due to the recognition of $12.5 million in proceeds from the sale of airport land during FY2017. Charges for services were up by $3.3 million (24.3 percent) over the prior year. Capital contributions were down by $2.4 million (18.0 percent) due to a decrease in federal and state grants.
- Operating expenses increased by $2.4 million (16.0 percent) due to an increase in contractual services and depreciation expense.
The Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller, through the Finance Division, conducts all investment activity of the Board of County Commissioners in accordance with Section 218.415, Florida Statutes, Local Government Investment Policies, as well as the investment ordinance adopted by the Board (Pinellas County Code, Investment of Surplus Public Funds, Section 2-144) and Board Resolution 17-33 adopting investment policies. The investment policy and the ordinance can be found at:

http://www.pinellasclerk.org/aspInclude2/ASPIInclude.asp?pageName=investmentreports.htm

The Board’s investment policy applies to all funds in excess of those required to meet current expenses for the Board of County Commissioners. The Association of Public Treasurers of the United States and Canada (APT US&C) awarded Pinellas County in November 2017 with the Certification of Excellence for its investment policy for the third time. This certification should be renewed every three years. Receiving this certification denotes the county has a sound investment policy founded upon professional standards to assist in ensuring prudent management of public funds.

INVESTMENT OBJECTIVES
- Safety - Protection of the County funds.
- Liquidity - Provide sufficient liquidity to meet the County’s operating, payroll and capital expenses.
- Income - Maximize the return, but avoid assuming unreasonable risk.

**PINELLAS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO**

**INVESTMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Market Value</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treasury Note</td>
<td>$40,031,453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Agency Issues</td>
<td>$552,338,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Funds Depository Accounts</td>
<td>$92,601,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government Investment Pools</td>
<td>$126,317,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash Pools</td>
<td>$138,370,729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL CASH AND INVESTMENTS</strong></td>
<td><strong>$949,659,881</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pinellas County’s investment in capital assets for governmental and business-type activities is $3.4 billion, net of accumulated depreciation. This includes land, buildings, improvements, equipment, road, bridges, drainage systems, intangible assets and construction in progress. The total increase in capital assets was 3.8 percent over the prior year (2.5 percent increase for governmental activities and a 5.7 percent increase in business-type activities).
Pinellas County issues bonds in order to fund major capital projects or purchases. A major liability of the county is the amount of outstanding bonds. In recent years the county has been successful in reducing its debt. The county’s total bonds outstanding as of September 30, 2017, were approximately $141.2 million.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUE DATE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>ORIGINAL ISSUED AMOUNT (in thousands)</th>
<th>AMOUNT OUTSTANDING AT YEAR END (in thousands)</th>
<th>CURRENT MATURITIES¹ (in thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2003</td>
<td>Sewer Revenue Bonds, Series 2003</td>
<td>$ 86,580</td>
<td>$ 5,215</td>
<td>$ -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2008</td>
<td>Sewer Revenue Bonds, Series 2008A</td>
<td>42,005</td>
<td>38,640</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 2008</td>
<td>Sewer Revenue Refunding Bonds, Series 2008 B-1</td>
<td>32,700</td>
<td>32,025</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 2012</td>
<td>Sewer Revenue Refunding Bonds, Series 2012</td>
<td>59,510</td>
<td>52,310</td>
<td>2,535</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 2016</td>
<td>Sewer Revenue Refunding Note, Series 2016</td>
<td>14,733</td>
<td>13,031</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$ 235,528</td>
<td>$ 141,221</td>
<td>$ 2,535</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The county’s bonds all have favorable underlying ratings from the following bonds rating agencies:


¹ Current maturities represent the amount of debt required to be paid during the next fiscal year.
GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Thanks to notifications via the Doing Things for You! mobile app, County departments and other agency partners responded to more than 15,000 issues since inception, ranging from potholes and sidewalk repair, to downed traffic signs and mosquitoes. Efficiencies gained during the past year have greatly increased response time to issues, with most issues being acknowledged within one business day.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Pinellas County officials unveiled new emergency preparedness tools and urged residents to check their evacuation zone during the June 1 Media Day: Kick Off to the 2017 Hurricane Season. Newly-released storm surge data produced by the National Hurricane Center and the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council has resulted in changes to the assigned evacuation zones for more than 85,000 properties in Pinellas County. About 20,000 of these properties are now in an evacuation zone for the first time. The “Ready Pinellas” app can be downloaded on mobile devices by searching the Apple App Store or Google Play. Residents can also sign up for Alert Pinellas, an emergency notification service, at www.pinellascounty.org/alertpinellas.

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Pinellas County Economic Development works to drive economic growth in Pinellas by attracting corporate relocations, expansions, and new business to bring high-wage and targeted industry jobs to Pinellas County. In 2016, this department helped to facilitate 21 business relocations and expansions. Combined, these are projected to create more than 1,264 new jobs, retain 225 current jobs, and provide an estimated $120.7M in capital investments in our community. Measured as of December 2017, the unemployment rate in Pinellas is the lowest it has been in a decade, at 3.2 percent, down from 11.5 percent in January 2010.

TRANSPORTATION

In an effort to provide safer access for pedestrians, crews installed more than 600 feet of sidewalk and completed nearly 3,000 sidewalk repairs to remove potential trip-and-fall hazards. Pedestrians and cyclists will benefit from completion of the Pinellas Trail extension (Sunset Point Road to the Enterprise Road overpass at US 19 in Clearwater), completing a 70-mile loop around the county. With the completion of a 5-mile segment of the Florida Coast-to-Coast Connector, the Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail has become the first link in a 250-mile network of trails that will cross Florida.

April 2017 concluded a six-month test period of the Cross-Bay Ferry, a 149-seat catamaran that ran from downtown St. Petersburg’s waterfront to Tampa’s Riverwalk. This pilot was the result of a partnership between Pinellas County, the City of St. Petersburg, Hillsborough County, and the City of Tampa, and was funded by Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill settlement funds. Additionally, progress is being made on the 118th Avenue North Gateway Express project to build a new elevated controlled access roadway (to bypass traffic signals and congestion) that will connect US 19 and the Bayside Bridge to I-275.
The St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport had a record-breaking passenger count in 2017. With over 2 million passengers, the County experienced a 12 percent annual increase and its fifth year of double digit passenger increases. Notably, Allegiant added service to eight new cities in 2017. Currently, non-stop service, in and out of the St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport, includes 57 destinations with 55 of those being domestic and two being international flights to Halifax and Toronto. Recently, the Federal Aviation Administration published its top growth airports list for 2016 and ranked PIE as #3 in the nation for small airports.

**PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

Several major beach nourishment and stabilization projects are either underway or forthcoming for segments of the Pinellas coastline, including Upham Beach, Sand Key, Indian Rocks, and Treasure Island. Pinellas County’s beach nourishment program, a partnership between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the state, and local communities, provides vital resources to mitigate and protect our shores against the effects of erosion.

Pinellas County partners with neighboring municipalities and private utility systems through the Wastewater/Stormwater Task Force. The task force provides short- and long-term solutions to avoid and reduce spills, overflows, and releases of wastewater into the environment. The team is also reviewing the potential for increasing the capacity and effectiveness of sewer system and wastewater treatment structures.

In partnership with 24 municipalities, private recyclers, and residents who contribute to recycling efforts, Pinellas County has the highest recycling rate in the state at 89 percent with 2.1 billion pounds of countywide recycling material. Highlights include 432,000 pounds of household chemicals, 1.5 million pounds of household electronics, 2.5 million pounds of metal and 84 million pounds of ash. The County offers “No Such Place as Away” Recycle and Solid Waste Operations tours. This free tour covers Pinellas County’s integrated solid waste management system, including waste-to-energy, sanitary landfills, recycling programs, and the Household Electronics and Chemical Collection Center (HEC3).
As a result of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, the County received a $7.1 million settlement from BP. The BCC received feedback from more than 800 citizens via a citizen engagement survey on how the funds should be invested in the community. Projects were then selected based on the survey and additional input from the public and our customers. Money has been allocated to affordable housing, stormwater projects, arts and culture, community-based projects, youth sports, and transportation, including electric bus charging stations. The charging stations will support Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority’s (PSTA) purchase of electric buses, helping to reduce emissions being released into the environment.

**HUMAN SERVICES**

Human Services continues to work collaboratively with the City of St. Petersburg and the Homeless Leadership Board to increase funding available through grants to better serve residents in need, with over $15 million to date. The Cooperative Agreement to Benefit Homeless Individuals (CABHI) is an example of working collaboratively with partners to achieve more. The grant provides mental health and substance abuse treatment to individuals who experience chronic homelessness.
On November 7, 2017, Pinellas voters chose to renew the Penny for Pinellas with nearly 83 percent support countywide. The 10-year Penny renewal (2020-2030) will fund long-term capital infrastructure projects that support our local community. The funds will be shared between the County and 24 cities. Funding initiatives include: roads, bridges and trails; water quality, flood and sewer spill prevention; efforts to provide a safe and secure community; community vitality and preservation of parks and the environment. The Penny generates the equivalent of 2.4 mills of property taxes ($314 on the average single-family home with a taxable value of $131,000).

The County purchased the Windsor Charter School property on January 29, 2018 for $11 million to be used for the Lealman Community Center. This long-awaited community center will sit on 5.85 acres which will act as a hub for recreation, education and local services. Located in the heart of the recently established Lealman Community Redevelopment Area, the forthcoming Lealman Community Campus will offer programs, such as youth mentoring, after-school programs, adult education, workforce training and health and human services programs, among other uses by the County and local partners. The center is expected to serve about 1,000 people each month.

The Pinellas County Commission agreed to help fund a plan to put a nurse in every Pinellas County School starting in fiscal year 2017-2018. The need for nurses is due to more students coming to school with chronic diseases, some having feeding tubes, catheters or Type 1 diabetes that require insulin shots as well as a myriad of other health reasons. The School District plans to recruit 65 new nurses and move towards LPNs (Licensed Practical Nurses) rather than RNs (Register Nurses) in order to save costs. To pay for the nurses, Commissioners unanimously agreed to raise the Health Department millage rate from 0.0622 to 0.0835. The cost for an average single-family home valued at $131,000 is an additional $2.79 a year.

The Board has approved several major projects to be funded by tourist development dollars. One of the largest being, the Clearwater Marine Aquarium. The Aquarium is slated to receive approximately $26 million toward a $66 million dollar expansion of the aquarium’s site on Island Estates. The project includes five new dolphin pools, a 376 space parking garage, elevated viewing areas and 102,000 square feet of additional guest space. Other bed tax projects include renovations to the Toronto Blue Jay’s stadium and training facilities, renovations to Ruth Eckerd Hall, improvements to the Countryside Sports Complex, enhancements to the Eddie C. Moore softball complex, and a new museum in St. Petersburg, the American Craftsman Museum.
Citizens’ Guide

This Citizens’ Guide to County Finances was prepared by the Finance Division, the Clerk’s Communications Coordinator and the Board of County Commissioners Marketing & Communications Department.

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