# Indian River County, Florida

## Meeting Minutes

## Board of County Commissioners

Indian River County Administration
Complex 1801 27th Street
Vero Beach, Florida 32960
indianriver.gov

**Deryl Loar, District 4, Chairman**
**Laura Moss, District 5, Vice Chairman**
**Susan Adams, District 1**
**Joseph Flescher, District 2**
**Joseph H. Earman, District 3**

**John A. Titkanich, Jr., County Administrator**
**Jennifer W. Shuler, County Attorney**
**Ryan L. Butler, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller**

Monday, June 29, 2026 1:00 PM

### 1. Call to Order

**Present:** 4
Chairman Deryl Loar
Commissioner Susan Adams
Commissioner Joseph Flescher
Commissioner Joe Earman

**Absent:** 1 - Vice Chairman Laura Moss

### 2. A Moment of Silent Reflection for First Responders and Members of the Armed Forces Followed by the Invocation

### 3. Pledge of Allegiance

### 4. County Attorney Matters

**4.A.** Gifford Florida Children's Initiative Resolution

Chairman Loar opened the special call meeting, agreed upon at the Board's June 16, 2026 regular meeting, to consider a resolution supporting Pioneering Change Inc.'s (Pioneering) effort to obtain official designation of the Gifford neighborhood as a Florida Children's Initiative (FCI) community.

Deputy County Attorney Susan Prado briefed the Board on Florida Statute 409.147, explaining that once a resolution was adopted on this matter, the statute required specific duties for the County, including establishing a planning team and developing a strategic plan. She cautioned Commissioners to avoid creating unintended obligations, especially since statutory provisions referred directly to the County as the applicant.

The Board discussed Pioneering's prior mention of two pathways to an FCI designation – through the County or through a non-profit entity such as Pioneering. Commissioners expressed hesitation as they lacked information regarding the non-profit entity pathway and sought to ensure the organization met its obligations to the State without encumbering the County.

Pioneering Change's Executive Director Merchon Green addressed the Board regarding the organization's efforts, including the grant the organization received to conduct workshops, gather community input, and complete a strategic plan. Ms. Green was surprised to learn that Winnie Higgins, President and CEO of the Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida, did not attend the scheduled meeting with the County, leaving unanswered questions regarding the non-profit pathway. Ms. Green emphasized that Pioneering was not seeking any financial commitment from the County and intended to rely on providers and partnerships with existing nonprofits to deliver services.

Commissioners questioned whether adopting the Resolution would place operational burdens on the County or imply financial responsibility; Attorney Prado read the statute and legal requirements into the record. Several Commissioners referenced the fiscal year deadline of June 30 and received clarity that a Letter of Support would not meet Pioneering's needs. Additional discussion between Ms. Green and the Board ensued as the Commissioners sought information regarding the non-profit pathway and how it differed from the statutory requirements.

During public comments, the Board heard support from the community for the designation, with descriptions of months of coordination, provider involvement, data collection, and outreach. There was an emphasis on not needing financial support or having to re-invent social service distribution in Gifford.

The following people addressed the Board in support of the Resolution:

Tony Brown, President of the Indian River County NAACP branch
Valerie Brant-Wilson, Board Member, Pioneering Change
Miranda Swanson, Health Officer, Florida Department of Health
Denita Henry
John Kirkland
Peggy Jones
Hunter and Sienna Kirkland

To address legal and fiscal concerns, Commissioner Adams and staff and Ms. Green discussed proposed amendments to the draft Resolution: remove language incorrectly stating the County would apply for a planning grant, since the grant had already been awarded; strike the word "local" from a recital regarding investment partners; and include a new clause explicitly stating that the County's support did not bind it to future funding or staff commitments.

Commissioners discussed and agreed that the edits accurately reflected the County's intent and avoided creating expectations beyond statutory minimums.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Adams, seconded by Commissioner Earman, to Approve Resolution 2026-045, as amended. The motion passed by the following vote:**

**Aye: 4** - Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Flescher, Commissioner Earman
**Nay: 0** - None
**Absent: 1** - Vice Chairman Moss

The Board requested that Pioneering Change provide a copy of its final application and any associated contracts to County staff once submitted. Staff stated they would contact representatives from the Department of Children and Families or the Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida to confirm procedural details and deadlines.

**5. Staff / Consultant Presentations**

**6. Board Comments / Questions**

**7. Public Comments**

**8. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 2:38 p.m.