





Construction
Licensing Board
Pinellas County

THE **RISE** AND **FALL**

Of The Pinellas County Construction Licensing Board

Tampa Bay Times Series
Audit – Investigations – Grand Jury



FLORIDA
AUDIT
FORUM



DIVISION OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
KEN BURKE, CPA
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT AND COMPTROLLER
PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA



Hector Collazo Jr.
Inspector General/Chief Audit Executive
Division of Inspector General
Office of Ken Burke
Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller
Pinellas County, Florida
(727) 464-8375
hcollazo@mypinellasclerk.org

Questions



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The Pinellas County Construction Licensing Board (PCCLB) is an **Independent Special District** created by the Florida Legislature in 1973. Since the PCCLB was **created by an Act of the Legislature**, specifically Chapter 73-595, Laws of Florida (PCCLB Special Act), it **operates as a separate and autonomous policy-making body**. The PCCLB regulates certain construction and home improvement contractors practicing in all Pinellas County jurisdictions, which includes local municipalities. The PCCLB **provides countywide certification and registration of contractors and countywide certification of journeymen**. In addition, the PCCLB adopts and amends Building Codes for application and **enforcement countywide to provide safe, economic, and sound buildings and structures throughout Pinellas County**. The PCCLB **does not receive any property tax support and is funded through licensing fees, fines, and citations that are separate from the County**.



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Inspector General Does NOT Have Jurisdictional Authority Over PCCLB – However!

2009 - 10
Audit of PCCLB's Internal Controls

2011 - 11
Follow-Up Audit of PCCLB

2012 - 15
Investigation PCCLB
Testing Procedures

2013 - 36
Investigation PCCLB
Facility Use By Non-County Organizations



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Inspector General Does NOT Have Jurisdictional Authority Over PCCLB

2015 - 01
Investigation PCCLB
Abuse of Authority



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Pinellas County Business Technology Services (BTS) Third Party IT Service Provider To BCC, Constitutional Officers and Component Units

The Pinellas County Business Technology Services (BTS) Board is an *independent board composed of Constitutional Officers* to provide for the review of, and set policy for common technology issues and expenditures, and facilitate the economic and effective provision of business technology services and support to the operations of the County and Constitutional Officers.

Board Members

Membership is comprised of three County Commissioners and eight Constitutional Officers as set forth by an Interlocal Agreement.

Kenneth T. Welch, County Commissioner – Chair
Bernie McCabe, State Attorney – Vice Chair
Karen Williams Seel, County Commissioner
Janet C. Long, County Commissioner
Anthony Rondolino, Chief Judge, Sixth Judicial Court
Bob Dillinger, Public Defender
Deborah Clark, Supervisor of Elections
Bob Gualtieri, Sheriff
Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller
Charles W. Thomas, Tax Collector
Mike Twitty, Property Appraiser

Access to a department's
applications/data not a problem
when conducting an audit.

However, when conducting an
investigation, need to follow a
few procedures, which is
normally not a problem.



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Inspector General Does NOT Have Jurisdictional Authority Over PCCLB

2015 - 01 Investigation PCCLB Abuse of Authority



- Started October 2013
- Requested BTS provide read only access to PCCLB application
 - Executive Director (ED) refused, confidentiality of accumulated data
 - IG tried to work with ED, who continued to refuse
- IG had meeting with County Attorney
 - Solution was to have PCCLB Board Chair provide IG authorization to access PCCLB application
 - PCCLB Board Chair provided authorization in writing
 - ED used assigned County Attorney to stop BTS from providing access to PCCLB application
 - IG email to County Attorney - "Jim, Please see below. Are we going to have this dance AGAIN!"



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Inspector General Does NOT Have Jurisdictional Authority Over PCCLB

2015 - 01 Investigation PCCLB Abuse of Authority



- IG repeatedly contacted ED, and ED would not provide access
- Clerk and IG meeting with ED
 - ED agreed to cooperate at meeting
 - ED never did
- Prepared a memo to PCCLB
 - It is unclear and suspicious as to the rationale for the Executive Director's obvious resistance, impediment, and lack of cooperation with this specific investigation. The crucial records have been deliberately thwarted, which is obstructing this formal investigation. Therefore, we are demanding immediate and unrestricted access to all records under the purview of the Pinellas County Construction Licensing Board in order to continue the investigation.



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Inspector General Does NOT Have Jurisdictional Authority Over PCCLB

2015 - 01
Investigation PCCLB
Abuse of Authority



- Clerk and IG present at PCCLB Board Meeting controlled by ED
- Issued Unsubstantiated Investigative Memo January 2015
- After 16 months, cut our losses



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Inspector General Does NOT Have Jurisdictional Authority Over PCCLB

2015 - 01
Investigation PCCLB
Abuse of Authority

2015 - 39
Investigation PCCLB
Hiring Practices

IG conducted one
additional
investigation in
2015



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Starting September 2016 - Tampa Bay Times
submitted *Open Records Requests* for
Investigative and Audit Work Papers on PCCLB

Developed Into Series of Articles on PCCLB
January 2017



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You Are Now
Wondering Why
Tampa Bay Times
Submitted An Open
Records Request
On PCCLB?



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Tampa Bay Times [Open Records Requests](#) Developed Into Series of Articles on PCCLB Starting in January 2017



- IG Email to County Attorney, “Jim, Please see below. Are we going to have this dance AGAIN!”
- Prepared a memo to PCCLB
 - It is unclear and suspicious as to the rationale for the Executive Director’s obvious resistance, impediment, and lack of cooperation with this specific investigation. The crucial records have been deliberately thwarted, which is obstructing this formal investigation. Therefore, we are demanding immediate and unrestricted access to all records under the purview of the Pinellas County Construction Licensing Board in order to continue the investigation.

2015 - 01
Investigation PCCLB
Abuse of Authority



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Pinellas sheriff says construction board never asked for help cracking down on unlicensed contractors
Published on 06/05/17
Updated on 06/07/17



News at noon: Pinellas construction board leader retires; Democrats boycott Trump confirmation hearings; Gov. Scott proposes \$83.5 billion state budget; and a Ph.D. candidate at USF is stuck in Iran
Published on 02/13/17



Pinellas construction board leader Rodney Fischer to go, but when?
Published on 02/10/17
Updated on 02/01/17



Pinellas licensing board says it's transcribing hearings and wants to know: Who called 911?
Published on 02/29/17
Updated on 02/29/17



Pinellas commissioners to licensing board chief: 'increase accountability and oversight'
Published on 02/29/17
Updated on 02/27/17



Pinellas County Commission: Reform construction licensing board and give us control
Published on 02/25/17

Unlicensed contractors on the rise, and fines, liens go unpaid

As the number of illegal contractors grows, Pinellas can't do much to punish them.
Published on 04/18/17
Updated on 06/17/17

Tampa Bay Times
WINNER OF 12 PULITZER PRIZES



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Tampa Bay Times
WINNER OF 12 PULITZER PRIZES

Turmoil surrounds Pinellas construction board manager Anne Maddox
Published on 10/27/17

Pinellas licensing board needs cash. Will the county give it any?
Published on 09/25/17

Pinellas construction licensing board needs to be fixed. But how?
Published on 09/23/17

Report slams Pinellas construction licensing agency and leaders
The inspector general and a grand jury criticize the agency, saying the board mismanaged its finances, lacked accountability and transparency and disregarded its own rules.
Published on 09/20/17
Updated on 09/23/17

Beware of unlicensed contractors when making repairs
Published on 09/13/17
Updated on 09/13/17

What you need to know for Monday, Sept. 4
Hurricane Irma strengthens, archaeologists dig into MacDill's past; how do you move a 14-ton stone monument?
Published on 09/04/17

Email shows Rep. Larry Ahern disagreed with law he drafted
Published on 08/15/17
Updated on 08/23/17

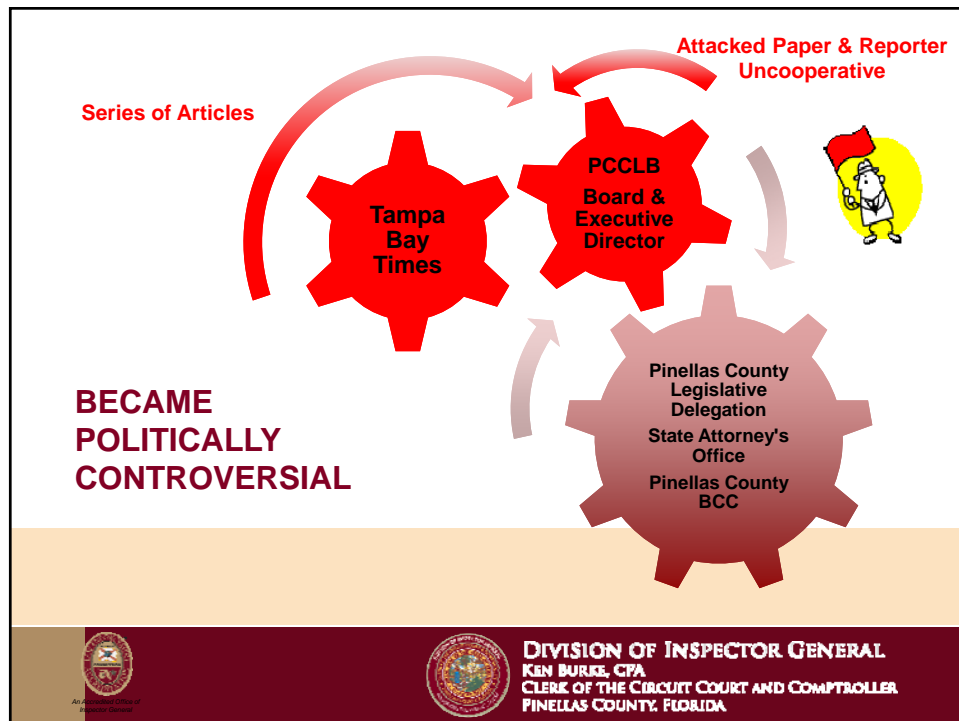
The Pinellas agency that's supposed to crack down on bad contractors is about to go broke
Published on 06/05/17
Updated on 06/13/17

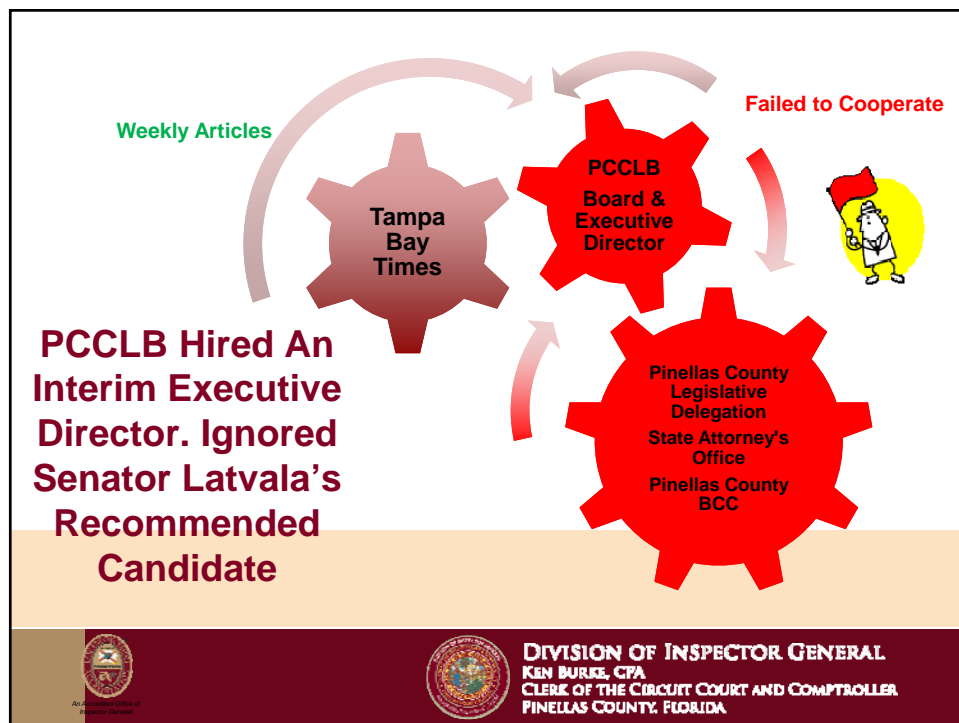
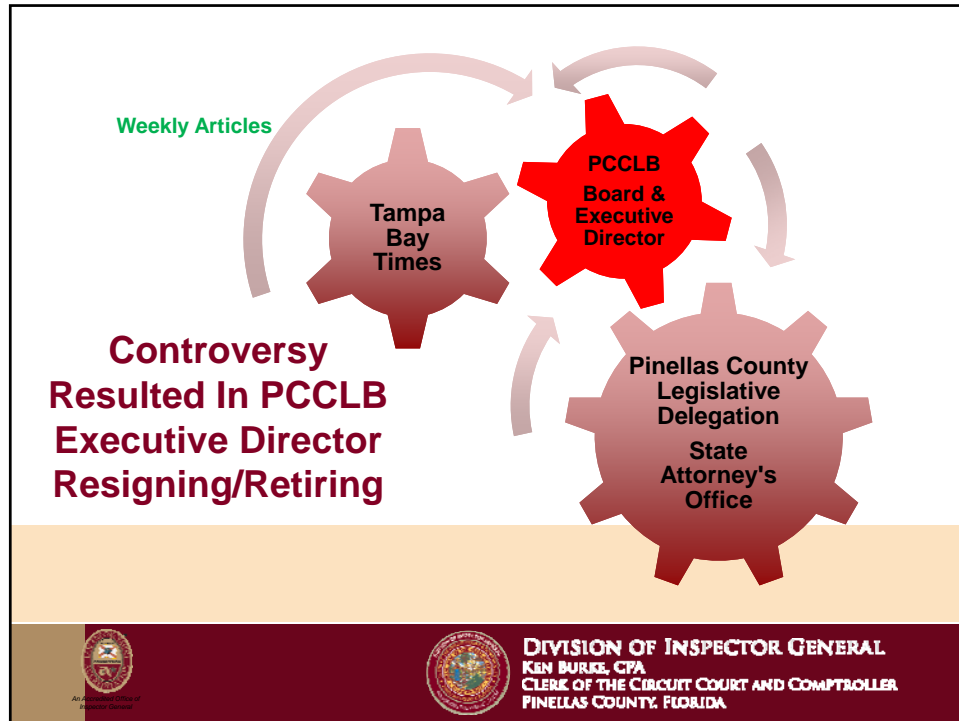


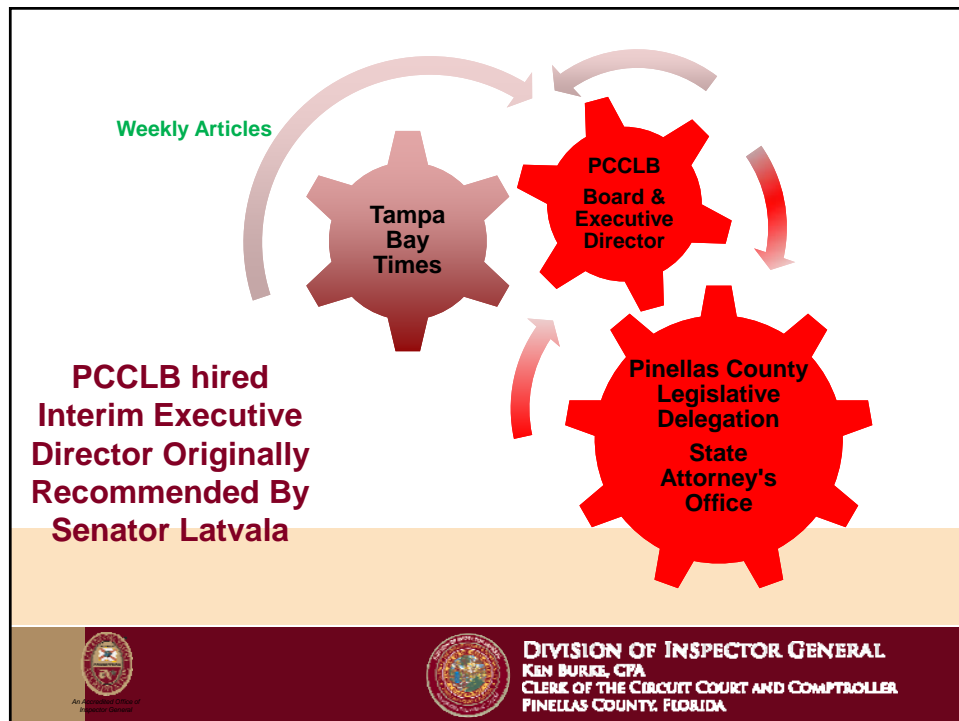
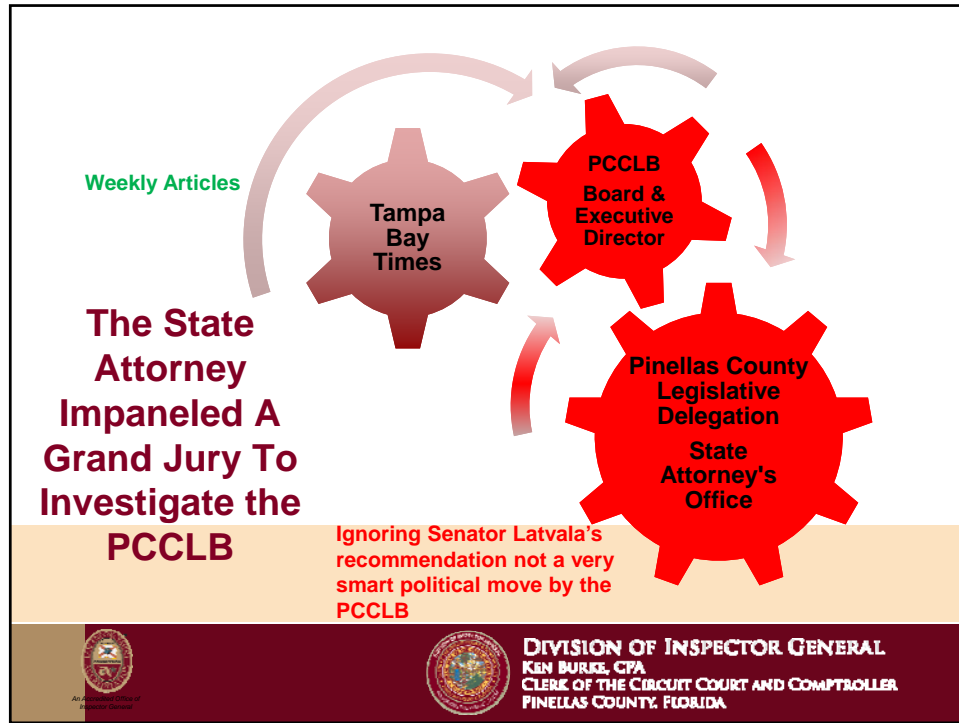
An Independent Office of
Public Account



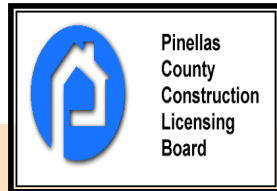
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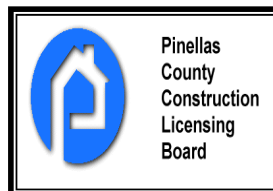


On the same day the Interim Executive Director for the PCCLB was named, and the State Attorney announced the Grand Jury investigation, the Inspector General offered the Division's resources to assist in any way they needed!



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**PCCLB Interim Executive Director
Requested A Full Operational Audit**



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The State Attorney's Office (SAO) Requested Our Assistance. When Informed Of The PCCLB's Request For A Full Operational Audit, SAO Was Pleased, And Informed Us That Our Audit Would Be Vital To The Grand Jury's Investigation, And A Partnership Was Formed.



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YES!

We placed **all** our audits, investigations, and **projects on hold**. The **entire office** worked on the PCCLB audit and investigations.

1. Allow the Grand Jury sufficient time to investigate and prepare their Presentment (report) for the Pinellas County Legislative Delegation.
2. The Delegation had a deadline to meet should they determine legislative action was required.



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Key PCCLB Areas Audited

Governance
Finances
Information Technology
Investigative Process
Licensing Of Contractors And Journeymen
Administration



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AUDIT OF THE PINELLAS COUNTY
CONSTRUCTION LICENSING BOARD



Hector Collazo Jr.
Inspector General/Chief Audit Executive

Audit Team
Melissa Dandberg, CPA, CIA, CISA, CIG, CTP, CRMA, CFS - Assistant Inspector General
Deborah White, CFA, CIG, CISA - Senior Inspector General
Danny Eckert, CISA, CIG - Inspector General II
Jason Murphy, CPA, CIG, CISA - Inspector General II
Robert Pomeroy, CISA, CISA - Inspector General I
Corey Worsley, CFE, CAMS, CISA, CIG - Inspector General I
Corey White - Inspector General I

SEPTEMBER 30, 2017
REPORT NO. 2017-14

114
Issues

93
Findings

235
Recommendations



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PCCLB Governance

The Current PCCLB Structure Does Not Have Adequate Oversight And Accountability Mechanisms.

The PCCLB Tone At The Top Did Not Create A Strong Ethical Environment.

A PCCLB Board Member Misused His Position.



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PCCLB Finances

The PCCLB Cannot Continue To Support Itself Financially Without Strategic Changes.

PCCLB Fees Are Less Than The Average Fees Charged In Other Counties.

Outstanding Citations and Fines Have Not Been Reconciled.



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PCCLB Information Technology

The PCCLB Case Management System Does Not Adequately Support Agency Needs.

PCCLB Oracle Application Security Roles Are Not Appropriately Segregated.

The PCCLB Oracle Database Lacked Sufficient Field Level Validation Edits And Was Not Configured To Audit Changes To Critical Data Elements.



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PCCLB Investigative Process

There Is A Lack Of Supervisory Review Of GPS Data.

Investigators Are Not Adequately Covering The County.

There Are Opportunities To Improve Collaborating Efforts Between The PCCLB And The Office Of Consumer Protection.



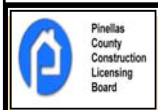
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PCCLB Licensing Of Contractors And Journeymen

**The Board Does Not Review Or Approve
Testing Examinations.**

**PCCLB Staff Did Not Efficiently Process Renewals
And Late Fee Payments.**

**There Is A Lack Of Written Policies And Procedures For
Specialty Contractor And Journeyman Licensing.**



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PCCLB Administration

**Staff Improperly Rescinded Final Orders Without
Resubmitting The Case To The Board For A Vote.**

There Is Not Sufficient Supervisory Staff.

**Boards Of Adjustment And Appeals
Meeting Minutes Are Missing.**



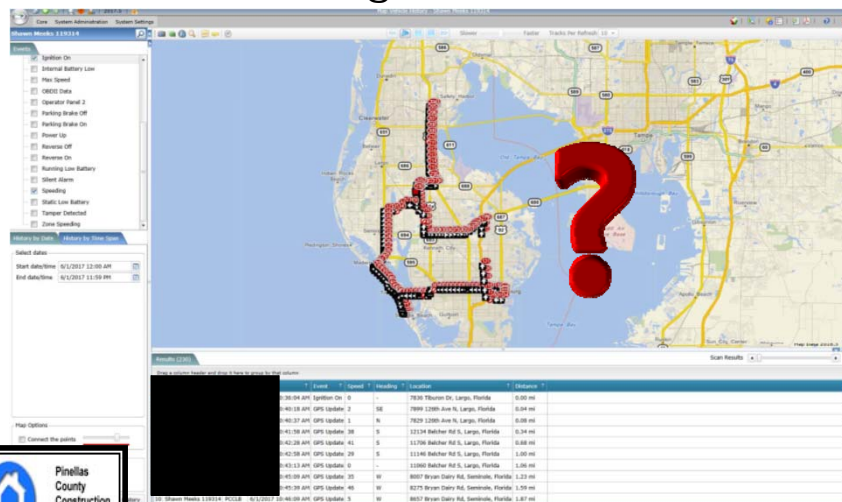
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Review Of Patrol Patterns For PCCLB Investigators Using GPS

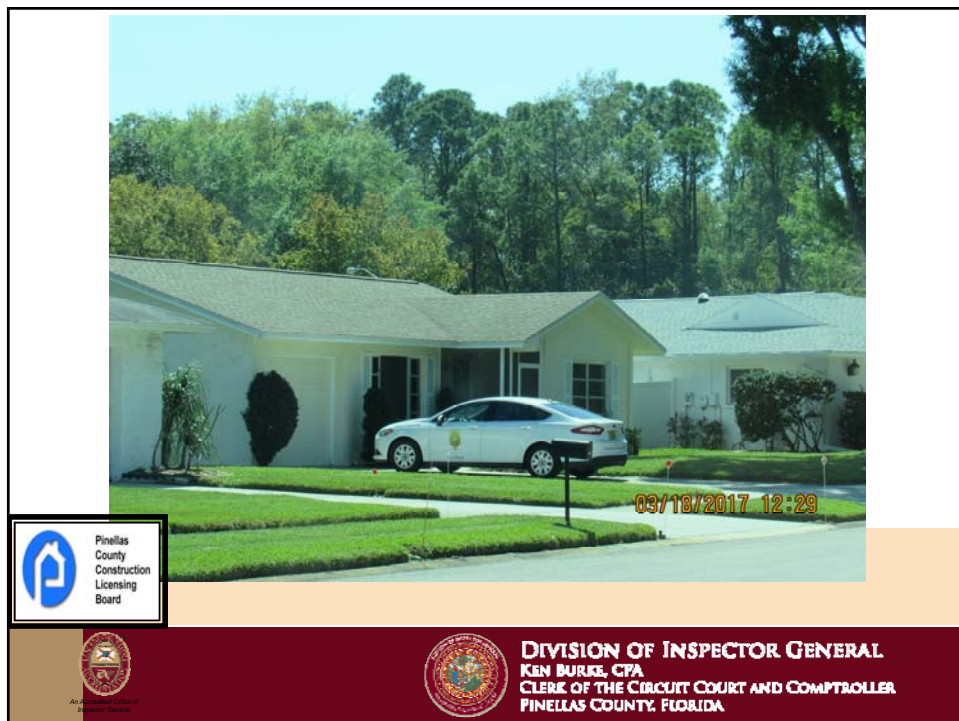


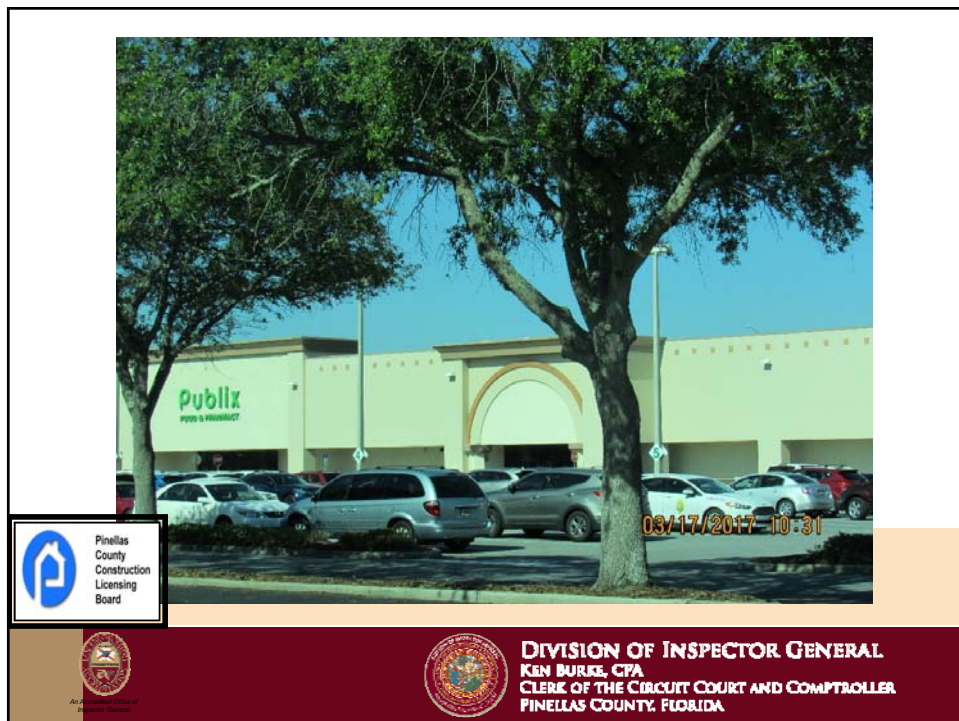
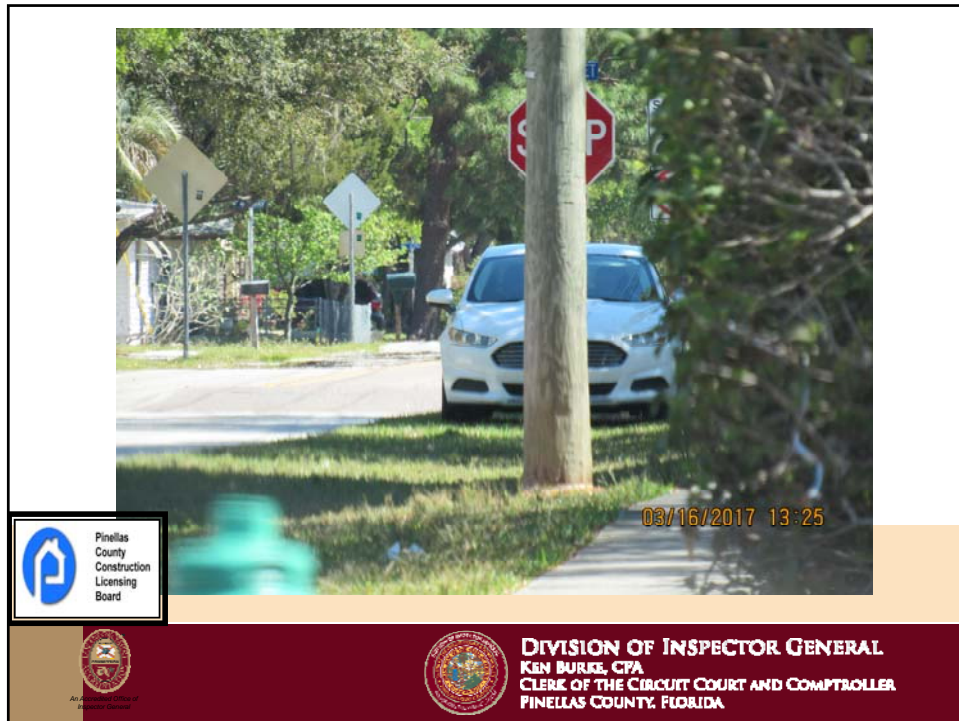
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What Is Wrong With This Picture?



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Pinellas
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Construction
Licensing
Board

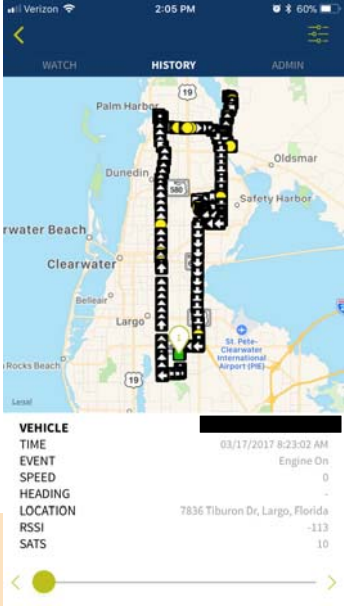


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Mobile
Phone
App




VEHICLE	
TIME	03/17/2017 8:23:02 AM
EVENT	Engine On
SPEED	0
HEADING	-
LOCATION	7836 Tiburon Dr, Largo, Florida
RSSI	-113
SATS	10



Pinellas
County
Construction
Licensing
Board



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Three PCCLB Investigations

Respondent #1

Engaged In Conduct Unbecoming A County Employee

Respondents #1 and #2

Misused County Time And Equipment

Respondent #2

Misused County Internet Access

There Is A Lack Of Supervisory Review Of GPS Data.



Conducted interrogations of Respondents #1 and #2, both confessed and resigned at the end of their interrogations.



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Grand Jury's Investigation



Testimony is Secret



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Inspector General regularly met with the State Attorney's Office (SAO), assigned Assistant State Attorney, and two SAO Investigators

**Reviewed audit findings and recommendations
(as they developed)**

**Reviewed investigative findings and
recommendations
(as they developed)**



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**Reviewed if there were any criminal activities for
SAO to investigate (none identified)**

Forwarded any related complaints

**Provided drafts of audit report SAO needed to
prepare for Grand Jury**

**Provided draft investigative reports SAO needed
to prepare for Grand Jury**



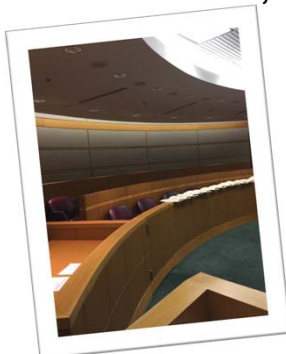
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PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA**

- Prepared PowerPoint for Grand Jury testimony
- SAO provided 60 questions that may be asked (40 pages of notes)
- Not all questions fact based, **OPINIONS REQUESTED**



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GRAND JURY PRESENTMENT AND THE FOUR IG REPORTS ISSUED ON SEPT. 20, 2017



IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA IN AND FOR PINELLAS COUNTY

GRAND JURY PRESENTMENT

TO THE HONORABLE ANTHONY RONDOLINO JUDGE OF SAID COURT:

We, the Grand Jury, impaneled and sworn to inquire and true presentment make in and for the body of the County of Pinellas, Florida, having been convened on Wednesday, September 20, 2017 beg to report as follows on this, the 20th day of September, 2017.

We have considered all criminal matters brought to our attention and known to the members of our body.

During the course of these investigations, we have caused to come before us today a total of 3 witnesses. We have returned 4 True Bill(s) and 0 No True Bill(s).

In addition, the State Attorney requested and we agreed to pursue an investigation into the operation of the Pinellas County Construction Licensing Board. We received testimony from 9 witnesses and conducted our investigation on July 28th, August 30th, August 31st and September 20th, 2017.

It became quickly apparent that we were faced with two viable options with regard to this Board. The first option was to repeal or amend the Special Act creating the Board in such a way as to make the Board a county department. The other option would be to amend the Act to allow the Board to remain independent but with increased transparency, accountability and professionalism.

The obvious advantage in making the Board a dependent part of the county government would be that the transparency, accountability and professionalism would be overseen by the county administrator and ultimately the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners. However, in our view, there are disadvantages to making the Board a dependent part of county government. The most significant disadvantage is that we believe, in time, the inevitable tension between city governments and county government could lead to fragmentation and confusion in construction licensing and building code enforcement in Pinellas County. We have also been advised that if the Board became a dependent part of county government, pre-existing

GRAND JURY PRESENTMENT

During our investigation, we became aware that Hector Collazo, the Pinellas County Inspector General, was conducting an exhaustive performance and financial audit of the Board and its operation. It is anticipated that the results of this audit will be released shortly after this Presentment. The Inspector General and his staff are to be congratulated for their comprehensive review. We have received testimony from Mr. Collazo and been made aware of the significant findings. We also would like to thank the Board's interim Executive Director, Gay Lancaster, for her efforts to reform the Board's operations as deficiencies were brought to light during the audit. We believe that the professional management that is currently being provided is an example of the leadership needed in the future and that the most important requirement for the position of Executive Director is that the Executive Director possesses organizational skills as exemplified by Ms. Lancaster.

The Inspector General's report identifies many instances of inappropriate conduct that have occurred in the past. The details of those instances are contained within his report. We have concluded that none of those instances rise to the level of actionable criminal offenses. However, it is clear that the prior executive leadership of the Board failed, at times, to follow the policies, procedures, rules and regulations as they apply to government employees. Examples of these are outlined in the Inspector General's report.



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Tampa Bay Times

WINNER OF 12 PULITZER PRIZES

Pinellas lawmakers to discuss fate of construction board

By [Mark Puente](#)

- Delegation Meeting November 1, 2017
 - [Agenda](#)
 - [Press Release](#)
 - Local Bills - PCCLB
 - [Rouson](#) - received October 11, 2017
 - [Diamond](#)
 - [Grant/Brandes](#)
 - [Latvala/Latvala](#)
 - [Rouson](#)
 - Local Bill - Clearwater
 - Local Bill - Redington Beach



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Pinellas County Legislative Delegation Meeting

Tampa Bay Times
Series of Articles
on PCCLB
January 2017



Grand Jury
Presentment
PCCLB

September 20, 2017

Inspector General
Issued Four
Reports

September 20, 2017

**Pinellas County
Legislative
Delegation**

November 1, 2017



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Pinellas County Legislative Delegation

Pinellas County
Legislative Delegation

Contact Us | Calendar | News | Media | Home

Season: 2017
Bill # [Search]

Legislative Delegation

Upcoming Meetings
• No meetings scheduled at this time.

Meeting Archives

Delegation Rules
• Delegation Rules - Resolution No. 2011-03

Delegation Chairman
Carolyn Rowan
District 19

Delegation Vice Chair
Chris Sarnoff
District 65

State of Florida Senators



Jack Latvala
District 16



Jeff Brandes
District 24

State of Florida House of Representatives



Gregory Newton, Sr.
District 70



Larry Aborn
District 66



Chris Latvala
District 67



Kathleen Petros
District 69



Ben Diamond
District 68



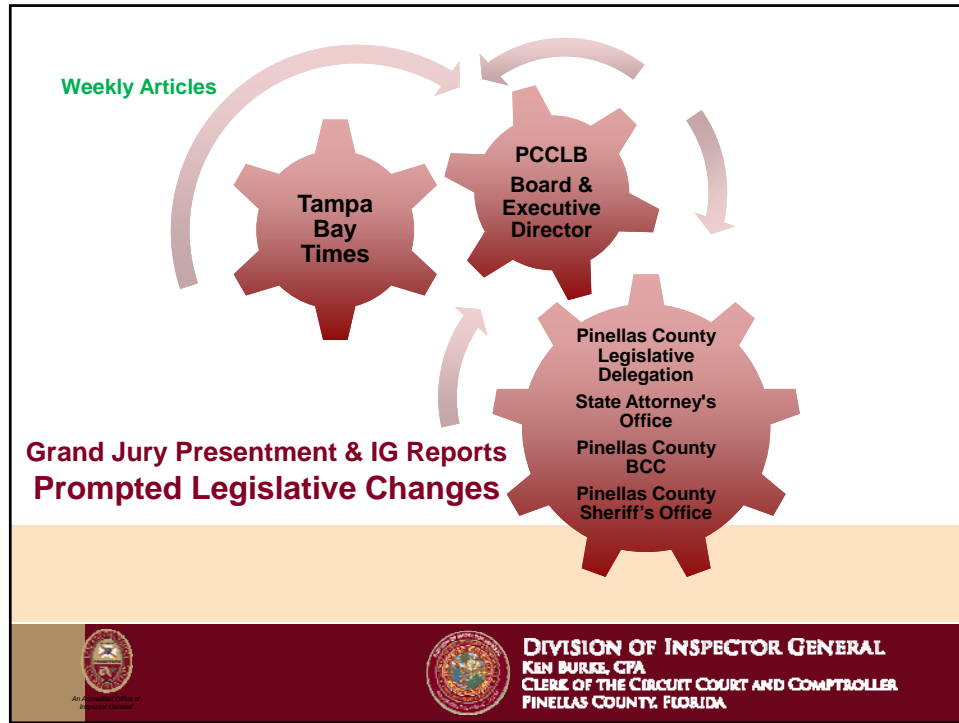
James Grant
District 64



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Pinellas County Legislative Delegation Introduces SB 402

Florida Senate - 2018 (NP) **SB 402**

By Senator Rouson

19-00666A-18 2018402_

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to the **Pinellas County Construction Licensing Board**; amending chapter 75-489, Laws of Florida, as amended; **revising the composition of the Pinellas County Construction Licensing Board**; revising the terms of the board members; providing for the election and terms of the chair and vice chair; authorizing the board to regulate local licensure and discipline local contractors; authorizing the board to employ personnel and incur expenses; **providing that board staff are employees of Pinellas County**; providing that the board is a dependent agency of the Board of County Commissioners of Pinellas County; authorizing the Board of County Commissioners to adopt rules; requiring the board to provide an annual report on finances and administrative activities; subjecting the board to periodic audits; requiring members of the board to file financial disclosure statements; specifying the board is eligible for state funding to support its operations during transition to the county; providing an effective date.

Pinellas County
 LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION

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Tampa Bay Times
WINNER OF 12 PULITZER PRIZES



Pinellas construction board prepares to lose independence





Legislative Delegation

The Pinellas County Construction Licensing Board, located at 12600 Belcher Road in Largo, has come under scrutiny from the county's inspector general and a grand jury. Pinellas lawmakers unanimously passed a proposal to move the agency under control of county government. (SCOTT KEELER/Times)



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Pinellas County Legislative Delegation

12 Months

➔

New



**Pinellas
County
Construction
Licensing
Board**

January 2018

**Tampa Bay
Times
Series of
Articles on
PCCLB**

January 2017

**Grand Jury
Presentment
PCCLB**


September 20, 2017

**Inspector
General Issued
Four Reports**


September 20, 2017

**Pinellas County
Legislative
Delegation**


November 1, 2017



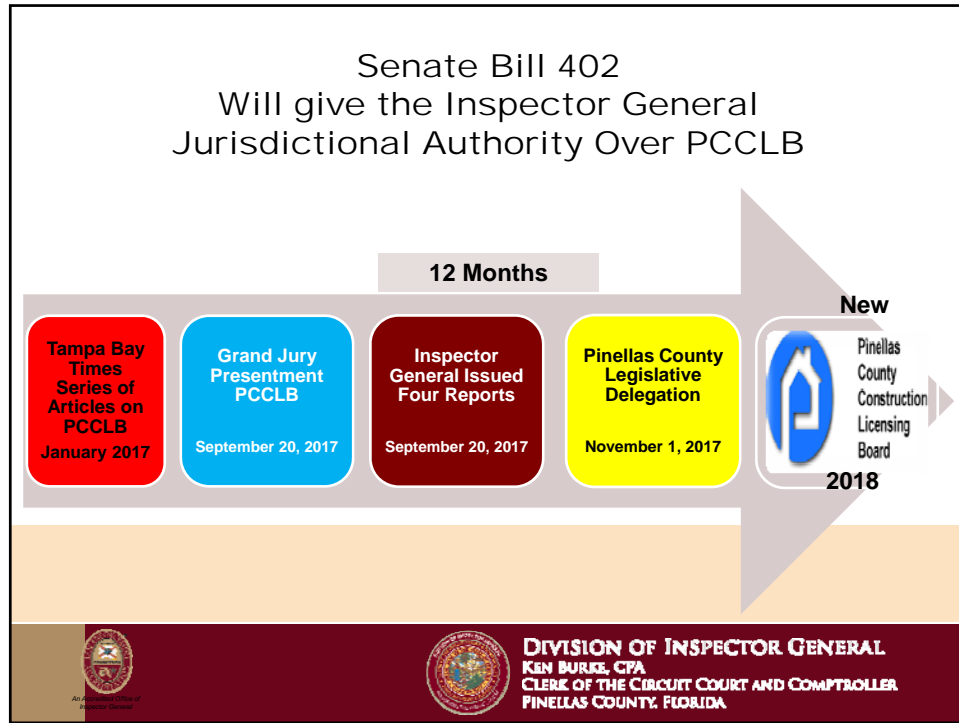
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4. **Pinellas County Construction Licensing Board gets eviscerated**

Inefficient. No oversight. No safeguards to protect taxpayers. That's how the Pinellas County Inspector General Hector Collazo Jr. described the Pinellas County Construction Licensing Board. The report came after a Tampa Bay Times investigation exposed how the agency operated, how its leaders and staff conducted themselves behind closed doors and how some officials treated consumers and contractors unfairly. The agency failed to protect homeowners from unlicensed contractors.

Pinellas-Pasco State Attorney Bernie McCabe and Collazo launched investigations. In November, the Pinellas County legislative delegation unanimously passed a proposed state law to abolish the board's independence and move it under county government. It awaits a vote by state lawmakers, who are the only ones who can reshape the agency.

http://www.tampabay.com/news/The-10-biggest-stories-in-Tampa-Bay-and-Florida-in-2017_164002276

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