

MINUTES
CITY OF INDIAN ROCKS BEACH
HURRICANE TASK FORCE
Civic Auditorium
1507 Bay Palm Blvd., Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785
Wednesday, May 13, 2026
Meeting called to order at 6:00 PM

1. Introductions

Task Force Members and City Staff

Commissioner Hilary King, Chair of the Hurricane Task Force, opened the meeting and explained the format would be less formal than typical city meetings, with recordings and transcripts to be maintained. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by introductions around the table.

Task Force Members and City Staff Present:

- **Commissioner Hilary King** - Task Force Chair, City Commissioner; lives on Bahia Vista Dr.; resident for approximately 14 years; retired from aerospace industry.
- **Ryan Henderson** - City Manager, City of Indian Rocks Beach; serving since October 2025.
- **Robin Gomez** - Administrative Director, City of Indian Rocks Beach; newest staff member, started full-time January 2026; nearly 32 years in local government including 21 years with City of Clearwater and almost 4 years with City of Madeira Beach, including service through two recent storms.
- **Dean Scharmen** - Public Works Director, City of Indian Rocks Beach
- **Lou Russo** - Task Force Member; building construction degree from University of Florida; builds airports worldwide (Asia, Europe, China, Middle East, US); interested in permitting aspect of Task Force.
- **Beth McMullen** - Task Force Member; lifelong Pinellas County resident; 34 years in Indian Rocks Beach on Harbor Dr. South; Registered Nurse (RN); lifelong experience with hurricanes in Pinellas County.

- **Jennifer Landry** - Task Force Member; co-owner of Chicago Jaqx Pizzeria; resident for about 8 years.
- **Ed Klaskowski** - Task Force Member; Florida resident since 2019, Indian Rocks Beach resident since approximately 2019 on 12th Ave.; originally from New Jersey area; previously experienced extensive hurricane damage during Hurricane Sandy in New Jersey; on forced sabbatical from pharmaceutical industry where he was Chief Information Officer for animal health and human health companies.
- **Scott Holmes** - Task Force Member; 6th generation Floridian; Indian Rocks resident approximately 20 years; licensed architect and engineer; certified SAP evaluator (post-disaster building assessment - green/red tags); former code investigator and environmental engineer; current President of AIA Tampa Bay; designed numerous buildings in floodplain/velocity zone including hurricane shelters (E Lake Middle School and others); involved with advocacy nationally, state, and locally regarding resiliency, FEMA, and sustainability.
- **Kelly Cisarik** - Task Force Member; 32-year resident on Harbor Dr. S.; retired with husband John from manufacturing business in Clearwater 26 years ago; previous home at end of 12th Ave. flooded in 1993 Storm of the Century; served on Fire District Task Force 2017-2018; recent informal lobbying at state level on home rule issues.
- **Mark Arnold** - Task Force Member; homeowner in Indian Rocks for 13 years, full-time resident for 8 years, retired naval officer and current President of the Indian Rocks Beach Rotary Club.

City Manager Henderson thanked all volunteers for serving on the Task Force.

2. Purpose of Meeting

Staff Presentation

Presenters: Robin Gomez, Administrative Director; Commissioner Hilary King

Administrative Director Gomez provided a PowerPoint presentation covering the following topics:

City Commission Resolution 2026-09: The City Commission adopted Hurricane Task Force Resolution 2026-09 establishing four primary purposes:

1. Assess current hurricane preparedness measures in the city
2. Identify vulnerabilities and areas for improvement in emergency planning, infrastructure, and public communication
3. Develop recommendations for enhancing community resilience to hurricanes and severe weather events
4. Coordinate with local, county, and state agencies on best practices for disaster preparedness and response

Hurricane Season Overview: Hurricane season runs June 1 through November 30, with August and September being the busiest months. Historical significant storms were reviewed, including Hurricane Irma (September 10, 2017), Hurricane Charley (August 13, 2004), Hurricane Andrew (August 24, 1992), Hurricane Helene (September 26, 2024), and Hurricane Ian (September 28, 2022).

Preparation, Response, and Recovery Goals: The primary goals are to protect life and property, with communication being key, and to re-establish daily life as quickly as possible.

Government Coordination: Coordination involves four government levels (city, county, state/FDEM, federal/FEMA) plus non-governmental organizations and private companies.

City Coordination: The City's role includes communication, coordinating with agencies, and restoring city services.

Pinellas County Emergency Management: Pinellas County serves as incident commander and issues evacuation orders (not the City). Pinellas County determines when to evacuate, when residents can return, and when to reopen, and coordinates resources. Residents were encouraged to download the Ready Pinellas app and register for Alert Pinellas. Pinellas County also coordinates debris removal and permitting.

Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM): FDEM handles disaster preparedness, recovery, and response, and provides funding pass-through from FEMA, including the Elevate Florida program.

FEMA: FEMA has four main components:

- **Individual Assistance:** \$750 initial assistance, funding for home repair and lost contents
- **Public Assistance:** Government reimbursement - the City of Indian Rocks Beach has expenses over \$5 million after Hurricanes Helene and Milton, with insurance paying approximately \$2 million and the rest awaiting FEMA reimbursement
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Permitting and substantial damage determinations, which are embedded in state statute, county and city ordinances. Non-compliance risks include no FEMA reimbursement and potential removal from the National Flood Insurance Program, as nearly happened to Collier County, Naples, and Cape Coral after Hurricane Ian
- **Mitigation:** Grants for resilience projects

Task Force Purpose: The Task Force will engage in open discussion on what worked and did not work, and what can be improved. Pinellas County after-action report summarizes EOC activation through barrier island reopening. An issue was noted regarding residents paying up to \$100 for boat transport to the island during closure.

Next Steps: Actions and meetings will be guided by Commissioner King.

A brief quiz was conducted on hurricane basics covering the Saffir-Simpson scale, landfall locations, preparedness importance, and rotation direction.

Commissioner King reviewed the Resolution purposes and emphasized the focus on the City's purview and control, with potential input from county, state, and federal agencies as needed during the process. She encouraged all members to read at least the summary section of the Pinellas County after-action report, which covers five categories: what went well, needs improvement, and tasks for improvement. The full report is 66 pages and covers the complex process of County coordination with the state for EOC activation, asset deployment, and

communications. She emphasized the communication focus for the Task Force, including backup plans for outages. The Task Force journey was estimated to take at least two months.

Discussion

Commissioner King opened the floor for questions and discussion. Multiple questions and discussions occurred:

City Hall Preparedness: Kelly Cisarik asked about City Hall preparedness given the building is not elevated, the FEMA grant for storm barriers, usability with a 5- to 6-foot storm surge, and whether an alternative off-island location should be considered. Public Works Director Scharmen responded that the Legislature appropriation was obtained for an AquaFence flood barrier system (FEMA-approved, readily deployable). The current City Hall elevation is 4.3 feet plus a 6-foot flood barrier. The system is 700+ linear feet and takes 8 people approximately 8 hours to install. Projected delivery is June 1, 2026, with installation by the end of June. The system will likely remain up for public education. Sump pumps and sandbags will be used for areas inside the fence. Continuity of operations depends on island access. Staff will evacuate pre-storm, and return timing depends on power and damage assessment. City Manager Henderson added that, having joined in October, he did not personally experience the displacement residents faced, but praised the Commission's foresight to obtain state funding for the AquaFence, and stated the goal is to operate from City Hall as quickly as possible post-storm.

Binding Recommendations and Coordination: A Task Force member asked if recommendations would be binding to the City Commission and if coordination with other communities, county, and state would occur. Commissioner King responded that recommendations within the City's purview and control will be binding (subject to Commission approval). The goal is to make significant changes to preparation, operation, and recovery if deemed necessary. Some recommendations may be for community or volunteer organizations. The idea of sharing with other cities is great, as some have already done this. Taking recommendations to the County is desired and will be discussed. The plan is to have different agencies speak to the Task Force and educate them, and for the Task Force to educate agencies.

The Pinellas County after-action report shows ongoing activities for improvements and sustaining what went well.

City vs. County Responsibilities: Beth McMullen asked about City versus County responsibilities for preparing and post-storm clearing, specifically Gulf Boulevard. Public Works Director Scharmen responded that the City has an interlocal agreement with Pinellas County for debris management. The City does the "first push" to open one lane on Gulf Boulevard to access secondary streets for initial damage assessment and fire department access. The City must wait for the green light to return and for Duke Energy to ensure no live power lines. Then the City coordinates debris management activation. The state handles the bridge area. Gulf Boulevard ownership: south of Walsingham is FDOT, north of Walsingham is Pinellas County (the City coordinates with the County to clean the roadway within the municipal boundary).

Building Damage and Equipment Storage: Scott Holmes asked about the plan if a wind event destroys the building (roof blows off) versus just flood protection. Public Works Director Scharmen responded that staff is discussing rental of off-site properties. The City currently leases property from the City of Largo for potential temporary trailer setup and could also use a storefront closer to the beach as temporary City Hall with public notice. Scott Holmes asked about equipment storage for road clearing. Public Works Director Scharmen responded that all rolling stock is evacuated off the island pre-storm. Equipment is diversified to employee homes across North, East, and South county (if all in one location and devastated, it would be a bad situation). There is an agreement with Yellow Banks/Orange Grove for parking lot storage east of their building. No rolling stock is left on the island.

Post-Storm Response and Fire Safety: Ed Klaskowski shared positives: staging of workers the next morning at the Indian Rocks Beach bridge was very helpful, and garbage trucks rolled in very close to island re-opening. Mr. Klaskowski also raised a concern: 3 fires on his street were not from Duke Energy restoring power, but from Spectrum and other cable providers turning power back on very quickly. Unprotected cable wires often wrapped around power wires caused fires in things that should not be live. Firemen attributed the fires to powered cable lines. This should be part of return-to-island coordination.

City Manager Henderson responded that he and Mayor-Commissioner Vaughan met with a Spectrum governmental representative at a meet-and-greet and brought up the issue. They now have contact with the Spectrum operational manager in the area to have a conversation.

Public Works Director Scharmen added that information is gathered by drones in different neighborhoods. He is unsure what Duke will utilize but typically they want to see damage. Flying the island gives the county and sheriff a comfort level to determine if it is safe to allow return.

3. 2024 Hurricanes/Storms – Pinellas County After-Action Report and Overview Brief

Staff Presentation

Presenters: Robin Gomez, Administrative Director; Commissioner Hilary King

Administrative Director Gomez's presentation covered the county after-action report (66 pages full version, with a 10-page condensed summary available). The report covers EOC activation, calls during storms, and the barrier island reopening process. An issue was noted regarding residents commandeering boats or paying up to \$100 for boat transport across the waterway to reach the island during closure (debris in water made swimming dangerous).

Commissioner King encouraged reading at least the summary section covering 5 categories: positives, lessons learned and needs improvement. The full report details the complex coordination process between the county and state.

4. City and Community/Neighbor Roles

Staff Presentation

Presenters: Robin Gomez, Administrative Director; Dean Scharmen, Public Works Director; Ryan Henderson, City Manager

Administrative Director Gomez's presentation covered the roles and expectations of different government levels and agencies:

City of Indian Rocks Beach: Coordination for hurricane preparation, communication with residents, coordinating with other government levels and agencies, restoring City services, and working to get government operational as soon as possible post-emergency.

Pinellas County Emergency Management: Serves as incident commander, issues evacuation orders (not the City - comes from County Administrator with Sheriff and School Superintendent plus County Commission), determines evacuation timing and return/reopening, coordinates resources, provides information via Ready Pinellas app and Alert Pinellas alerts, and coordinates debris removal and permitting (damage assessment to rebuild determinations).

State (Florida Division of Emergency Management - FDEM): Disaster preparedness, recovery, and response; provides funding pass-through from FEMA and other programs including Elevate Florida.

Federal (FEMA):

- **Individual Assistance:** \$750 initial assistance, home repair funding, lost contents replacement
- **Public Assistance:** Government reimbursement - the City of Indian Rocks Beach has over \$5 million in expenses from Hurricanes Helene and Milton with approximately \$2 million from insurance, with the rest awaiting FEMA reimbursement
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Permitting and substantial damage determinations, which are embedded in state statute, county and City ordinances. Non-compliance risks include no FEMA reimbursement and potential removal from the National Flood Insurance Program
- **Mitigation:** Resilience grants

National Hurricane Center (NHC): Forecasting and tracking (role implied but not explicitly detailed).

The presentation emphasized expectations before, during, and after storms. Administrative Director Gomez noted the importance of mental health preparation, which is often overlooked. He emphasized Task Force members becoming "champions" or "captains" to spread information in their areas. Coordination involves non-governmental, social, faith-based, and community organizations, as well as private companies providing equipment, services, and expertise.

Public Directors Scharmen explained the coordination between City, county, state, and federal agencies. He described the initial damage assessment process, debris management coordination, and communication protocols. Administrative Director Gomez detailed groupings of county coordination including city managers/mayors, public works respondents, first responders, and public information officers. He explained the information flow from the National Hurricane Center through the State Emergency Operations Center to counties and municipalities.

City Manager Henderson clarified the communication chain from the county through the city manager to the PIO and management team.

Discussion

Task Force members discussed utility coordination responsibilities, with clarification that the county handles water and sewer but municipalities coordinate with private utilities like Spectrum. There was discussion of FEMA contractor relationships and how FEMA hires consultants for damage assessments. Multiple Task Force members raised questions about communication protocols, single point of contact with the county EOC, and City input into after-action reports.

Task Force members discussed challenges related to post-storm communications, including inconsistent messaging and the need for centralized public information.

5. Next Steps

Discussion

Commissioner King outlined a homework assignment for members to analyze three hurricane phases (preparation, during, recovery) and identify what worked well, what did not, and potential improvements.

Upcoming Hurricane Expos: Discussion of upcoming Hurricane Expos in the region:

- May 30, 2026 in Clearwater (Pinellas County/City of Clearwater Hurricane Preparedness Day, 10 am – 1 pm, N Greenwood Recreation Center, 900 N MLK Jr Ave, Clearwater, 33755)
- June 6 at St. Pete Beach and Belleair Bluffs
- Late June in Dunedin

There was a proposal for the City to host its own Hurricane Expo and Sandbag Saturday event. City Manager Henderson confirmed the City will conduct Sandbag Saturday regardless of Expo timing.

Beth McMullen reported on attending the Indian Shores/Redington Hurricane Expo, describing the format with Bay News 9 meteorologist Brian McClure, City officials, sheriff representatives, food, and raffles with emergency supply prizes. She suggested coordinating with neighboring cities like Belleair Beach for a joint event.

There was discussion of sandbag effectiveness and the need for education on proper use.

Senate Bill 180 Compliance: Scott Holmes raised questions about Senate Bill 180 compliance regarding the May 1st deadline for a municipal action plan. Public Works Director, Scharmen, confirmed it is not yet completed due to the bill's lack of clarity.

Private Street Debris Removal: Mark Arnold raised a critical issue regarding the disparity between public street and private street residents in debris removal services. He noted that private street residents pay the same taxes but had to arrange their own debris removal. The Task Force agreed to include this in the lessons learned analysis.

Meeting Schedule: Meeting frequency was set at every other week with a goal of completing recommendations by the end of June or early July. A virtual attendance option via Zoom will be established.

Homework Assignment: Members are to email their analysis of the three hurricane phases to the chair (hking@irbcity.com) by Tuesday evening, May 26, 2026.

Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 27, 2026.

It was confirmed that there are no Sunshine Law restrictions on Task Force member communications.

6. Q&A / Open Discussion

The Q&A and open discussion were integrated throughout the meeting, particularly during agenda items 2, 4, and 5. Key topics included:

- City Hall preparedness and the AquaFence flood barrier system
- Binding nature of Task Force recommendations
- City versus County responsibilities for debris management and roadway clearing
- Equipment storage and evacuation procedures
- Post-storm fire safety concerns related to cable provider power restoration
- Communication protocols and coordination with utility providers
- Hurricane Expo planning and coordination with neighboring cities
- Senate Bill 180 compliance
- Disparity in debris removal services for private street residents
- Task Force meeting schedule and homework assignments



2026 HURRICANE TASK FORCE

May 13, 2026



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- **Thank you to HTF members !!!**
- **Neighbors**
- **Mayor & City Commission**
- **Resolution 2026-09**



HTF RESOLUTION 26-09

- **Assess current hurricane preparedness**
- **ID vulnerabilities, improvements to emerg planning, infrastructure, public communic**
- **Recommend enhanced community resilience**
- **Intergov't coordination on best practices for disaster preparedness and response**



HURRICANES

- **June 1 to November 30**
- **Part of Paradise Living**
- **August - September**
- **S-10, A-13, A-24, S-26, S-28**
- **https://www.aoml.noaa.gov/hrd/hurdat/All_U.S._Hurricanes.html**



PREPARATION, RESPONSE, RECOVERY

- **Public Safety - protect life**
- **Infrastructure - protect property**
- **Communications - as much as possible**
 - **Re-Establish Daily Life**



COORDINATION

- **Government - city, county, state, federal**
- **Non-government - social, faith, community**
- **Private - equipment, services, expertise**



Gov't Coordination

- **City of IRB**
- **Pinellas County Emergency Mgt**
- **Florida Division of Emergency Mgt**
- **Federal Emergency Mgt Agency**



CITY Coordination

- **Preparations**
- **Communication**
- **Coordinate with all others**
- **Restore City Services**



PCEM Coordination

- **Updates**
- **EOC-Incident Commander**
- ***Evacuation and Return***
- **Resources - equipment, supplies**
- **Preparation - Ready Pinellas**
- **<https://pinellas.gov/departments/emergency-management/>**





PCEM COORDINATION

- **After-Action Report**
- **After-Action Overview**
- **Debris Removal**
- **Permitting**





FDEM Coordination

- **Disaster preparedness**
- **Recovery-Response, equipment/supply**
- **Funding (pass through for gov't)**
- **Mitigation - elevate Florida**





FEMA Coordination

- **Individual Assistance**
- **Public Assistance**
- **Regulatory Compliance (state, city)**
- **NFIP**
- **Mitigation - various grants**





OPEN DISCUSSION

- **What worked**
- **What did not work**
- **Improvement actions**
- **NEXT STEPS, ACTIONS, MEETINGS**



HURRICANE QUIZ

1. All hurricanes are?

- A. Category 4 Storms
- B. Tropical Cyclones
- C. Tropical Tornadoes
- D. Atlantic Ocean Based

2. What scale are hurricanes measured on?

- A. Enhanced Fujita Scale
- B. Beaufort Wind Scale
- C. Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale
- D. Magellan Scale

3. A Category 4 hurricane has wind speeds ranging from:

- A. 130 - 156 mph
- B. > 157 mph
- C. 111 - 129 mph
- D. 74 - 95 mph

4. A hurricane needs which of the following conditions to form?

- A. Warm sea surface temperature
- B. Warm air
- C. High humidity
- D. All of the above

5. Hurricane season begins in _____ and ends in _____.

- A. January, March
- B. July, October
- C. May, September
- D. June, November

6. Hurricanes typically make landfall in which of the following places?

- A. US East Coast states
- B. US Gulf of Mexico states (AL, FL, LA, MS, TX)
- C. Alaska
- D. Wisconsin
- E. Both A & B

7. Hurricanes affect only coastal states.

- A. True
- B. False

8. Other weather perils that are produced by hurricanes include:

- A. Floods
- B. Hail Storms
- C. Snowstorms
- D. Tornadoes
- E. Both A & D

9. An important aspect of making sure things don't blow away during a hurricane is:

- A. Outside preparedness
- B. The color of your house siding
- C. The type of grass in your yard
- D. All of the above

10. Which direction does a hurricane in the North Atlantic rotate?

- A. Sideways
- B. Counterclockwise
- C. Clockwise
- D. In a figure eight



Thank you !

- **Ryan Henderson, City Manager**
- **rhenderson@irbcity.com**
- **727.595.2517**

- **Robin Gomez, Administrative Director**
- **rgomez@irbcity.com**
- **727.214.7463**

- **Dean Scharmen, Public Works Director**
- **dscharmen@irbcity.com**
- **727.580.0713**



AGENDA
CITY OF INDIAN ROCKS BEACH
HURRICANE TASK FORCE MEETING
Civic Auditorium/Commission Chambers
1507 Bay Palm Blvd., Indian Rocks Beach, FL. 33785
Wednesday, May 13, 2026, at 6:00 P.M.

1. Introductions

- Task Force Members
- City Staff
- Brief PowerPoint Presentation

2. Purpose of Meeting

- City Commission Adopted HTF Resolution 2026-09, purpose:
 1. Assess current hurricane preparedness measures in the city.
 2. Identify vulnerabilities and areas for improvement in emergency planning, infrastructure, and public communication.
 3. Develop recommendations for enhancing community resilience to hurricanes and severe weather events.
 4. Coordinate with local, county, and state agencies on best practices for disaster preparedness and response.
- Open discussion/dialogue on all-things hurricane/storm season

3. 2024 Hurricanes/Storms – Pinellas County After-Action Report and Overview Brief

- Positives
- Lessons Learned
- Needs Improvement

4. City and Community/Neighbor Roles

- City, County, State, Federal – NHC, FEMA, FDEM, PC Emerg Mgt
- Expectations - Before, During, After Storm

6. Next Steps

- City of IRB Hurricane Expo
- Next Meeting
- Pinellas County/City of Clearwater – **Hurricane Preparedness Day**
 - Sat, May 30, 2026
 - 10 am – 1 pm
 - N Greenwood Recreation Center, 900 N MLK Jr Ave, Clearwater, 33755

7. Q&A / Open Discussion