

**Special Task Force to Reduce Inefficiencies in Procurement (STRIP)****Location: Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 NW 1st St, Miami, FL 33128, 18th Floor****Date: June 25, 2025 - Time: 9:30 a.m.****Meeting Minutes**

Start: 9:08 a.m.

Appointed: 14

Stop: 12:10 p.m.

Quorum: 8

<u>Members Present (13)</u>	<u>Members Absent (1)</u>
Albert "Al" Dotson, Jr.	Jina Marie Braynon
Aldo Leiva	
Diana Mendez	
Erin Hendrix	
John Elizabeth Aleman	
Josenrique Cueto	
Kenneth Naylor	
Maira Suarez	
Miguel De Grandy	
Rey T. Melendi	
Rudy Ortiz	
Victor Herrera	
Willy Bermello	
John Elizabeth Aleman	

Call to Order and Introductions

Michou Jean, from the Strategic Procurement Department, called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. and officially welcomed attendees to the Special Taskforce to Reduce Inefficiencies in Procurement (STRIP). She opened by introducing herself and then invited each Taskforce member to briefly share their name, professional background, and relevant experience.

Chairman Anthony Rodriguez delivered opening remarks, thanking Taskforce members for their willingness to serve and highlighting the importance of the work ahead. He shared that this initiative has been a personal priority for over a year and described it as a legacy effort to reform the County's procurement system from the ground up. Rather than addressing issues one by one, the goal is to take a holistic approach that removes inefficiencies, streamlines processes, and ultimately serves both businesses and residents more effectively. He understands that delays in procurement drive up costs, and when that happens, it's the taxpayers who pay the price.

Chairman Rodriguez urged members to set aside personal or industry interests and commit to doing what's best for the County. While acknowledging that some Taskforce members represent firms outside the County, he expressed full trust in their ability to lead with integrity and fairness, especially when addressing policies like the locally headquartered preference.

He explained that this effort is different from past attempts to “fix” procurement through one-off legislative items. Instead, this Taskforce is being asked to take a step back and rethink the system from the ground up. While the timeline is aggressive, the aim is to gather meaningful input, begin implementing changes as soon as possible, and deliver recommendations by the end of the year or no later than the first quarter of 2026. He closed by thanking the County Attorney’s Office and staff for their support and expressed optimism about the work to come.

Organization

Diana Mendez was nominated to serve as Chair of the Taskforce. The nomination was seconded, and upon being put to a vote, the motion passed unanimously with a vote of 13-0.

Willy Bermello was then nominated to serve as Vice-Chair. The nomination was also seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous vote of 13-0.

Eduardo Gonzalez from the County Attorney’s Office, provided an overview on quorum requirements, ensuring all members understood voting procedures and participation protocols. He also reviewed the Taskforce’s purpose, and the language outlined in the resolution. He emphasized the importance of maintaining quorum during official meetings to ensure that any decisions or recommendations made are valid and in accordance with established legal standards.

In addition to the procedural guidance, Mr. Gonzalez also reviewed the official purpose of the Taskforce as outlined in the resolution adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. He explained that the primary responsibility of Taskforce members is to evaluate the County’s current procurement practices, identify areas where efficiencies can be improved, and develop actionable recommendations. These recommendations will be compiled and submitted in both interim and final reports to the Board of County Commissioners for consideration. His presentation ensured that all members had a clear understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and the overall mission of the Taskforce moving forward.

Reasonable Opportunity for the Public to be Heard

Chairwoman Mendez opened the reasonable opportunity to be heard, seeing no one appear, the reasonable opportunity was closed.

Presentations:

A. Overview of County Procurement Challenges and Opportunities Presented by: Namita Uppal – Director Strategic Procurement Department

Ms. Namita Uppal, Director & Chief Procurement Officer, provided a comprehensive presentation on the current state of procurement in Miami-Dade County. She shared data illustrating the scope and scale of her department's responsibilities, including management of over 1,000 active contracts and 200 procurement pools valued at more than \$12 billion. In 2024 alone, the team of 67 staff managed 134 agenda items totaling \$2.5 billion.

Ms. Uppal explained that procurement was governed by a complex system of over 216 legislative provisions up from 209 from a few months prior. She highlighted the collaborative nature of the procurement process, which involved coordination with multiple departments, including legal, ethics, small business, and risk management.

Namita shared an overview of the Strategic Efficiency Initiative, which is a focused plan designed to improve how procurement operates by streamlining internal processes and making necessary updates to County legislation. The goal is to speed up the RFP cycle and create a more efficient, responsive system overall.

She explained that the next steps include officially launching the initiative, moving forward with proposed changes to both internal procedures and legislation, and providing training to staff to support the new approach. There will also be systems put in place to monitor progress and ensure these improvements last over time.

Ms. Uppal also introduced proposed streamlined timelines:

- Up to \$5M: 90–220 days
- Over \$5M: 120–150 days

The Taskforce members emphasized the need to review a list of outdated, overlapping, or unnecessary legislative rules. They urged for a return-on-investment (ROI)-driven approach to evaluate the necessity and value of each step in the procurement process. Several members raised concerns about the current structure of selection committees, noting that many lack the appropriate subject matter expertise. There was strong support for returning to larger, more qualified panels that can better assess proposals with accuracy and fairness.

Board members also discussed the importance of improving transparency, ensuring fairness, and expanding access to procurement opportunities, particularly for smaller and local firms. Concerns were raised about inconsistent access to “drops” (the release of proposal documents), which some members noted can limit vendor participation and public engagement.

There was also discussion around the proposed legislative changes. Members requested greater clarity on which ordinances or administrative orders would be revised and what the timeline for approval might look like. They expressed concern that legislative delays could stall implementation and emphasized the need for a clear path forward to avoid bottlenecks.

In addition, there was strong consensus on the need for built-in accountability. Members stressed that launching the initiative isn't enough, it needs consistent follow-through.

They suggested regular progress check-ins, performance tracking, and clearly defined responsibilities to ensure momentum is sustained. Training and communication were highlighted as key factors for success. Members emphasized the importance of ensuring County staff, vendors, and all stakeholders understand the changes being implemented, not just the logistics, but the purpose behind them. Targeted outreach and clear messaging were seen as essential to getting buy-in and easing the transition.

Lastly, a few members encouraged the County to explore how technology and automation could help streamline the procurement process. They noted opportunities to reduce manual work, speed up approvals, and bring the County in line with best practices seen in other jurisdictions.

Overview of Sunshine, Ethics, and Public Records Presented by: Robert A. Thomas - Commission on Ethics and Public Trust

Mr. Robert A. Thomas from the Commission on Ethics and Public Trust provided a high-level overview of legal compliance. He reviewed the Sunshine Law, emphasizing the importance of transparency and appropriate communication between members. He also discussed ethical obligations and proper handling of public records, including documentation and correspondence that may be subject to public access.

Mr. Thomas responded to questions from members on potential Sunshine Law violations, proper storage of notes and emails, and when a document becomes a public record. His guidance offered clarity on navigating legal obligations during and outside of formal meetings.

Meeting Logistics and Calendar Review

The draft meeting calendar was presented. The Taskforce Members reviewed proposed meeting dates and discussed aligning the schedule with reporting deadlines.

- Several adjustments were suggested to accommodate summer and holiday periods.
- The group agreed that a standing Zoom link should be established.
- Deliverables were reviewed, including the due dates for the interim and final reports, which will include policy recommendations.
- Ms. Namita Uppal, Director & Chief Procurement Officer will coordinate internal scheduling and ensure department presentations align with the report timeline.

Highlighted Points

- Eddie Gonzalez, County Attorney, summarized Resolution R-411-25 outlining the Task Force mandate

- Meeting Frequency and Reporting Requirements: Clarification that the task force must meet at least monthly, each topic must be covered in at least two meetings, and subcommittee meetings do not substitute for full task force meetings.
- Scheduling and Calendar Adjustments: Discussion on conflicts with holidays and board meetings, and the need to adjust the calendar to accommodate all required topics and deliverables.
- Meeting Start Time: Proposal to start meetings at 9:30 a.m. instead of 10:00 a.m. to allow more time for discussion and subcommittee work if needed.
- Public Notice and Sunshine Requirements: Clarification on public notice requirements for meetings and subcommittees, including the need for 24-hour notice and compliance with Sunshine laws.
- Quorum and Remote Participation: Discussion on quorum requirements and the possibility of remote (Zoom) meetings. Clarification that physical quorum is required for taking action, but meetings can proceed for discussion without quorum, with actions deferred to future meetings.
- Final Report and Deliverables Timeline: Review of reporting deadlines for August 4, 2025, and the December 2025, with discussion on the need for possible extension requests.
- Inclusion of Additional Topics: Motion to include additional items such as bid protests, pre-procurement, and technology in the meeting agenda.
- Solid Waste Contracts Timing: Concern raised about the timing of recommendations on solid waste contracts, given that commission decisions may occur before December 2025.
- Pre-Procurement Process: Discussion on adding the pre-proposal and pre-advertising process to the July 2, 2025, meeting, and the need for department input on these steps.
- 100-step RFP checklist Request made to upload it to SharePoint



Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Special Task Force to Reduce Inefficiencies in Procurement (STRIP), the meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.