

Special Task Force to Reduce Inefficiencies in Procurement (STRIP)
Location: Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 NW 1st St, Miami, FL 33128, 19th Floor
Date: September 5, 2025 - Time: 10:00 a.m.
Meeting Minutes

Start: 10:07 am

Appointed: 15

Stop: 1: 29 p.m.

Quorum: 8

<u>Members Present (12)</u>	<u>Members Absent (2) Zoom (1)</u>
Albert "Al" Dotson, Jr.	Jina Marie Braynon
Aldo Leiva	John Elizabeth Aleman (ZOOM)
Carolina Vester	Maira Suarez
Chairwoman Diana Mendez	
Erin Hendrix	
Kenneth Naylor	
Josenrique Cueto	
Miguel De Grandy	
Rey T. Melendi	
Rudy Ortiz	
Victor Herrera	
Willy Bermello	

Roll Call

Michou Jean (SPD) called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m., followed by Taskforce members introduction, and a quorum was confirmed.

Welcome

Welcome by Chairwoman Mendez and moved directly into opening the floor for the reasonable opportunity for the public to be heard.

Reasonable Opportunity for the Public to be Heard

Chairwoman Mendez opened the reasonable opportunity for the public to be heard. As no members of the public came forward to speak, the public comment period was closed.

Approval of the August 5, 2025, Meeting Minutes

The Taskforce reviewed the minutes from the August 5, 2025, meeting. A correction was noted regarding the responsible wage section, clarifying the date should read September 30, 2026, instead of 2025. With this correction, a motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded. The minutes were approved as corrected by a vote of 12-0.

Discussion on Department Contract Managers attending STRIP meetings

The Taskforce discussed having Department Contract Managers attend meetings to provide clarity and answer questions directly. Members agreed this would be helpful to avoid back-and-forth after the fact. Victor Herrera advised that he had drafted a list of questions, which will be shared with the Taskforce once approved by the Chair.

Clarification from Taskforce – Solid Waste Contracts

Staff explained that the County needed clarification on what type of information, if any, the Taskforce wanted for the upcoming topic of Solid Waste Contracts. Members discussed the limits of the “cone of silence” and agreed they could not request details on active procurements. Instead, the focus should be on understanding the overall process. It was suggested that the County provide a list of Solid Waste contracts currently in place and those under the cone so the Taskforce could identify where they wanted to focus further review. Members also noted that Solid Waste was specifically included in the original resolution from the Chairman’s Office and requested staff to follow up with that office for further guidance. No formal action was taken.

60 Day Interim Report

The Taskforce reviewed the draft 60-Day Interim Report, which is required under Resolution. The edits and corrections including changing the date for the Responsible Wage section, which was corrected to read September 30, 2026, instead of 2025. In the Phase 1 Pre-Construction section, “handoff” was confirmed as the correct wording (not “handout”). There a typo was corrected: “DERVEN” changed to “driven.”

The taskforce members agreed that the report should explicitly label all recommendations as “Preliminary Recommendations” to distinguish them from the final recommendations that will come after all presentations, discussions, and additional data gathering are complete. The draft report had originally included the phrase “identify systemic challenges” among the tasks to be completed by the evaluation committee, but the language was changed to mirror the language in Resolution No. R-441-25. Task Force Member Willy Bermello raised concerns about removing language that included identifying systemic challenges as part of the objectives. It was agreed that while the preliminary report would not explicitly detail systemic challenges, the final report would include a section explaining the systemic challenges identified by the task force. Task Force Member John Aleman asked that the Interim Report acknowledge that there is a number of other recommendations that members have made.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the redlined draft of the 60-Day Interim Report with the discussed edits, clarifications, and corrections.

Vote: Approved unanimously (12-0).

Extension of the Taskforce

Chairwoman Diana Mendez read into the minutes that Chairman Anthony Rodriguez moved to amend Resolution No. R-441-25 to extend the Taskforce's deadlines, giving until September 12, 2025, for preliminary findings and recommendations, extending the deadline for the final report to the last scheduled Board of County Commissioners meeting in March 2026, with the report due no later than May 1, 2026.

Recommendations

1. Living Wage Freeze

Recommendation: Freeze the living wage for existing contracts for contract years after September 30, 2026.

Discussion: The task force deliberated on a proposal to freeze the living wage for existing contracts effective after September 30, 2026. A motion was introduced in favor of the freeze, advocating for a market-based approach to wage adjustments. The motion prompted a robust debate. Several members voiced concerns about the potential consequences for low-wage workers and the administrative burden of reviewing more than 90 active contracts. Key arguments against the freeze included:

- The risk of negative impacts on workers' livelihoods.
- Challenges in attracting and retaining workers at low or stagnant wage levels.
- The possibility of a windfall in vendor profit margins, given that current contract pricing already incorporates the living wage.

Vote: After extended discussion, the motion failed with 7 votes against and 5 votes in favor. (5 - YES and 7 - NO)

2. Small Business Program Improvements

Recommendation: Adopt contract-level SBE (Small Business Enterprise) requirements instead of firm-level commitments for A&E task-based contracts.

Discussion: The Taskforce considered shifting from firm-level SBE commitments to contract-level requirements for A&E task-based contracts. Members explained that in task-order contracts, the specific scopes of work are often unknown at the time of award, making it difficult for firms to guarantee percentages at the firm level. Moving to contract-level requirements would give more flexibility, allowing compliance to be measured across the life of the contract rather than tied to one firm's initial commitment. During discussion, members raised concerns that if certain tasks did not align with SBE-eligible work, compliance could still be difficult. However, overall, the group agreed that contract-level requirements would be an improvement over the current approach and would reduce unnecessary non-compliance findings.

Vote: Miguel De Grandy moved, and Erin Hendrix seconded, to adopt contract-level SBE requirements for A&E task-based contracts. The recommendation was approved, with a note that there was one abstention but no opposition. (11 – 1)

Recommendation: Establish standard SBE percentages for architecture and engineering procurements (10%-15%) rather than evaluating each one individually. Allow deviation from standard SBE % with a waiver with justification, SPD approval of variance.

Discussion: The Taskforce discussed setting consistent SBE participation percentages for architecture and engineering procurements rather than determining them individually. They decided on:

10% SBE percentage for task-based contracts and miscellaneous professional services contracts

15% SBE percentage for scope-specific contracts

The recommendation was to apply these standard percentages instead of evaluating each procurement individually. Flexibility would be provided through a waiver process, requiring justification and SPD approval of any variance

Vote: Approved unanimously (12–0).

Phase III: Evaluation – Carryover

Selection Committees – Rita Silva

On Topic 5, Neutrality Affidavit, staff provided a presentation on the current split process: under \$5M contracts require each member to sign a neutrality affidavit, while over \$5M contracts add resumes, OCA background checks, and COE opinions, which has led to delays, invasive public disclosure of personal information, and little demonstrated value since most COE opinions come back with no issues. Staff explained this process originated from a single incident and recommended returning to a simplified neutrality affidavit where members simply attest to compliance and neutrality. They further suggested eliminating OCA background checks and resume collection and requiring a minimum of two years of County service for committee members to reduce conflicts and ensure familiarity with County processes.

On the topic of OIG/COE reports provided to committees, staff explained that the current process requires Procurement to collect seven years of reports for both primes and subs, wait about a week, and then forward them to committees, even though members often struggle to interpret the findings and many of the items are closed or immaterial. To streamline the process, staff recommended eliminating the mandatory reporting to committees and instead pulling targeted reports only as part of Procurement's responsibility review, typically post-evaluation or pre-award, and primarily focused on the prime contractor, with the option of applying a dollar threshold to determine when reports are necessary. Member feedback was mixed: some supported full elimination to save time, while others preferred retaining IG checks for serious issues to avoid

surprises and political fallout later. Additional ideas included tying the checks to annual or biannual A&E certifications or conducting them only as needed with faster turnaround times.

Responsiveness Opinions - Julie Whiteside

Julie Whiteside provided an overview of how responsiveness opinions are currently handled. She explained that when potential irregularities are identified in a bid or proposal, staff request a formal legal opinion from the County Attorney's Office. These formal opinions involve a written memo, multiple levels of review, and can take up to 30 days, which often delays procurements. For smaller or less significant issues, staff sometimes obtain informal opinions by email, but these are not used consistently. To streamline the process, staff suggested allowing more "informal" email opinions for minor, non-protest issues to save time. The County Attorney's Office cautioned that consistency and internal review are still needed, and confirmed that even informal opinions are vetted, with a database of prior opinions already in place. Members offered several suggestions, including clearly identifying "material" requirements in solicitations to reduce protests and make pass/fail decisions easier, developing boilerplate guidance for recurring issues such as confidential markings and pricing formats, and considering a short notice-and-cure window to allow correction of minor irregularities on larger contracts. They also recommended looking at Broward County's model, which front-loads responsiveness and responsibility checks so that committees only review eligible firms.

Phase IV: Recommendation to Award – Carryover

Vendor Registration – Tiffany Taylor

Tiffany Taylor reviewed the County's vendor registration process, highlighting that vendors are currently required to complete 13 separate affidavits as part of registration. She noted that over time, new affidavits have been added, creating administrative burdens and delays, as vendors must update forms before being considered fully registered. Staff suggested consolidating these into a more streamlined process, recommending that vendors sign a single, comprehensive attestation up front rather than multiple affidavits, while still ensuring compliance with state and County laws.

Vendor Compliance - Due Diligence – Jocelyn Fulton

Jocelyn Fulton presented on the vendor compliance and due diligence process, which involves a 28-item checklist that staff must complete each time a contract is awarded, extended, or renewed. She explained that 24 of these items are required by legislation (15 by County code/AOs and 9 by state or federal law), while 4 items were added historically in response to prior concerns raised by elected officials. Fulton acknowledged the process is burdensome and time-consuming, sometimes requiring staff to chase vendors for cures. She recommended improvements such as: eliminating duplicate checks (e.g., DOJ and antitrust overlap), moving

affidavits to the front end, and exploring an automated vendor risk management system to continuously monitor vendors throughout the life of a contract.

After Jocelyn's presentation, Chairwoman Mendez reminded members about upcoming scheduling. The group confirmed the next meeting for Tuesday, September 23, 2025. They also adjusted the October meeting date from Thursday, October 9 (conflict with the BCC meeting) to Tuesday, October 7, 2025.

With that, the Chairwoman closed the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 1:29pm.