

**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 23, 2025 - Time: 10:00 a.m.****Meeting Minutes**

Start: 10:08 am

Stop: 1: 23 p.m.

Appointed: 15

Quorum: 8

<b><u>Members Present (9)</u></b>	<b><u>Members Absent (2) Zoom (4)</u></b>
Aldo Leiva	Albert "Al" Dotson, Jr. ( <b>Zoom</b> )
Chairwoman Diana Mendez	Maira Suarez ( <b>Zoom</b> )
Erin Hendrix	Miguel De Grandy ( <b>Zoom</b> )
Jina Marie Braynon	Willy Bermello ( <b>Zoom</b> )
John Elizabeth Aleman	Carolina Vester ( <b>ABSENT</b> )
Josenrique Cueto	Rey T. Melendi ( <b>ABSENT</b> )
Kenneth Naylor	
Rudy Ortiz	
Victor Herrera	

**Roll Call**

Michou Jean (SPD) called the meeting to order at 10:08 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 23, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

The Taskforce reviewed the minutes from the August 5, 2025, meeting. A correction was noted: the September 2 minutes recorded the vote as "11-1 with no opposition," but members thought it should read "11-0 with 1 abstention." The minutes were approved as amended. (Approved 9-0)

**Solid Waste Contracts**

It was clarified that STRIP will not review solid waste contracts, as they are already being addressed through separate processes outside the Task Force's scope. Michou reached out to the Chair's Office and they confirmed that these contracts are being managed separately, so no further review or action is required by STRIP.

## Discussion on Department Contract Managers Questions

Taskforce Member Victor presented a draft survey for department contract managers to gather direct input on the current procurement processes and identify inefficiencies or areas for improvement.

While reviewing the questions the members suggested the following revisions to avoid being “leading” and to ensure managers could answer objectively:

*In what ways does current departmental procurement authority slow down your projects, and where would expand authority make the most impact?*

Members also recommended adding an open-ended question to give managers the opportunity to share broader suggestions or concerns. Concerns were raised about whether contract managers would feel comfortable answering candidly, leading to a consensus that responses should be anonymous. It was recommended that the Communications Department circulate the survey.

## Taskforce Recommendations

### *Discussion on Preliminary and Upcoming Recommendations*

Chairwoman Diana Mendez provided a memorandum summarizing the outcomes of the preliminary recommendations voted on by the Task Force during its September 5, 2025 meeting, as well as those scheduled for a vote on September 23, 2025. The memorandum served as a guide to review both approved recommendations and those still under consideration.

### *Procurement Organization: Delegation of Authority*

John Aleman moved to approve two of the four recommendations under this category:

1. Establish a formal process for the Board to designate certain goods and services as standardized, allowing non-competitive repeat purchases if budgeted (e.g., re-licensing of existing software) without requiring further Board action. *Approved (Vote: 9–0)*
2. Raise the Miscellaneous Construction Contracts (MCC) cap from \$5M to \$20M to account for inflation and expedite larger public works projects. *Deferred*
3. Expand the Mayor’s authority to award contracts up to \$5M without Board action. *Deferred* — to be revisited at the next meeting pending additional research and data.

Chairwoman Mendez noted that the Mayor’s current authority cap is already \$5M. The Task Force discussed the possibility of increasing this cap further to align with the proposed MCC increase. Items 2 and 3, along with other Delegation of Authority recommendations, were deferred pending staff research on thresholds used by other jurisdictions.

Task Force Member Victor Herrera, with consensus from the group, requested staff to provide a 2024 impact analysis showing how many items (and their dollar values) would shift under the proposed authority expansion compared to raising the Mayor’s threshold. The group also discussed incorporating inflation-adjusted thresholds into future recommendations.

### **Additional Delegation Proposals**

Task Force Member Maira Suarez presented a recommendation to grant major operational departments, including Port Miami, MDAD, WASD, and DTPW, the authority to conduct procurements up to \$30–\$50 million. Her proposal also included limited delegation for department directors to execute contracts directly, provided all awards remain subject to Board ratification. After discussion, Maira clarified her focus was on award authority, not conducting the procurement.

There was consensus on the need to establish clear written guidelines for delegation of authority across departments. Chairwoman Mendez also recommended exploring the creation of a Chief Procurement Officer (CPO) role with enhanced authority to provide centralized oversight.

### **Small Value Contracts**

Task Force Member Rudy Ortiz proposed authorizing the immediate advertising of solicitations once SBE eligibility verification is completed for contracts under \$250,000. However, it was noted that the County has few contracts under this threshold, and departments already manage small contracts efficiently through existing pools.

### **Staff Presentations**

#### **Phase IV: Recommendation to Award: Negotiations – Christopher Grant-Henriques**

The Task Force reviewed the current negotiation process, which involves multiple steps, including negotiation strategy meetings and legal sufficiency reviews by the County Attorney's Office. Several challenges were identified, particularly around complex scope definitions and evolving contract terms. A key issue is the frequent lack of clarity or completeness in initial scopes of work, which often leads negotiations to focus heavily on refining scope details. This can result in delays or, in some cases, contract terminations.

Legal and contractual complexities also pose challenges. Standard boilerplate terms are often perceived as one-sided, making it difficult to negotiate more balanced language. Additionally, the limited flexibility in standard agreements can hinder effective negotiations.

To address these issues, the Task Force recommended several next steps. First, the creation of an Architecture & Engineering (A&E) subcommittee was proposed to review the draft Professional Services Agreement (PSA) template and provide feedback on standard contract terms. Enhancing industry engagement was also emphasized, including making draft Requests for Qualifications (RFQs) available online earlier, allowing for more industry input prior to finalizing Requests for Proposals (RFPs), and conducting more interactive "Industry Days."

Efforts to standardize processes were discussed, such as developing standardized agreement templates, involving the County Attorney earlier in the negotiation process, and establishing clearer guidelines for negotiation parameters.

### **Board Memos – Jocelyn Fulton**

Jocelyn Fulton walked the group through the current process for preparing Board memos, noting that much of the information is repeated in the summary, recommendation, and background sections, which makes the process lengthy and resource heavy. She outlined the many layers of review each memo goes through from the procurement officer drafting it, to SPD managers, directors, OMB, department directors, chiefs, the Mayor's Office, and finally the County Attorney before it reaches the agenda. Members acknowledged that while this ensures accuracy, it creates delays and adds significant workload, especially given the high volume of memos each year.

Discussion centered on ways to streamline the process, such as creating a one-page standard form that captures only the most essential details, using AI tools to draft and summarize memos, and moving some requirements out of the Code into policy so they can be updated more easily. Representatives from some of the District Offices observing the meeting indicated that memos are valuable for transparency and ease of review and help reduce items being pulled at Board meetings. However, they supported exploring reforms to make them more concise and efficient.

Staff was asked to prepare a 2024 impact analysis showing how many items and dollar values would shift if thresholds were raised (e.g., \$20M or \$30M delegated authority). This ties directly to how many memos could be reduced or streamlined.

AI adoption came up members recommended the county explore using a secure, behind-firewall AI tool to help draft and summarize memos. This was flagged as a potential formal recommendation. There was also a request to review which memo requirements are codified in ordinance versus policy, with the idea of moving some items out of Code so they could be updated more easily as Board priorities change.

### **Phase IV: Recommendation to Award and Phase V: Contract Performance**

#### **Objections to scoring and Bid Protest Process - Natalya Vasilyeva**

Natalya Vasilyeva presented on the county's current protest framework, explaining the difference between informal protests (\$25K–\$250K) and formal protests (above \$250K), both of which allow vendors to challenge awards. Members discussed the costs to the County of defending protests, as well as the delays and service impacts that result when awards are tied up in protest.

Several areas for improvement were identified: creating an online protest portal to allow filing, payment, and real-time tracking with hard cutoffs for deadlines; defaulting to virtual hearings to speed up scheduling; and raising thresholds so that only larger procurements go through the full formal protest process. Members also suggested adding a motion-to-dismiss step and a mandatory settlement conference similar to the process provided in state bid protests to resolve



weak cases without having to have a full hearing. The Chair confirmed that these points would be incorporated into the Task Force's proposed recommendations for discussion and approval.

### **Adjournment**

After the final presentation and discussion, the Chairwoman closed the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 1:23pm.