

# Pinellas Police Standards Council

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## **Final Report of the Council Retreat August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2003 Allstate Center**

### **Principal Participants**

Chief Lester Aradi  
Chief Earnest Armistead  
Associate Provost James Brock  
Director James Dates  
Chief James Ernst  
Chief Tom Gavin  
Chief George Harmansky  
Chief Chuck Harmon  
Chief Sid Klein

Chief Mark LeCouris  
State Attorney Bernie McCabe  
Chief Joe Pelkington  
Sheriff Everett Rice  
Chief David Romine  
Chief Dorene Thomas  
Director Robert Siwik  
Interim Chief Robert Vincent  
Director Tom Lange (Facilitator)

### **Introduction**

The Pinellas Police Standards Council met all day on August 12, 2003 to address several issues, some raised by the current Pinellas Assembly process and others from the regular work of the council. Several principals brought key staff members to assist the council during the retreat. Three representatives from county government were present to address technology questions. In all, approximately forty persons participated in the retreat. St. Petersburg College provided the location at no charge. Council staff members provided facilitation. The council provided food to allow work without interruption. Total expenditures were \$650 for the full day.

The issues addressed during the retreat appear on the following pages. The agenda for the retreat was established by means of a survey and some preliminary discussions. The header language for each issue in this report is the same used in that survey and the resulting agenda. Each is followed by the conclusions reached during the retreat. A draft of this report was circulated to all participants to allow for correction or clarification prior to publication.

**Retreat Conclusions**

1	Consolidation of all law enforcement services	This initiative would consolidate all law enforcement services under the Sheriff.
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**Position:** No position was taken on this issue.

**Comment:** Sheriff Rice stated his firm belief that full consolidation of law enforcement services would both save money and promote public safety. There was, however, no consensus that full consolidation was inevitable or desirable. Any historical trend toward full consolidation seems to be currently balanced by a more recent trend toward annexations by municipalities. There was general agreement that any movement to full consolidation, or the exhaustion of prospective annexations, would likely take many years. The future decision of any municipal government to contract with the sheriff for full law enforcement services was recognized as a local issue that would be based on circumstances unique to that community. Discussion recognized that partial consolidation of some functions or services, as proposed under subsequent issues in this report, might have the effect of postponing full consolidation if any interim savings reduced the financial incentive to fully consolidate. Partial consolidation of some functions or services also has a countervailing potential to ease the way toward full consolidation, as the differences between agencies in methods, training, equipment, information systems, data standards, etc. decline over time. The resolution of these opposing dynamics cannot be accurately predicted at this time.

2	Contract Issues	Should the Sheriff implement a standardized budget and contract format for law enforcement services provided to municipalities?
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**Position:** The council supports law enforcement services contract formats and accounting formulas that make it easier for the public to clearly identify costs and benefits.

**Comment:** Sheriff Rice informed the council on the work of the " MUNICIPAL SERVICE TAXING UNIT (MSTU) ALOCATION FORMULA AND RELATED STUDY" report completed by the Government Services Group, Inc. and dated May 2003. He stated that changes recommended by the study are being implemented. Recent law enforcement services contracts between the Sheriff and municipalities reflect these changes with increased costs.

3	Technology Issues	<p>This initiative would establish a Law Enforcement Technology Committee to develop a strategic plan for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* A Countywide Law Enforcement Records Depository</li> <li>* Mobile data connectivity</li> <li>* Electronic traffic tickets</li> <li>* Centralized records management</li> <li>* Pawn ticket data</li> <li>* Other information collection</li> <li>* Upgrading countywide radio system emergency capabilities</li> </ul>
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**Position:** The council will use two existing work groups to address these issues. The common mission will be to foster partnerships between municipal and county agencies that establish common standards and interoperability of equipment, software and data to improve interagency communication, reduce crime, enhance emergency personnel safety, and provide higher levels of service to the community at lower cost.

**Comment:** The county and cities already collaborate on development and use of some common technology. The countywide Motorola voice radio system and the Enforcer database are examples of such collaboration, and each already has a standing advisory group to provide some measure of oversight. The council will meet with these two groups, probably on September 10, 2003, and charge them to develop strategic plans to expand the level of service provided in certain areas. The council anticipates regular progress reports and opportunities to provide feedback. The two groups and their proposed responsibilities are:

**“Radio Users Group”** This group consists of representatives from all agencies using the countywide Motorola voice radio system that care to participate in meetings. Pam Montanari, Pinellas County Radio Systems Manager, chairs the Users Group meetings. The present meeting schedule is quarterly. Dick Williams, Director of Pinellas County Emergency Communications, was present to discuss technology issues with the council. He agreed to work with the council to introduce the following issues to the Radio Users Group, for the purpose of developing plans:

- Mobile Data Connectivity
- Upgrading countywide radio system emergency capabilities (See Issue 4)

Mr. Williams distributed a copy of a memorandum dated July 7, 2003 on the subject of “Pinellas County Interoperable First Responder Data Communications System” that particularly addresses mobile data connectivity. It outlines the county’s present intention to offer mobile data connections to local law enforcement agencies in three phases, starting in October of this year.

Mr. Williams advised that the Emergency Communications Department is considering purchase of law enforcement Computer Aided Dispatching (CAD) and Records Management System (RMS) software from a company named GEAC, for proliferation to the law enforcement agencies of Pinellas County. He indicated that he would dedicate his computer programmers to adapt the various modules to meet department needs. The ultimate capability will provide uniformity and the full integration of systems to include sharing data and direct transfer of 9-1-1 data for each incoming call. He envisions the establishment of a CAD users group to manage the CAD. To help determine specific costs and other details, Mr. Williams requests all agencies interested in participating in this system advise his office (464-3835) as soon as possible.

Mr. Williams agreed with the analogy describing the present voice radio communications system as being similar to a telephone company, where the company provides the technology but the customers decide what use to make of it in conducting their own business. There was general agreement that this was the kind of model most likely to be useful for a mobile data system - one where individual agencies can conduct their own dispatching and information exchanges over a common system with shared capabilities.

Note: Please see Attachment “A” for a draft proposal expanding the mission of the Radio Users Group.

**“Enforcer Steering Group”** This group has representatives from local agencies participating in the Enforcer database. (It was noted that the group might need a name change if its subject matter is expanded.) Tim Burns, Pinellas County Office of Criminal Justice Coordination, operates the meetings and was present to discuss these issues with the council. He agreed to work with the council to introduce the following issues to this group for the purpose of developing plans for:

- Electronic traffic tickets
- Pawn ticket data
- Other information collection
- Centralized Traffic Records (See Issue 10)
- Countywide Telephone Notification System (See Issue 17)

Mr. Burns also gave the council a brief update on work already underway on pawnshop tickets, web-based data access over CJ-NET, an upcoming opportunity in geo-profiling and other initiatives. The discussion noted the importance of moving toward common data standards, such a data field labels, report numbering, crime codes, etc. to allow for more effective exchanges of information between individual systems or eventual centralization of records management.

Note: Please see Attachment “B” for a draft proposal expanding the mission of the Enforcer Steering Group.

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4	Communications: Emergency frequency.	Establishing an emergency channel to be monitored countywide, so officers could call for assistance from surrounding agencies without waiting for relays through dispatchers.
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**Position:** The council supports improvements to the programming, utilization protocols and user training of the countywide radio system, which make it easier for officers from different agencies to communicate during emergencies.

**Comment:** This issue arises in cases where an officer observes an in-progress crime in another jurisdiction or becomes involved in a fast breaking event, such as a pursuit into another jurisdiction, and needs to summon help. There is currently no common “hailing frequency” over which such a call may be made with any assurance that it will be heard. Dick Williams of Pinellas County Emergency Communications explained how some common radio frequencies are already programmed into all law enforcement radios. Officers from different agencies currently use them to conduct inter-agency communications, meeting on these frequencies by prior arrangement or by relaying requests through their dispatchers. Traffic on these channels is recorded, but not continuously monitored by a dispatcher. He will raise this issue at the “Radio Users Group”, which has representatives from all agencies that wish to participate, to see if they can identify ways to improve emergency communications.

5	County Support Services: Forensics	The Sheriff currently provides forensic services, particularly crime scene processing, to some agencies by contract. This initiative would have the county fund the Sheriff to provide forensic services countywide.
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**Position:** The council looks forward to a proposal from Sheriff Rice that would provide countywide services for crime scene processing, property and evidence handling and fingerprinting (comparison), to be funded by a special tax district.

**Comment:** The Sheriff agreed to prepare a proposal to provide these services on a countywide basis. The Sheriff currently provides such services to some cities by contract and major case assistance to others as mutual aid. A majority of the council agrees that these services, particularly the highly technical evidence processing functions, are good candidates for consolidation at the county level. Such services could possibly be funded by advalorem tax or by creation of a special taxing district, possible labeled a “Law Enforcement Ancillary Services Tax District.” In either case, success of such a proposal would require active support from council members and the taxing mechanism should include a provision allowing individual municipalities to opt out of participation.

**Note:** This issue now encompasses the next two issues (6&7).

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6	County Support Services: Evidence Storage	Individual agencies currently handle most of their own property and evidence storage and disposal operations. This initiative would have the county fund the Sheriff to provide these services countywide.
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**Position:** The council supports this initiative. Please see Issue # 5 for details.

7	County Support Services: Fingerprint Services	This initiative would have the county fund the Sheriff to provide fingerprint services countywide.
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**Position:** The council supports this initiative. Please see Issue # 5 for details.

8	Police Authority	This initiative would expand or replace the voluntary mutual aid agreement to allow the officers of participating agencies to exercise police authority across municipal boundaries and within unincorporated areas such as enclaves.
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**Position:** The council looks forward to a draft proposal to be prepared by the Sheriff, which will expand mutual aid to include traffic enforcement and crash investigations on streets contiguous to the jurisdiction of a participating agency.

**Comment:** Council members already participate in a countywide mutual aid agreement that provides for officers from one agency to exercise some law enforcement authority in the jurisdiction of another participating agency under certain limited conditions. Three of the member agencies now have a separate agreement additionally allowing for the investigation of crashes and the enforcement of traffic laws on the streets of participating jurisdictions, so long as the street in question is contiguous to the jurisdiction of the agency taking such action. The intent of this agreement is to allow officers to take necessary enforcement actions to increase public safety, and to avoid the understandable dissatisfaction of citizens who witness an officer failing to act in the presence of a violation. Sheriff Rice has agreed to draft a reciprocal mutual aid agreement providing for this limited addition of traffic enforcement on contiguous streets, including an understanding for how resulting fines are apportioned, and including a provision for dividing any forfeiture proceeds that might stem from such enforcement. This may be in the form of a new separate mutual aid agreement addressing only the issues of traffic enforcement, or may be a replacement of the existing voluntary mutual aid agreement, amended to include this traffic enforcement. The first draft will be shared with Chiefs Aradi and Klein, so there will be an opportunity to incorporate their suggestions prior to presentation of the proposed agreement to the full council.

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9	Participatory Management of Consolidated Services	This initiative would create a standing task force to determine what services law enforcement agencies could consolidate.
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**Position:** The council believes the “Radio Users Group” and the “Enforcer Steering Committee” can fulfill these responsibilities.

**Comment:** As noted in Issue 3, these groups will be tasked to address consolidation and coordination issues related to communications, records and other technical services.

10	Centralized Traffic Records	Individual agencies currently maintain and disseminate crash reports and citation records. A centralized function, perhaps by the County Clerk, could do this more efficiently.
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**Position:** It is unlikely that the council could prevail upon the clerk to provide such a service. The council prefers to seek another solution and will consider this issue along with other technology possibilities in Issue 2.

11	Centralized Sexual Offender Notifications	Individual agencies currently receive information, track and disseminate notifications on sexual offenders/predators. A centralized function, perhaps by contract with the Sheriff, could do this more efficiently.
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**Position:** The council supports consolidation of this function countywide.

**Comment:** The Pinellas County Sheriff’s Office anticipates a grant to improve handling of these notifications. They will use this grant to develop a countywide system. If continuing costs of the service become a burden, the service may be considered for inclusion in the “Ancillary Services” tax discussed in Issue 5. It was noted that statutes create specific obligations for such notifications. Any proposal resulting from this grant would have to recognize those obligations, and perhaps include a formal agreement specifying how the obligations would be discharged to conform with law.

Note: PCSO is additionally intending to implement a new database (SPOT) to share specific information such as offender descriptions, vehicles and images via the Enforcer system.

12	School Crossing Guards	The School Board currently determines the number and location of school crossing guards that must be provided by individual law enforcement agencies. Parking tickets revenues partially reimburse the cost. This initiative would consolidate the function and make the School Board responsible for manning it.
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**Position:** The council objects to the un-funded mandate resulting from the present school crossing guard system.

**Comment:** While the council recognizes the close association between school crossings and the duties of local agencies in traffic enforcement, the present system creates significant staffing obligations for which no funding is identified or provided. There is an existing consultation mechanism between the Pinellas County School Board and the individual agencies, concerning the number and locations of school crossings, but there is no funding linked to the scope of the required service, and agencies have no real opportunity decline the obligation to staff the resulting number of school crossings. The only specific support for these obligations comes from a fee assessed on parking tickets that is inadequate to support the required service. The resulting burden on law enforcement agencies has been greatly magnified by the School Board adoption of a school choice program that resulted in the need for many new crossing locations.

13	Prisoner Transport System	This initiative would create a regular service by the Sheriff, collecting prisoners from temporary holding facilities and transporting them to the county jail.
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**Position:** The council supports the creation of a countywide prisoner transport system and urges the Pinellas Assembly to adopt this initiative.

**Comment:** Sheriff Rice agrees that such a service can be seen as an extension of the county jail services already provided by his department. The additional cost, approximately \$700,000 to \$800,000, would have to be included in the Sheriff's budget. The support of council members would likely be required to help the Pinellas County Commission gain confidence in any proposal to increase the county advalorum tax for this service. It was noted that individual agencies would likely be asked to calculate some corresponding savings for their city budgets.

14	Governance of Consolidated Services	This initiative would create a "Board of Directors" with authority to make policy, implementation and funding decisions for services which are consolidated.
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**Position:** The members recommend that the Pinellas Police Standards Council undertake any such responsibility for oversight of consolidated services.

**Comment:** The council already includes the executives of all the law enforcement agencies in the county and meets on a regular basis to deliberate issues of policy and interagency coordination. Discussion recognized that the council’s charter might need amending to recognize additional regular members, such as representatives from Pinellas County government, or to countenance some new specific responsibility to be discharged by the council.

15	Expanded Air Support	The Sheriff currently operates the only regular air unit. Should it be expanded to provide quicker response times?
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**Position:** The council is very appreciative of the service provided by the Sheriff and supports improving it.

**Comment:** While there does not appear to be any evidence that the present service level is inadequate, any improvements in response time or availability would be welcome. The council recognizes the large expenses associated with this type of service and have confidence in the Sheriff to recognize when improvements may be justified.

16	Centralized Blood & Urine Testing	Individual agencies collect and transport blood and urine samples for testing by the Medical Examiner, and maintain separate arrangements for pre-employment testing. Should all forms of collection, transportation and testing be centralized?
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**Position:** The council takes no position on this issue.

**Comment:** Council members are presently studying a new test fee schedule proposed by the Medical Examiner for testing done in criminal investigations. There does not appear to be enough savings potential to justify the organization of a countywide system for pre-employment testing.

17	Countywide Telephone Notification System	Some agencies have existing autodialer systems to broadcast alerts or notifications to the public in specific geographical areas. This initiative would consolidate the function countywide, perhaps with the Sheriff.
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**Position:** The council looks forward to a recommendation from the “Enforcer Steering Committee”, which may centralize this function to take better advantage of technical advances.

**Comment:** It was noted that the hardware and software used for this function continue to improve rapidly, resulting in the obsolescence of smaller individual systems. Tim Burns of Pinellas County Criminal Justice Coordination has obtained a grant to improve notifications systems. His group will report back to the council. Chief Harmon of St. Petersburg described an interim solution available from a web-based company that has been very cost effective for his department. He will circulate information on this company.

Note: St. Petersburg Police Department subsequently provided details on the Wide-Area Rapid Notification (WARN) system. This information was sent to all council members.

18	Specialized unit: Marine Patrol	Can this function be improved by concentrating it in a single agency as is done with Air Support?
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**Position:** The council is very appreciative of the service provided by the Sheriff and supports improving it.

**Comment:** Some member agencies have no body of water that needs marine patrol. Others have needs that are fully met by the Sheriff, who receives support from a tax on boat registrations and the use of some facilities provided by cities. Others have additional needs or local expectations that require them to maintain their own marine patrol to augment the service provided by the Sheriff. There was no consensus to depart from the current arrangements.

19	School programs (DARE etc.)	Individual agencies currently provide school programs such as DARE and Officer Friendly. This initiative would transfer responsibility for these programs to the school board to provide consistency.
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**Position:** The council has no joint position on this issue. Individual agencies must determine their own level of participation in programs such as DARE and Officer Friendly.

**Comment:** DARE, Officer Friendly and similar education or prevention programs were initiated by law enforcement agencies, not by the School Board, which merely provides officers access to classrooms for delivery of the programs. It is unlikely that the School Board would adopt these programs under any other arrangement, due to their lower relevance to the basic education mission. Individual agencies need to determine whether these programs have enough prevention or community-relations value to justify their costs.

20	School Resource Officers	The school board currently reimburses agencies that provide School Resource Officers by contract. This initiative would make Sores direct employees of the School Board (Pinellas County Schools Police).
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**Position:** The council supports full reimbursement of the costs by the School Board to the law enforcement agencies that provide School Resource Officers.

**Comment:** School Resource Officer (SRO) programs in this county were largely an initiative by local law enforcement agencies, accepted in the beginning by somewhat skeptical educators. This has changed over time, as the enthusiasm of educators has grown and the other burdens placed on law enforcement agencies have increased. Both parties recognize the mutual benefit derived from the programs, particularly as security concerns associated with schools have received significant new interest. Everyone is also aware that the public would likely view any discontinuation in a negative way. While the original SRO reimbursement agreements were intended to provide for a more or less even sharing of the costs, subsequent renewals have not kept pace with increased labor costs absorbed by the law enforcement agencies in recent years. Both parties are simultaneously under considerable budget pressures. As the Pinellas County School Board is one of the few school authorities in Florida with its own police department, the Pinellas County Schools Police, the board could provide its own police officers as needed. The current SRO contracts are expiring this year. Negotiations are underway.

21	Missing Persons Investigations	Establish a countywide policy for which agency should conduct and report missing persons investigations, particularly for juveniles who are last seen in a jurisdiction other than the one in which they reside.
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**Position:** The council anticipates a draft policy being created by an existing committee. Chief Thomas was appointed to chair this committee, as the former chairman has been unable to serve due to temporary responsibilities as an Interim City Manager.

**Comment:** This issue arises from cases where the person who is missing resides in one jurisdiction, but was apparently last seen in another jurisdiction. An example would be a minor who resides in one city, but was last known to be visiting the mall in another city. Any indication of a crime at the location where a person was last seen requires a criminal investigation to begin in that jurisdiction. When such preliminary investigation fails to develop any indication of a crime having occurred, and the facts strongly suggest that the disappearance was voluntary, the follow-up missing person investigations may best be handled in the jurisdiction where the missing person resides and has the most ties. Any policy would define how such decisions would be made, and would specify the procedure for a reliable and graceful hand-off between the agencies.

22	Officer Employment Contracts	"Should you hire officers from other agencies who are under contract?"
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**Position:** The council continues to recommend that law enforcement agencies not hire applicants who are under a current obligation to repay training costs to another agency.

**Comment:** Many agencies require officer applicants to execute a contract that obliges applicants to repay certain training costs if they leave employment prior to a specific period of service. Council members have honored these contracts by not hiring applicants until they have discharged their responsibilities under such a contract. It was noted that changes to FS 943.16 during the last legislative session, specifying repayment obligations for training costs, might allow agencies to rely on statute and remove the need for such individual written contracts.

Note: A copy of SB 2002, which made these changes to FS 943.16, was subsequently sent to council members.

End Of Retreat Conclusions

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Issued: August 22, 2003

Attachment “A”  
To Report of the Council Retreat on August 12, 2003

Proposal to expand the Radio Users Group mission. (Draft submitted by Pam Montanari,  
Pinellas County Radio System Manager.)

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT RADIO AND DATA USERS GROUP**

### **Mission**

Address operational and technical issues on current and future Radio and Data Systems to facilitate communications interoperability between agencies.

### **Responsibilities**

- Identify public safety communications requirements
- Develop and prioritize future communications requirements
- Research potential communications solutions
- Recommend communications solutions
- Act as proponent for communications systems implementation
- Provide updates on current system modifications
- Promote user interaction
- Resolve system operational issues
- Provide feedback to Police Standards Council
- Coordinate efforts with Law Enforcement Information Sharing and Analysis Group

#### Meetings and Participation

- Held on a Quarterly basis or as determined by group
- Technical and operational representation from all law enforcement agencies is encouraged.

Attachment “B”

Report of the Council Retreat on August 12, 2003

Proposal to rename the “Enforcer Steering Group” and expand its mission. (Draft submitted by Tim Burns, Pinellas County Office of Justice Analyst.)

## Law Enforcement Information Sharing and Analysis Group

### **Mission**

Explore the various issues, directions, and impacts associated with information sharing and analysis in Pinellas County, and provide assessments and recommendations for consideration by local law enforcement agencies.

### **Responsibilities**

- Identify and prioritize information sharing and analysis issues within Pinellas County.
- Survey Pinellas County Law Enforcement Agencies to determine the current status of existing information systems and technology.
- Identify and explore various alternatives that exist to enhance local information sharing and analysis within Pinellas County. This includes exploring data, hardware, and software standards, types of data that could be shared, methods for information sharing, security, analysis methods, funding possibilities, and other issues as identified by the information sharing and analysis committee or as advised by the technology steering committee.
- Provide assessments of identified alternatives and determine impacts where appropriate and possible.
- Provide alternatives and recommendations to technology steering committee for consideration.
- Work closely with the Law Enforcement Radio and Data Users Group to coordinate complimentary information sharing solutions for local law enforcement agencies.

### **Meetings and Participation**

- Held on a quarterly basis for ongoing operational need. In short term meetings will be set on a more frequent basis in order to address immediate needs expressed by participating agencies and the Pinellas Assembly process.
- Technical and policy representation from all local law enforcement agencies is encouraged and needed to effectively review issues.