

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY  
CHARTER REVIEW BOARD  
AGENDA FOR JANUARY 30<sup>TH</sup> 2006, 6:00 P.M.  
COUNTY CENTER, 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR BOARDROOM

**PARKING CODE FOR JANUARY 30, 2006, MEETING: [REDACTED] #**

- I. Welcome
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Approval January 9<sup>th</sup> Minutes
- IV. Public Comment (3 minutes each, total 30 minutes)
- V. Staff Update
  1. Financial Report January 30<sup>th</sup>
- VI. Correspondence
  1. Letter from Pat Frank, Clerk of Circuit Court
- VII. County Attorney Update
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
  1. Draft Executive Summary
- X. Public Comment
- XI. Adjournment

Next Meetings: Unscheduled

Attachments: Minutes January 9th, Financial Report January 30<sup>th</sup>, Letter from Pat Frank, Clerk of Circuit Court, Tampa Tribune replacement Advertisement for CRB meeting dates

JANUARY 9, 2006 - CHARTER REVIEW BOARD - DRAFT MINUTES

The Charter Review Board (CRB), Hillsborough County, Florida, met in Regular Meeting, scheduled for Monday, January 9, 2006, at 6:00 p.m., in the Boardroom, Frederick B. Karl County Center, Tampa, Florida.

The following members were present:

Mitch Thrower, Vice Chairman	A. J. (Marc) Mandt
Terry Ballard	Sharon Miller
Ralph Fisher	Yvette Miranda-Chapman
Keith Hall	Jim Porter
Bethany Leytham	Gerald White
Hung Mai	

The following members were absent:

Jan Platt, Chairman (illness)	Janet Wilson
David Storck	

Vice Chairman Thrower called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m., led in the pledge of allegiance to the flag, and requested a moment of silent prayer.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 14, 2005, AND DECEMBER 12, 2005, MINUTES

Vice Chairman Thrower called for a motion to approve the November 14, 2005, minutes. **Mr. Ballard moved approval, seconded by Mr. Mandt, and carried eleven to zero.** Vice Chairman Thrower called for a motion to approve the December 12, 2005, minutes. **Mr. White moved approval, seconded by Ms. Miller, and carried eleven to zero.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Terrance Neal, 4703 East River Hills Drive, referenced previous concerns about records for all committees appointed by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) not being kept on file by the Clerk of the Circuit Court (Clerk). He noted inquiries regarding records for the Historical Advisory Council, stated there was a recent flood at the history center, was unsure if records were damaged, and perceived all committee records should be kept in the County Center and managed by the Clerk's Office.

Ms. Pat Frank, Clerk, reviewed duties of the Clerk's Office, funding concerns, and financial impacts. Mr. Ballard noted information could be stored on compact disks (CD) and perceived that if the BOCC appointed an advisory board, arrangements should be made on how the minutes should be kept. Ms. Miller agreed and referenced libraries being used as repositories. Vice Chairman Thrower noted record keeping was the duty of the Clerk and stated he had called the Florida Department of State, Division of Library and Information

MONDAY, JANUARY 9, 2006 - DRAFT MINUTES

Services, to discuss legal requirements for record retention. Mr. White referenced concerns regarding boards that had taxing authority and asked about arrangements related to advisory boards. Ms. Sue Parrish, Chief Deputy Clerk, Clerk's Office, was unsure if any advisory boards dealt with tax dollars and explained advisory boards made recommendations to the BOCC. Mr. White asked if there was a formal document discussing the arrangement between the Clerk's Office and the BOCC related to the scope of records that would be kept. Ms. Parrish noted requests in 1991 to reduce the Clerk's Office budget. As a result, a list was created of boards and councils for which the Clerk's Office would no longer do minutes, which was approved by the BOCC.

Mr. White had attempted to find information related to other counties and minutes, asked the County Attorney to respond to what a citizen could do if they perceived County property was not being properly documented, and questioned if the issue rose to the level of a charter amendment. Senior Assistant County Attorney Kenneth Tinkler was not aware of any other county that had a provision for minutes in the charter and noted questions were related to the storage of minutes. Vice Chairman Thrower stated County staff maintained minutes for the Citizens Advisory Committee, and he perceived the main issue was whether records were being kept. Mr. Porter understood concerns from Mr. Neal were that a private citizen was maintaining minutes for a County advisory board and asked if there were any other situations where someone other than County staff was maintaining minutes. Ms. Parrish was not aware of any. Mr. Porter was concerned with the Clerk's Office storing minutes they did not take, noting possible questions of veracity and accountability. Ms. Parrish shared that concern.

In response to Ms. Miller, Vice Chairman Thrower discussed the function of the Florida Department of State, Division of Library and Information Services, and noted he perceived the issue was whether advisory boards were keeping records properly. Referencing the charter language suggested by Mr. Neal, Mr. White questioned the need to include the language in the charter if State laws existed. Mr. Neal said State statutes required the Clerk to be the official record keeper for the County unless otherwise stipulated by a home rule charter. Mr. White asked if Mr. Neal had taken concerns to the BOCC. Mr. Neal reported he had addressed the BOCC during public comment, referenced comments from Ms. Parrish regarding the Clerk no longer taking minutes for certain meetings, and pointed out Ms. Parrish had not indicated a decision was made for the Clerk to stop storing those documents. In response to Mr. White, Ms. Frank noted the issue was not only one of maintaining the records but of the financial impact. She perceived direction from the BOCC would be helpful and had reservations about maintaining records of meetings for which the Clerk

MONDAY, JANUARY 23, 2006 - DRAFT MINUTES

did not take the minutes. Mr. P... opined it might be appropriate for the BOCC to review the 201 list.

Responding to Ms. Miller, Ms. ... supported electronic preservation records and discussed the importance of maintaining original records. Mr. Fisher contacted Ms. ... Frank and ... on the County records process. Mr. ... opened the CRB should ask the BOCC to review this again. Mr. ... so moved, seconded by Mr. ... Following clarification the motion passed ten to one; Mr. ... voted no.

Ms. Ann White, Tampa Resident, noted discrepancies with regard to ... were handled on behalf of the public, perceived more could have been done by the CRB, and pointed out discrepancies in minutes and coverage of meetings.

AGENDA UPDATE AND CORRECTIONS

Ms. Shelley Hood, CRB Director, noted financial reports and corrections contained in background material. In response to Mr. Fisher, explained ... expenses were ... every six months. Vice ... however mentioned a ... Tribuna CRB advertisement containing errors. Ms. Hood confirmed a corrected advertisement was run without Mr. White ... Mr. ... for recommending CRB advertisements ...

COUNTY ATTORNEY UPDATE

Attorney ... stated the Attorney General's opinion regarding the ... proposal on ... property taxation had been ... delayed ... to a new Attorney General being appointed, he hoped ... the opinion ... to the next CRB meeting.

OLD BUSINESS - None.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. White ... information and initiated discussion re ... proposal to change the ... process to mirror requirements Florida Constitution. ... reviewed differences, including a ... deadline for submitting proposed amendments and requirements for a ... impact statement and for the proposed amendment to be published in a ... of general regulation. Mr. Fisher perceived it was difficult to ... under the current language. At the request of Mr. White, ... explained the current amendment process and clarified ... related to signature requirements. Mr. White reviewed reasons for ...

MONDAY, JANUARY 9, 2006 - DRAFT MINUTES

the changes, perceiving there was an obligation to tighten the process. In response to Mr. Mandt, Attorney Tinkler clarified Section 8.03 regarding time frames for verification of signatures by the Supervisor of Elections. Attorney Tinkler responded to queries from Ms. Miller on how the State and County processes differed. Mr. White responded to queries from Ms. Miller regarding why he wanted to increase the percentage requirement to 10 percent. Responding to Mr. Hall, Mr. White noted the Hillsborough County Charter was older than the Pinellas County charter. Mr. Fisher pointed out information in background material showed nine counties required less than 8 percent to put an amendment on the ballot. Mr. Ballard wanted to keep the current charter language.

Mr. White hoped to at least adopt the February 1 deadline. Mr. Mai agreed changes were not needed. Mr. White moved to adopt the language in the Florida Constitution regarding the February 1 time frame, language related to the financial analysis of the amendment to be performed by the BOCC, and language requiring the petitioner to place the petition in a newspaper of general circulation. Ms. Miller seconded the motion for discussion. Responding to Ms. Miller, Attorney Tinkler noted the CRB could take action through the last CRB meeting and clarified the February 1 date was related to time frames for gathering signatures. In response to Mr. White, Attorney Tinkler reviewed the procedure for a CRB public hearing and noted additional CRB meetings would be needed. Following clarification, the motion failed one to ten; Vice Chairman Thrower and members Ballard, Fisher, Hall, Leytham, Mai, Mandt, Miller, Miranda-Chapman, and Porter voted no. Referencing comments regarding a financial impact statement, Vice Chairman Thrower noted that had been discussed previously. Mr. White stated the motion would have required the financial impact statement to be done by the BOCC, and he would write to request the BOCC review that section of the charter. Mr. Porter left the meeting at 7:12 p.m.

Ms. Blood distributed and reviewed an outline proposed for the CRB executive summary, noted Mr. Ballard had provided copies of past CRB executive summaries, and suggested information be placed on CD. Ms. Miller supported putting information on CD but asked to have hard copies available.

Mr. White submitted a letter and an editorial regarding eminent domain and newspaper articles regarding an elected County mayor.

Mr. White hoped Ms. Miller would act as a liaison on the executive summary. Ms. Miller highlighted the ability of staff and perceived a draft should be submitted for review. Ms. Blood confirmed a draft would be submitted prior to finalization. In response to Mr. White, Ms. Miller would appreciate input

MONDAY, JANUARY 9, 2006 - DRAFT MINUTES

from the entire CRB on the process. Ms. Blood pointed out the CRB was fortunate to have all records in an electronic format. Vice Chairman Thrower remembered previous executive summaries included a biography for each CRB member. Ms. Blood could include that as well as photographs of CRB members. Mr. White perceived it would be beneficial for members to provide updated information. Ms. Blood responded to queries from Ms. Miller regarding motions and public comment to be included. Vice Chairman Thrower found the summary of public comment helpful in previous executive summaries.

Mr. White mentioned that during the last Legislative Delegation meeting action was taken regarding Ruskin becoming a city and wanted everyone to be clear that no action was taken by the CRB either opposing or supporting an elected County mayor. Mr. Hall and Attorney Tinkler recalled a position was taken to not pursue that. Ms. Miller perceived if County leadership was dysfunctional, creating another layer would not make that better. Mr. White was troubled about a Tampa Tribune editorial calling for an elected County mayor but not for complete and total accountability related to the Hispanic and African-American communities.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Vice Chairman Thrower called for public comment; there was no response. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

READ AND APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
CHAIRMAN

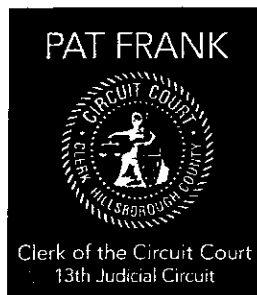
ATTEST:  
PAT FRANK, CLERK

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Clerk

kc

Hillsborough County 2005 Charter Review Board  
Financial Report  
January 30, 2006

Beginning balance	\$54,728.42
Expenses	
Postage	7.07
Printing	9.14
Total expenditure postings 01/09/06 to 1/30/06	16.21
Balance as of 1/30/06	\$54,712.21



January 10, 2006

Ms. Jan Platt, Chair  
Charter Review Board  
3531 Village Way  
Tampa, FL 33629

Dear Ms. Platt:

At the meeting which you held last evening you asked my opinion regarding a proposed amendment to the County's charter which would require the Clerk to retain all records and materials of advisory boards, commissions, etc. which the BOCC creates.

In the course of the inquiry a question was asked of me regarding the governance of the county's Library Board. I replied that it was a joint responsibility of the City and County. That statement is not totally accurate.

About 20 years ago it was agreed that the City and the County would no longer maintain separate library systems. The agreement between the two bodies was that the County would be primarily responsible for the daily operations of the libraries and that an Advisory Committee would be established with appointments to this Committee being made by the BOCC. The City agreed that a county-wide tax would support the operation of the libraries. Although the County would run the libraries, City taxpayers would join county taxpayers in supporting the funding of the libraries.

Last night I wanted to clarify my statement but the testimony did not afford an opportunity. I was certainly aware of the history of the consolidation of services and the role which the County plays in the management of the libraries. My apologies for not accurately conveying my knowledge of the facts.

My best wishes are with you as you conclude the most important task you have undertaken.

Cordially,

Pat Frank  
Clerk of the Circuit Court

cc: Mr. Terry Ballard  
Ms. Yvette Miranda Chapman  
Mr. Ralph Fisher  
Mr. Keith Hall  
Ms. Bethany R. Leytham  
Mr. Hung Mai  
Mr. A.J. Marc Mandt  
Dr. Sharon E. Miller  
Mr. James Porter  
Mr. David Storck  
Mr. Mitch Thrower, III  
Mr. Gerald White  
Ms. Janet Wilson

~~Attn~~ Attn: April

# Pays Ransom

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20s. An American missionary helped him get a green card, Ryman said.

Though Thelusmar is a legal U.S. resident, he is not an American citizen. The U.S. government is limited in its powers to help noncitizens abroad, according to the State Department.

Tuesday morning, Ryman traveled to Haiti to take over the orphanage's day-to-day operations and help Thelusmar and Hughes.

Hughes, the orphanage director, had to have his arm amputated from the elbow down because of the shooting, Ryman said.

Reporter Nicola M. White can be reached at (813) 779-4613.

mercial passenger bus while riding her bicycle.

Athena M. Nichols, of 8001 52nd Lane N. in Pinellas Park, was hit about 3:10 p.m. while riding across 54th Avenue North near 28th Street North, the Florida Highway Patrol said.

A passenger bus driven by Raymond Ramos, 51, of 1103 Viking Drive, was westbound on 54th Avenue North when Nichols rode in front of the bus. She was thrown during the collision and taken to Bayfront Medical Center, where she died.

Ramos had the right of way, the highway patrol said, and is not expected to be charged.

A staff report

# Auto Accidents

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## 2005 Charter Review Board Meeting Schedule

The Charter Review Board is appointed every five years, per a mandate by the Hillsborough County Charter, to conduct a comprehensive study of any or all phases of county government. The Board of County Commissioners selects its 14 members. Each commissioner appoints two members from their district, none of whom can be an elected official. The remaining meeting schedule is as follows:

- Monday, Jan. 9, 2006
- Monday, Dec. 12
- Monday, Jan. 30, 2006

These meetings are held at 6 p.m. in the County Commission Boardroom on the second floor of County Center, 501 E. Kennedy Blvd. in downtown Tampa. Review Board members welcome public comments.

For more information about the Review Board, visit our web site at [www.hillsboroughcounty.org](http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org) or call Shelley Blood,

Neighborhood Relations Officer, 276-2541

(TTY: 301-7172)

Para información, llamar al 272-5900.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Board of County Commissioners

495179

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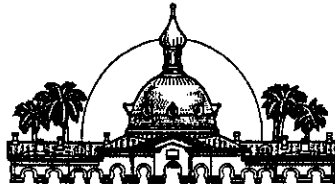
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## Charter Review Board

January 20, 2006

Board of County Commissioners  
Hillsborough County  
P.O. Box 1110  
Tampa, FL 33601

Re: BOCC Advisory Board and Committee Records Retention

Dear Commissioners:

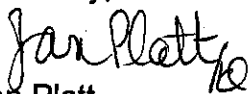
At the January 9, 2006, Charter Review Board meeting Terry Neal spoke to the Board regarding the issue of preserving the minutes and records of Advisory Boards and Committees for the Board of County Commissioners. Mr. Neal expressed concern regarding the safety of records not being kept by the Clerk citing the example of the flood at the History Center where their records are kept.

Pat Frank, Clerk of the Court and Sue Parrish, Chief Deputy Clerk for BOCC Records answered questions regarding the Clerk's ability to provide the taking and storage of minutes and records for the Advisory Boards. During the discussion, Sue Parrish advised that in 1991, in an effort to reduce expenses, the Board of County Commissioners reviewed their list of Advisory Boards and Committees and eliminated some of the Advisory Boards from the list of Boards covered by the Clerk's Office.

After hearing from Pat Frank, Sue Parrish, and Terry Neal, the Charter Review Board voted to request that the Board of County Commissioners review their 1991 list of Advisory Boards and Committees and determine if the Clerk of the Circuit Court needs to take minutes for additional Boards and Committees.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

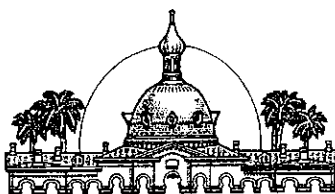
  
Jan Platt  
Chair

Jan K. Platt, Chair -- Mitch Thrower, Vice Chair  
Terry Ballard - Jim Beeler - Yvette Miranda Chapman - Ralph Fisher - Keith Hall  
Hung Mai - Marc Mandt - Sharon E. Miller - Jim Porter - David Storck - Gerald White - Janet Wilson  
Staff Liaison: Shelley Blood

# Office of the County Attorney

## BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Brian Blair  
Kathy Castor  
Ken Hagan  
Jim Norman  
Thomas Scott  
Mark Sharpe  
Ronda Storms



Hillsborough County  
Florida

Renée Francis Lee, County Attorney  
Donald R. Odom, Deputy County Attorney

## Managing Attorneys

H. Ray Allen  
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Robert E. Brazel  
Mary Helen Campbell  
Hank Ennis  
Susan J. Fernandez  
Sheree C. Fish  
Jennie Granahan Tarr

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Charter Review Board  
**FROM:** Kenneth A. Tinkler, Assistant County Attorney *KAT*  
**DATE:** May 9, 2005  
**SUBJECT:** Duties and Rules relating to the BOCC Officers

Board Member Gerald White requested the County Attorney's Office outline the duties and rules related to the officers of the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). This memorandum sets out the relevant documents that include the positions' mandates.

### Chairman

The only mention of the Chairman of the BOCC in the County Charter relates to salary. Section 4.07 of the County Charter grants the chairman an additional ten percent of base salary during his or her term as Chairman. The election of a Chairman is governed by Rule 26 of the BOCC Rules of Order, Policy Number 01.01.00.00, which sets out, in part:

#### **Rule 26. CHANGING OF COMMISSIONERS/SWEARING IN CEREMONIES.**

...On the second Tuesday after the election of a new Commissioner(s), the new Board will be convened for a swearing-in ceremony of the newly elected members at a designated location based on the expected attendance. The meeting will be called to order by a representative of the Clerk to the Board who will handle the gavel until a new Chairman is nominated and elected...

The duties of the Chairman are also outlined in the Rules of Order, in the preceding Rule 2:

**Rule 5. PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Chairman shall preside at all meetings of the County Commission. In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman shall preside. In the absence of either the Chairman or Vice-Chairman, the Chaplain shall preside. In the absence of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Chaplain, a presiding officer shall be selected by a majority vote of those Commissioners present.

The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Chaplain shall be selected annually at the Board's organizational meeting.

The Chairman or Vice-Chairman in the absence of the Chairman, or Chaplain in the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, is authorized to sign any documents approved by the Board.

The presiding officer of the Board shall have the following functions:

- a. determining that a quorum is present.
- b. opening the meeting and calling the meeting to order.
- c. recognizing members of the Board to speak.
- d. recognizing members of the general public or staff to speak. (See Rule 25)
- e. putting to vote all questions which come before the Board as motions.
- f. restating the motion prior to the voting on the motion.
- g. deciding all questions of order.
- h. refusing to recognize frivolous or dilatory motions.
- i. refusing to recognize motions out of order.
- j. adjourning meetings when there is a sudden emergency affecting the safety of the Board and others.

The decision of the presiding officer shall stand unless reversed by a majority vote of the members present after the proper motion has been made and seconded to reverse such decision.

Where the Chairman will be absent for a period of 4 weeks or longer, the Vice-Chairman shall receive the additional 10 percent of the basic salary as set out in Section 4.07, Hillsborough County Charter, for the period of time that the Vice-Chairman serves as Chairman.

Where matters of policy or position are concerned, the title "Chairman, Board of County Commissioners" shall only be affixed by the Chairman on items where the Board has taken official action.

The remains sections of the Rules of Order (attached) outline the procedural rules by which the Chairman conducts each meeting. In addition, the Chairman of the BOCC is required by various Florida Statutes to serve in certain positions. On example is the Chairman shall serve on the County's Canvassing Board for General Elections.

### **Vice-Chairman and Chaplain**

As outlined in the above Rule 5, the Vice-Chairman serves in the place of the Chairman when the Chairman is either absent or wishes to give up the gavel. In the Vice-Chairman's absence, the Chaplain serves in the role of Chairman.

Charter Review Board  
Memo regarding Duties and Rules relating to the BOCC Officers  
5/9/2005

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Please let me know if you have any questions.

Attachment

CC: Renée Francis Lee, County Attorney  
Mary Helen Campbell, Managing Attorney

# 68% Rate County Service High, Survey Says

## STORMS SAYS RESULT HURTS ELECTED MAYOR PROPOSAL

By MARK HOLAN  
mholan@tampatrib.com

**RUSKIN** — Some Hillsborough County commissioners see validation for their work and for the current form of county government in a new survey that shows nearly 80 percent of respondents find the quality of life here better than average.

The survey also shows 68 percent of residents rate county service performance and value at above average or excellent, from a 6 to a 10 on a 10-point scale for a range of services.

At 78 percent, Hillsborough's quality of life rating is 12 percentage points higher than a nationwide average based on surveys in 186 other markets.

"I think this is very, bad for an

elected county mayor," Commissioner Ronda Storms said during the board's annual retreat Wednesday at the county's new \$3.1 million South-Shore Regional Service Center.

Lawyer Mary Ann Stiles, a former HARTline lobbyist, and The Tampa Tribune editorial board have called for a referendum to add a Hillsborough mayor to the county charter. Under the current form of government, seven elected commissioners appoint a county administrator to run daily operations.

"I'm glad to hear they are doing a good job, but that's not the point," Stiles said. "Maybe we would have a higher percentage if we had a real leader."

Stiles said her effort wouldn't eliminate commissioners, three of whom are elected countywide and four of whom represent geographic districts.

The telephone survey of 403 adults was taken late last month and in-

*"I'm glad to hear they are doing a good job, but that's not the point. Maybe we would have a higher percentage if we had a real leader."*

**MARY ANN STILES**

*Proponent of elected-mayor form of county government*

cluded residents of the county's three cities and unincorporated areas. The survey was conducted for the county by Bramberg-Handley Inc., of Winter Park, and cost taxpayers \$10,600.

"It shows those who are pushing for a county mayor have no merit," Commissioner Brian Blair said. "They are simply creating another layer of government."

The survey didn't ask about the proposed county mayor, the performance of individual commissioners or the board's stance on social issues.

The survey focused on basic government operations. Library and emergency services, for example, rat-

ed more than 80 percent approval. Affordable housing and pedestrian and bike safety scored lowest in the survey, in the 40 to 60 percent range.

Commissioner Kathy Castor said the survey "confirms what I know about county employees providing good service," but the results don't have much bearing on the proposed countywide mayor.

"Citizens don't like a board that bickers or snubs ethics reform or plays ostrich with regional transportation funding," Castor said.

*Reporter Mark Holan can be reached at (813) 259-7691*

# Residents give county high marks

■ Hillsborough comes out ahead of other governments, such as Philadelphia's, in a poll.

By **BILL VARIAN**  
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — Hillsborough County government, maligned in editorials and by other bay area elected officials, nevertheless got favorable marks from residents in a survey it commissioned.

An overwhelming majority of residents rated Hillsborough as a good place to live generally and said the government does an above-average job of serving its citizens. In fact, the company that conducted the \$10,600 survey said Hillsborough on average came out ahead compared with other governments reviewed in similar surveys, such as Philadelphia and the county that includes Portland, Ore.

"The assessment is that residents of Hillsborough County like Hillsborough County very much," said Harry N. Handley, president of Bamberg-Handley Market Horizons in Winter Haven, which conducted the phone survey in late November. "Significantly more so than in other cities and counties nationwide."

It was not all roses for Hillsborough commissioners, who received the report during their annual retreat Wednesday. County government received some of their worst scores in its handling of transportation issues, from car travel to providing bike lanes.

Only a little more than half of the 403 survey participants gave the county favorable marks in traffic safety and street repairs. Meanwhile, fewer than half gave the county favorable marks in how it deals with growth and development, and in the availability of affordable housing.

Not coincidentally, those are

some of the areas commissioners have targeted as their major areas of concentration.

"I thought it was very consistent actually with areas we have identified in our strategic plans as areas where we need to focus," said County Administrator Pat Bean. "We know that we're working very hard to become the best county government in the nation, but we've got work to do."

Overall, 78 percent of residents surveyed gave Hillsborough "above average" marks as a place to live, while 68 percent scored government service as above average, according to Bamberg-Handley. The numbers were slightly higher among residents who live in unincorporated areas and slightly lower for those who live within the city of Tampa.

The surveyors had a generous definition of what they labeled "above average."

People who responded to the survey were asked to rate the county and various government services on a scale of 1 to 10, with one being either "worst" or "poor" and 10 being the "very best" or "excellent." They were not told that five would be considered average.

So when the survey indicates that 73 percent rated Hillsborough as above average as a place to raise children, that means those respondents gave a score of six or better. For many of the questions, detailed results show the heaviest concentration of scores on many subject areas in the five to eight range.

Hillsborough Commission Chairman Jim Norman said the depiction of the results nevertheless reflects what he hears from residents when he regularly walks neighborhoods around the county.

"Everywhere I go, I get a real positive spin on county government," Norman said. "It (the survey) validates what I believe."

# Poll shows support for county mayor idea

■ The survey was commissioned by the group that is pushing for a county mayor. It didn't broach potential drawbacks.

By BILL VARIAN  
Times Staff Writer

1-27-06

TAMPA — A poll commissioned by the group seeking to ask voters if they'd like to be able to elect a Hillsborough County mayor shows strong support for the idea.

Of 400 residents reached by phone this month, most of whom said they are likely to vote in November, 42 percent said they would definitely or probably vote yes on the mayor idea if the election were held today. Of the rest, 28 percent said they would vote no, and 30 percent were undecided.

The margin of error was plus or minus 4.9 percent.

The favorable answer was generally consistent across gender, race and so-

cioeconomic lines, apparently unaffected by political persuasion. And the splits held true both inside Tampa's city limits and in unincorporated Hillsborough.

"Isn't it amazing?" said Mary Ann Stiles, the lawyer who formed the group Taking Back Hillsborough County Political Committee Inc., which is pushing the issue. "I thought the city would show more (interest) than in the county. It doesn't. It's as strong in the county as it is in the city."

The poll questions did not broach potential drawbacks that opponents of the measure are likely to claim in coming months.

During a recent debate with Stiles, east county Commissioner Ronda Storms said that a county mayor would lessen ordinary citizens' access to their elected officials and cost more. It would tilt power toward the moneyed interests of Tampa, away from suburban and rural residents, she said. It's a message she will be taking to civic groups if the issue proceeds.

Storms did not return a phone call

seeking comment on the details of the survey. But commission Chairman Jim Norman said he did not put much stock in the results, as relayed by a reporter.

"I believe once the other side is told about the downsides, if it gets to the ballot, I think it falls miserably," Norman said. "People in the unincorporated area don't want the downtown crowd running the show."

The survey was conducted Jan. 11 and 12 by McLaughlin & Associates of New York.

The mayoral question was put to residents in different forms, with varying degrees of support voiced. Asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "The people of Hillsborough County should have the right to elect their own mayor," 76 percent said they agreed.

Those polled were asked if they would support replacing the appointed county administrator with an elected county mayor. Sixty-three percent said they would support the proposal.

Other questions attempted to mea-

sure resident approval of county government as it exists now, and how well it deals with major issues. Poll takers ranked Tampa and Hillsborough County about equally in terms of which does better in providing government services. Thirty-two percent rated the city better, 34 percent chose the county and 34 percent said they didn't know or declined to answer.

Forty-three percent had a generally favorable opinion of county government, compared with 33 percent who did not. However, 57 percent said they disapprove of how county government deals with traffic and transportation problems.

Stiles, a former lobbyist for the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority, initiated the referendum effort in response to what she considered county meddling in the agency's business. She says the current seven-member commission is overly parochial and meddlesome, and is not effectively dealing with major county issues, such as traffic congestion and growth.