SIERRA CLUB

November 5, 2026
St. Petersburg City Council
City of St. Petersburg

Re: November 12 HERS action on citywide resilience planning

Dear Councilmembers,

Thank you for putting the storm-resilience GO bond on the ballot. St. Petersburg voters' overwhelming support sends a clear signal that residents want bold action from you. We also appreciate Council's approval of the GO Bond Advisory Committee and Resilience Advisory Committee, and its support for Resilient by Nature and nature-based stormwater solutions. These measures strengthen public oversight and accountability as the City moves forward with the GO bonds. Public Works Administrator Claude Tankersley and OSR Director Maeven Rogers have demonstrated their immense value to the City, and we urge you to continue supporting and empowering their critical work.

Building on these approvals and the voters' support, we urge you to act on the citywide resilience plan you referred to HERS at the July 23 Council meeting. Trust and accountability will require sound science, clear priorities, and performance measures the City can track over time. We need to track service disruptions, access to essentials, and housing displacement to strategically direct investments toward reducing harm and costs.

Other coastal cities offer practical examples. Jacksonville uses a 50-year strategy to guide development and prioritize investments. Virginia Beach organized its flood adaptation strategy around four watersheds because each faces different conditions. We can build on these examples to guide long-term investments and measure results.

On November 12, we urge the HERS Committee to vote to send a resolution to full Council, and we urge Council to adopt it before year-end. On page 2 we offer a draft resolution that identifies five initial measures of resilience and asks the Administration to prepare a written proposal, including a scope of work, estimated planning cost, and potential funding sources, for inclusion in the agenda packet and presentation at the first HERS meeting of 2027. That gives Council a concrete next decision without committing funds now. A practical plan can help protect the value of these investments, reduce avoidable losses, and give successive administrations a clear framework for action and accountability.

Respectfully,



James Scott
Executive Committee Chairperson, Suncoast Sierra Club

Draft resolution for consideration

November 12, 2026 HERS Committee

A RESOLUTION ENDORSING FIVE INITIAL RESILIENCE INDICATORS AND REQUESTING A SCOPE OF WORK FOR A CITYWIDE RESILIENCE PLAN

WHEREAS, the City needs clear measures to show how disruptions affect residents, businesses, and essential services and to guide investments that reduce those impacts;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of St. Petersburg, Florida, that:

1. City Council endorses five initial indicators to guide resilience planning across hazards.

Assess differences across neighborhoods and, where data permit, income groups.

Life and health. Deaths, serious illnesses, and injuries associated with hazards, including extreme heat.

Essential utilities. Number of customers affected and duration of disruptions, measured separately for drinking water, sewer service, and electricity.

Access to essentials. Which neighborhoods lose access to food, medicine, urgent care, or safe cooling, and for how long, including when routes are cut off to residents or emergency responders.

Housing displacement. Number of households displaced, duration of displacement, and number still without stable housing at follow-up.

Business recovery. Share of affected businesses operating at defined intervals after a disruption, counting those that remain closed.

2. City Council requests a written proposed scope of work for a citywide resilience plan.

Using existing staff resources and available information, the Administration is requested to submit the proposal for inclusion in the agenda packet for the first HERS meeting of 2027 and present it at that meeting. The proposal should include estimated planning cost, potential funding sources, a recommended contracting approach, and a schedule for bringing project and policy choices to Council for public consideration.

The scope should build on existing City and County plans and provide for coordination with emergency management and essential-service providers, consistent with applicable state and federal requirements. It should provide for establishing baselines, measurable targets, responsible implementation leads, and regular public progress reporting. Supporting measures should include tree loss and canopy recovery.

Drawing on existing studies and local data, the scope should require the plan to compare the City's current approach with reasonable development and infrastructure alternatives, using the five indicators and multiple risk scenarios extending at least 50 years. This comparison should quantify cumulative infrastructure, operation and maintenance, protection, disaster response, and repeated repair and recovery costs; identify who benefits and pays; account for revenues and uncertain outside assistance; and show effects on citywide budgets, household affordability, and remaining risk to inform Council's investment and policy choices.

The scope should provide for evaluating community resilience hubs and neighborhood partnerships, informed by SPARC's recommendations, as ways to improve these outcomes in everyday conditions, during disruptions, and through recovery. It should support accessible public education and describe how residents and the Resilience Advisory Committee will help refine the measures and shape alternatives before recommendations are made. The scope should provide for recommendations on any ordinances needed to implement and sustain the plan, with input from the Resilience Advisory Committee.

This resolution makes no appropriation and takes effect upon adoption.