

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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4TH FLOOR, CITY HALL

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202

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**Jacksonville Waterways Commission - Task Force on**

**Downtown River and Waterfront Activation**

**February 28, 2018**

**9:00 a.m.**

**Topic:** Downtown river and waterfront activation

**Location:** City Council Conference Room A, 4th floor, City Hall – St. James Building

**In attendance:** Task Force Members Jed Davis (Chair), Christian Harden, Jake Gordon, Brian Shell, John Ream

**Excused**: Task Force Member Ryan Tiedeberg

Also: Waterways Commissioners Lori Boyer and Matt Brockelman; Paige Johnston - Office of General Counsel; Philip Zamarron – Legislative Services Division; Brian Burket, Bob Skalitzky and Jim Suber – Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department; Jeff Clements – Council Research Divsion

**Meeting Convened**: 9:00 a.m.

Chairman Davis convened the meeting and the attendees introduced themselves for the record.

The minutes of the December 19, 2107 meeting of the Task Force were **approved as distributed**.

Council Member Boyer gave an overview of recent discussions by the Waterways Commission that relate to the work of this task force, including FIND projects, the Corkscrew Park (Northbank Riverwalk) exercise equipment/art work installation, the Geffen Park kayak launch and the unified waterways web site (incorporating Parks and Recreation, Special Events, Downtown Vision, and other relevant web links). Ms. Boyer also talked about the “riverfront nodes” effort currently underway, first suggested by the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects, to activate the waterfront and Northbank and Southbank Riverwalks. The first two nodes to be activated will be Friendship Fountain Park and the grounds of the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts. The Downtown Investment Authority had a consultant under contract who spent a week in Jacksonville in January developing themes and implementation strategies for those two sites (a music theme for the Times-Union Center site, a St. Johns River exploration theme at Friendship Fountain). Concepts being discussed are a projection system onto the CSX building for live and recorded music performance on the Northbank, and a fountain projection system and play park for the Friendship Fountain site. One important consideration is the increased maintenance costs these new, enhanced facilities will entail which may require a public-private partnership to fund. Another need is an advocacy mechanism to ensure long-term support of the initiative. She reviewed the various funding sources already committed to various aspects of the two nodes.

Jake Gordon felt the key to success would be generating broad-based community support and private funding to construct and then properly maintain two iconic spaces that will put Jacksonville on the map and be sources of pride. DVI and the Jacksonville Zoo have offered to staff the maintenance efforts at both sites with funding assistance. Ms. Boyer will circulate information to the group about how the estimated cost of maintenance personnel was determined. She said that construction should be underway on both nodes sometime in 2018. The group discussed the need for advocates to take “ownership” of the two nodes. Mr. Davis asked to schedule another meeting in 30 days to follow up on the progress of planning for the nodes.

Ms. Boyer reported on the upcoming revision of the City’s Comprehensive Plan and the importance of including goals and policies relating to water access, viewsheds, etc. She referenced riverfront park design criteria she recently discovered in the Zoning Code that have at times been waived or not strictly enforced. She intends to have the Office of General Counsel draft code amendments to include the proposed Riverwalk nodes in those design criteria requirements.

Brian Burket of the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department distributed a map showing downtown-area docks (including dock length), boat ramps and kayak launches, and speed zones. He distributed another map showing numerous downtown park projects, including the Riverwalks and their extensions, water taxi docks, greenways, walking paths, and other activation projects. Mr. Burket said there are several FIND projects in the downtown area that he will add to future editions of the map. In response to a question about moving the Riverside Arts Market boat dock, Mr. Burket said that he has been discussing conceptual ideas with RAM co-founder Wayne Wood for the grassy area behind the Red Cross building on Riverside Avenue where the dock could be relocated.

Topics for the next meeting: Jake Gordon update on the water taxi; cost estimates for moving existing docks from Jim Suber; potential Jacksonville Zoo partnership for Friendship Fountain from Chairman Davis; map updates by Brian Burket; float-in movie theater concept by Chairman Davis.

Public comment

John Nooney said that little things such as signage are both important and easy to implement. Installing kayak access signage would help inform the public. No trespassing signs have been put up along Hogan’s Creek which discourages people from trying to access it.

Brian Burket said that the Sheriff’s Office did not want the kayak launch at the end of Catherine Street where a kayak sign was installed several years ago (because it was a location where a public street ended at the river) because of the presence of homeless persons, vehicles parking in the right-of-way, etc. The Parks and Recreation Department subsequently discovered that the City’s right-of-way did not extend all the way to the water. The waterfront is actually state property, so the kayak launch sign was removed and the no trespassing sign was erected.

The committee will meet again in 30 days.

**Meeting Adjourned**: 10:02 a.m.

Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

2.28.18 Posted 11:00 a.m.