



Jacksonville Waterways Commission,

TASK FORCE ON DOWNTOWN RIVER AND WATERFRONT ACTIVATION

Wednesday, April 4, 2018

City Hall, Suite 425, Conference Room A

9:00 a.m.

In Attendance: Commissioner Jed Davis (Chair), Jake Gordon, Christian Harden, Brian Shell; Ryan Tiedeberg was excused; Commissioner Matt Brockelman and Council Member Lori Boyer were in attendance; Mia Richardson, Legislative Assistant, Jessica Matthews, Legislative Services Supervisor; Assistant General Counsel Paige Johnston; Daryl Joseph, Director, Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department; Steve Skalitzky, Chief, Natural and Marine Resources Division, Parks Recreation and Community Services Department; Brian Burket, Waterfront Project Manager; Jim Suber, Waterways Coordinator/Dockmaster, was excused; John J. Jackson, Council Research Division. (See attached sign-in sheet for additional attendees)

The Chair convened the meeting at 9:08 a.m. and asked attendees to identify themselves for the record.

Council Member Lori Boyer provided the Task Force with an update on highlights of the last meeting of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission. She reported that there is an ongoing conversation on repairs at the Jacksonville Landing that will be addressed at the next Waterways Commission meeting. The Commission discussed the impact of filling wetlands. The Commission did not address downtown river activation issues per se but did discuss McCoy's Creek, which some consider to be linked to downtown. She reported on her PowerPoint presentation on a vision of McCoy's Creek likening it with the San Antonio Canal. She explained that the creek repeatedly floods and requires flood control and drainage. Ms. Boyer explained that there are economic and recreational opportunities for McCoy's Creek. An ash issue will require an environmental clean-up. Brian Burket commented on the economic development opportunities in the corridor. Council Member Boyer alluded to private economic plans and noted the presence of Attorney Steve Diebenow who is believed to represent economic opportunities in the McCoy's Creek area. Chairman Davis asked if there were any dedicated funds for potential economic development projects. Ms. Boyer explained that there were CIP funds for the development of a McCoy's Creek Greenway and an ash clean-up over the next few years. The City had requested \$2,000,000.00 from the State and received \$200,000.00. She explained that there are possibilities for potential Community Development Block Grant funds for projects and disaster relief for damage incurred from Hurricane Matthew. Ms. Boyer further noted

that Groundworks has expressed in interest in a McCoy's Creek restoration project, viewing McCoy's Creek as an integral part of the Emerald Necklace proposal for waterways and greenways surrounding downtown.

Ms. Boyer explained that progress is underway in working on the two downtown Riverwalk recreational nodes at the Times-Union Center and Friendship Fountain. Work in underway to implement the project's vision.

The Task Force next heard an update from Jake Gordon on the Water Taxi. Mr. Gordon characterized the water taxi as a public-private mode of transportation. He has been meeting with Jim Bailey and Ron Moody to discuss improvements in the water taxi service including additional stops. Downtown Vision has been looking at how to educate and make more people aware of the water taxi and where people can park downtown to use the water taxi. Marketing is a key component. He envisions updating the map that Downtown Vision, Inc. distributes to make people aware of water-related amenities. Mr. Gordon explained that the water taxi is viewed by some as a mode of transportation and as a tourist attraction by others. Ms. Boyer feels that the water taxi should be both.

Council Member Boyer feels that Visit Jacksonville should do more to promote the water taxi. She asked if the water taxi could be more successful if a smaller vessel were operated that enabled people a swifter means for crossing the river.

The Chair asked if it would be worthwhile to have water taxi staff attend a Task Force meeting to discuss water taxi operations. Ms. Boyer indicated that consideration should also be given to having Task Force members visit the water taxi and report back to the Task Force. The Chair announced that since the Task Force has been talking about the water taxi for three meetings and is expected to ultimately make recommendations to the Waterways Commission on the best use of the water taxi, he would meet with water taxi operators to ascertain what their plans are for continued water taxi service and opportunities. Mr. Gordon will e-mail to Task Force members his report on his findings from the Downtown Investment Authority on the best use for the water taxi.

The next item on the agenda, Dock Moving Cost Estimates, was put off until the next Task Force meeting because the presenter, Captain Jim Suber, had an excused absence for the current meeting.

On the Zoo Partnership and Friendship Fountain, the Task Force Chair, Commissioner Jed Davis, reported on his recent discussions with the zoo's Board of Directors and Executive Director. He reported that there is a high level of interest at the zoo for a partnership with the City of Jacksonville, but would need additional information on what the partnership would entail. The zoo would welcome a presence in downtown Jacksonville but needed information on construction numbers. Council Member Boyer explained that the space around the fountain would be divided into a garden space and a park space for recreation, the latter being managed by either the Parks Department or M.O.S.H. (Museum of Science and History). The garden space could be managed by the zoo. Neither the zoo nor M.O.S.H. would have the resources to be responsible for maintenance of the fountain itself. Funds

from TDC (Tourist Development Council) might be considered because the fountain is an attraction. It was noted that Friendship Park has dockage for the water taxi. Brian Burket commented that Jacksonville needs a garden space where people can go for wedding or family photos.

Council Member Boyer said that the Friends of the Park organization could be the umbrella group that could assume the responsibility for the maintenance costs of the park, river walk or recreational nodes. The Friends of the Park organization would not be eligible for TDC dollars though. The Chair likened the Friendship Fountain garden area to what the Cummer Museum and Gardens has when it comes to wedding or family photos with attractive backgrounds and views.

The Chair asked Council Member Boyer for the site plan for Friendship Fountain; this would enable him to start conversations with the zoo on what its responsibilities could be.

With regard to the Times-Union Center, Ms. Boyer reported that the City has had discussions with SMG on the extent that SMG is responsible for maintenance for the Center's exterior (garden maintenance).

In further discussion on the zoo's involvement with downtown, it was noted that it is no longer possible to board the water taxi downtown and venture on to the zoo. The zoo's dock was decimated by Hurricane Matthew and it will be some time before the dock is either replaced or relocated. There was a time when downtown hotels were involved in encouraging their guests to visit the zoo via water taxi.

Brian Burket explained that the alternative to relocating the zoo's dock to the eastern edge of the zoo's property is to reconstruct a dock at its current location but extending it further out into the river to avoid the recurring need to dredge.

A discussion ensued on downtown docking space and marinas. Overnight docking is permissible at some marinas, prohibited in others. Factors include the length of a vessel and the length of the vessel's stay. Council Member Boyer suggested that it might be worthwhile to ascertain information on existing transient boating docking spaces currently available. The question is how we go about getting an inventory of slips downtown and the criteria in lease or rental agreements for dockage. Brian Burket said that the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department has this information and he would get gather the information for the Task Force.

The Task Force next discussed Float-in Movie Theatre led by Task Force Chair Jed Davis. Mr. Davis distributed a spread sheet showing the expenses incurred by Downtown Vision when it sponsored Movies @ Treaty Oak Park in the spring of 2011.

The discussion focused on possible sites for movies on the downtown waterfront. Jed Davis said consideration has to be given to identifying a potential sponsor to help defray costs of movies on the waterfront. He noted that Community First Credit Union has been actively involved in sponsoring events. After reviewing the expenses of the 2011

movie event, Mr. Davis suggested that a \$10,000 sponsor would be helpful.

Mr. Davis said that he would be talking to the developers of The District to gauge the possibility of using The District as a movie site. Boats anchor there, it is where the City fireworks launches are located and the current in the river is calm. He indicated that Task Force Member John Ream is interested in pursuing a sponsor and identifying a site. Mr. Davis asked the Task Force and others present for their thoughts on ideas for sponsors and a good site.

Council Member Boyer noted that if the idea was to have the movie screening in June at The District, it is important to realize that The District does not formally purchase the property at the former JEA generating station until July. Ms. Boyer said that she would be meeting with representatives of both JEA and The District later in the day and that she would apprise them of the proposed movie project and communicate with Mia Richardson and Jessica Matthews with her findings.

Daryl Joseph, Director, Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department, indicated that his department could partner with the Task Force and provide equipment and assistance with the movie project. Jed Davis will meet with Mr. Joseph to discuss this further.

John Nooney commented that in planning the float-in movie project, consideration should be given to the locale of the movie screens; thoughts had to be weighed with regard to kayakers and boaters that will be there for the screening.

In delegating tasks in preparation for the next Task Force meeting, the Chair expects Brian Burket to report on the inventory of current downtown docks and slips; the Chair will be reporting on his meeting with the Water Taxi operators; Council Member Boyer will have the site plan for Friendship Fountain; and the Chair will report on his meeting with Director Daryl Joseph on his department's role in assisting in the float-in movie project.

In Public Comment, John Nooney commented on water taxis and other vessels that ferry people on the river.

The next Task Force meeting will be held on May 2nd at 9:00 a.m.

There being no further business, the Task Force meeting was adjourned at 10:13 a.m.

John J. Jackson, Council Research Division (904) 630-1729

April 11, 2018
Posted: 4:00 P.M.