



Jacksonville Waterways Commission

Lori Boyer, Chair

JACKSONVILLE WATERWAYS COMMISSION
Wednesday, November 14, 2018
City Council Chamber
9:30 a.m.

These minutes are unofficial until approved by the Jacksonville Waterways Commission at its next meeting.

The monthly meeting of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission was called to order on Wednesday, November 14, 2018, at 9:34, in the Council Chamber, by the Chair, Council Member Lori Boyer.

In attendance: Council Members Lori Boyer (Chair), Al Ferraro (Vice Chair), Bill Gulliford; Commissioners Garrett N. Barket, Robert Birtalan, Jed Davis, Steve Davis, Jill D. Haskell, Raymond S. Pringle, Jr., Steve Swann; Bobby Baker, Ex-Officio; State Representative Jason Fischer was excused; Commissioner Lindsey Brock was excused; Captain Jim Suber, Waterways Coordinator/Dock Master; Susan Grandin, Assistant General Counsel; Dr. Quinton White, Dr. Gerard Pinto, Jacksonville University; Adri Maguire Segui, Legislative Assistant; John J. Jackson, Council Research Assistant. (See attached for additional attendees).

The Commission voted to approve the minutes for the Commission's October 10, 2018 meeting, as distributed.

Legislation

Ordinance 2018-872, Ord Concerning Continuation Grant; Apv & Auth the Corporation Secretary to Execute & deliver the FIND Proj Agreement Amendments extending the Agreements for 1 Yr for the following Projs.....

Brian Burket, Natural & Marine Resources Division, Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department, explained that FIND projects were for a two-year span, a year's time for design and an additional year for construction. There is the opportunity for a one-year extension. The original agreement for the four projects in this legislation expired in September 2018. A one-year extension of the agreement is needed in order to proceed and see the projects to fruition.

He explained that the Charles Reese Fishing Pier Phase 2 project now has sufficient funding for a kayak launch.

Half Moon Island Park & Boat Ramp Phase 2A; this park is off the Nassau River at the County line. Funding is in place and bids for the work will be going out shortly.

The North Shore Kayak Launch project needs funding for signage that alerts visitors of submerged rock formations.

Bids for the School Board Property ADA Kayak Launch will be let shortly. An extension is sought for this project to be prepared in the event that obstacles surface before the project is completed.

Commissioner Raymond Pringle inquired about the status of adaptive kayak launches. Mr. Burket assured the Commissioner that progress is being made in implementing the program for adaptive kayak launches. Commissioner Pringle asked if work on the adaptive kayak launch at Hanna Park could be expedited. Mr. Burket explained that the City is moving forward with the work at Hanna Park.

The Chair, Council Member Boyer, decried the extensions; to her, the FIND process for the application for funding and the ensuing work to complete the projects was far too lengthy. She implored Commissioners to be firmly aware of the time factor in future deliberations on FIND projects. Mrs. Boyer felt that the length of time expended to complete FIND projects would not be tolerated in the private sector.

Commissioner Pringle was frustrated with the length of time it took to install adaptive facilities. He explained that there are over 200,000 disabled people in Duval County and so it behooves the City to be more timely.

In the St. Johns River Status Report on Water Quality and Manatees, Dr. Quinton White reported that the river's water temperature was much higher than normal. He explained that nightly low temperatures are what drive the river's water temperature. Dr. White reported that rainfall has been two inches above normal for this time of year and that salinity was increasing. Dr. White explained that the river's grass beds were now gone due to increased rainfall. Considerable rainfall causes turbidity that prevents light from penetrating to the vegetation. Dr. White explained that the loss of submerged vegetation is bad for fishing because if there are no grass beds, then there is no nursery area for shrimp, fish and other species that are all a part of the food chain.

Dr. White reported that the George Holt artificial reef has been impacted by considerable sediment. The biennial inspection to monitor the artificial reef will be January 2019. The Holt and CCA artificial reefs are deployed in the St. Johns River south of the Fuller Warren and north of the Buckman Bridges.

In his monthly update on the status of manatees, Dr. Gerard Pinto reported on an

undetermined manatee fatality discovered in the IntraCoastal Waterway on October 20, 2018. There have been nine (9) manatee deaths reported this year. At this point last year, there had been nineteen (19) reported so this year is a great improvement.

Mark Middlebrook, Executive Director, Timucuan Parks Foundation, gave a presentation on the St. Johns River Alliance. The Alliance is currently defunct.

Council Member Lori Boyer provided the Commission with background information on the St. Johns River Alliance. She explained that when an extensive growth of algae bloom in the St. Johns River was linked to the discharge of a considerable amount of nutrients upriver, it was determined that it made sense to pursue a multi-county cooperative response to resolve the problem. This resulted in the formation of the St. Johns River Alliance, bringing numerous counties that abutted the river to the table.

In his presentation, Mr. Middlebrook explained that through an Executive Order, President Bill Clinton created the American Heritage Rivers Protection Program in 1997. The St. Johns River was one of fourteen (14) rivers in the country designated as an American Heritage River. The American Heritage Rivers Protection Program entailed federal agencies working with local governments and jurisdictions to identify funding sources for improving the health of the fourteen American Heritage Rivers. Mr. Middlebrook explained that while the American Heritage Rivers Protection program was a good concept, it never got the traction that it needed in Washington.

In September 2003, the American Heritage River Initiative (AHRI), a partnership between the St. Johns River community (county commissions, city council), state, regional and federal agencies created in 1999, transitioned to the St. Johns River Alliance, a federally designated Florida not-for-profit 501©3 corporation.

The St. Johns River Alliance was created to address American Heritage River issues and projects. Its 34-member board of directors consisted of elected officials, business, community, environmental interests, and regional agencies. The Alliance represented three river basins. The Alliance brought together the following Counties: Lake, Seminole, Orange, Osceola, Indian River, Brevard, Volusia, Flagler, St. Johns, Putnam, Clay and Duval. The Lower Basin counties contributed more to the Alliance's funds. (Funding was based on population size). Advocates for a healthy river felt that a working coalition was needed to lobby Tallahassee to fund projects that focused on the river's health.

Mr. Middlebrook explained that from the outset a major problem was that north and central Florida counties did not communicate much with each other. Communication was critical.

In January 2015, the St. Johns River Alliance was involuntarily dissolved. By this time, the issues surrounding the Rodman Dam had begun to overshadow issues that the St. Johns River Alliance had sought to focus on. Mr. Middlebrook explained that the St. Johns River is still designated as an American Heritage River. President Clinton's Executive Order was never rescinded.

Mr. Middlebrook reported that had there been any left-over funds of the St. Johns River Alliance, the funds would have been turned over to the Timucuan Parks Foundation. There were no funds left nor were there any liabilities. The Alliance's records are now under the purview of the Timucuan Parks Foundation.

Mr. Middlebrook reiterated the need for communication between people and the counties that abut the river. Communication is key.

The Chair, Council Member Lori Boyer, said that she recalled a gathering of people in the Council Chamber that had come together in 2010 for a discourse on the health of the St. Johns River. She believes that it was during former Council Member Jack Webb's tenure as Council President. She asked Mr. Middlebrook how the various officials from neighboring counties were summoned for a common cause. She requested that Council Research look into this.

Mr. Middlebrook reported that in that same year that Mrs. Boyer was referencing, 2010, then- State Senator John Thatcher created the St. Johns River Legislative Caucus.

The Chair requested that Waterways Commissioners provide her with their thoughts on the creation of a viable North Florida coalition that could consider whether the river was a water quality issue or a tourism factor. She requested that the Commissioners send their thoughts on this matter to Legislative Services (Jessica Matthews or Adri Segui). These issues will likely be on the agenda for the December Waterways Commission meeting.

The Commission heard a presentation on paddling guides by Brian Burket, Natural and Marine Science Division, Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department. Paddling guides have been a topic of consideration and a recommendation of the non- motorized subcommittee that had studied river reactivation initiatives.

Mr. Burket distributed three glossy paddling guides that the City has created, in collaboration with Visit Jax and the Public Trust Environmental Legal Institute of Florida. The three guides are: *Greater Jacksonville Paddling Guide*; *Jacksonville Intracoastal Salt Marsh Paddling Guide*; and *Jacksonville Timucuan Trail Waterway Paddling Guide*. The guides depicted sites that are kayak launches, boat ramps, and route descriptions, GPS coordinates, channel markers, amenities available such as camping, restrooms, restaurants, picnic tables & grills, skill levels, marinas and a myriad of additional information to guide kayakers, canoeists, campers, hikers and others.

Commissioner Raymond S. Pringle, Jr. was concerned that the paddling guides did not adequately depict accessibility points for the disabled.

Mr. Burket then provided the Commission with an Exchange Island PowerPoint presentation. There were photographs and aerials depicting the work that has been completed to enhance visits to the island that is located beneath the Mathews Bridge. There is a newly created floating dock and boat ramp, a picnic grill and tables, a shelter,

trails and other amenities. The next phase of improvements entails extending the nature trail, the picnic area and camping area. FIND funding will be sought for some of the improvement work. Mr. Burket said that the construction of restrooms presents a challenge because the island experiences flooding from time to time.

The Chair announced that it was that time of year again for the renewal of the FIND application process. A new FIND subcommittee had to be formed and she asked for volunteers. Commissioners Raymond S. Pringle, Jr., Garrett N. Barket and Jill D. Haskell will constitute the new FIND subcommittee. Ms. Haskell will chair the subcommittee.

Council Member, and Waterways Vice Chair, Al Ferraro reported on the work he has been doing on the permitting process for contractors. Mr. Ferraro had previously reported on contractors' frustration in their inability to obtain permits to help rebuild the many docks in the County that had been heavily damaged by hurricanes.

Council Member Ferraro reported on meetings that he had convened with Greg Pease, Chief, Procurement Division, Finance and Administration, the Parks, Recreation & Community Services Department and the Office of General Counsel. Docks have to be repaired or replaced. Mr. Ferraro reported that after meeting with vendors, it became clear that the bidding process had to be easier or simpler. Mr. Pease reported that he had met with vendors and explained the bidding process. In his meetings, he underscores bonding requirements.

The Chair, Council Member Boyer, canvassed the Commission on whether or not the Commissioners needed more information on the status of waterways activation projects and whether the projects needed to be on the next scheduled meeting of the Waterways Commission. By a show of hands, the answer was in the affirmative for additional information and update provided at the next Commission meeting.

Joseph Kistel, Executive Director, Tisiri (Think It Sink It Reef It), provided the Commission with a video on the Tisiri Starship Reef. The video depicted the construction and deployment of the artificial reef. The CCA (Coastal Conservation Association) had an instrumental role in the operation.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:22 A.M.

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TAPE: November 14, 2018 Jacksonville Waterways Commission Meeting
Legislative Services Division (904) 630-1404

November 21, 2018
Posted: 4:00 P.M.