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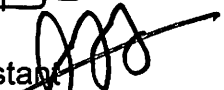
**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
RESEARCH DIVISION**

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 5, 2018

TO: The Honorable Lori Boyer, Chair, Jacksonville Waterways Commission

THROUGH: Jeff Clements, Chief of Research 

FROM: John J. Jackson, Research Assistant 

Pursuant to your request at the November 14, 2018 meeting of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission for information on a meeting in 2010 hosted by former City Council President Jack Webb, I am able to furnish the following information.

In July 2015, newly-installed Council President Jack Webb convened a meeting of stakeholders and interested parties to discuss the status of the St. Johns River's health. The Council President had made improving the health of the St. Johns River the theme of his installation remarks. The meeting was held on July 15, 2010 in the Council Chambers. Joining him as hosts were Mayor John Peyton, whose administration was a party to the St. Johns River Accord; State Senator John Thrasher, who had created the St. Johns River Legislative Caucus; and Council Member John R. Crescimbeni who was Chair of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission.

Former Council President Webb explained that decisions on who to invite to the conference was a collaborative effort between the Council President, the Mayor, Senator Thrasher and the St. Johns Riverkeeper, Neil Armingeon. The four of them communicated with civic leaders, public officer holders and citizens and extended a personal invitation to attend the meeting. They wanted the gathering to be broad-based.

Please find attached the minutes from the July 15, 2010 encapsulating remarks of the panelists.

Attachment



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HEALTH OF THE ST. JOHNS RIVER COMMUNITY CONVERSATION MEETING MINUTES - July 15, 2010 3:00 p.m.

Location: City Council Chamber, City Hall – St. James Building; 117 West Duval Street,

In attendance: Council President Webb, Mayor John Peyton, Senator John Thrasher, Council Member John Crescimbeni, Greg Strong, Dr. Jan Landsberg, Jeff Cole, Dr. Aaron Hilliard, Robert Schuster, Dr. Quinton White.

Meeting Convened: 3:05 p.m.

The Health of the St. Johns River Community Conversation was called to order by the host, Council President Jack Webb, on Thursday, July 15, 2010, at 3:06 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

The Council President welcomed those who came to participate and announced that the purpose of the gathering was to engage in dialogue and identifying issues that focused on the health and restoration of the St. Johns River. He then proceeded to introduce Senator John Thrasher, Mayor John Peyton and Council Member John Crescimbeni for opening remarks.

Senator John Thrasher remarked that the St. Johns River was one of our greatest assets and that he wanted to contribute whatever he could to efforts to restore the river's health. Having recently returned from the Panhandle and seeing how the Gulf oil spill had damaged Pensacola underscored the value of our own waterfront and its economic value. Senator Thrasher indicated that he had made a commitment to the late Senator John King to continue the fight for the river.

Mayor John Peyton welcomed all of the participants. He observed that on the previous day in the Council Chamber, he had presented a budget that gave priorities to measures and initiatives beneficial to the health of our waterways. He cited the City's financial commitment to the River Accord, the fertilizer ordinance, waste water treatment measures and the storm water fee that for the first time provided dedicated funding for water quality issues like septic tank phase-outs. He thanked all of the stakeholders present who advocate for the river.

Council Member John Crescimbeni, Chair of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission, announced that the Waterways Commission is ready to take on any recommendations that would improve the health of the river and our many other waterways.

Council President Webb proceeded to introduce the other panelists and asked them to remark on their agencies' role and responsibilities and to give their current analysis on concerns such as the algae bloom and the recent fish kill. In addition, he asked that they comment on what they felt the government's role was.

Greg Storm, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, said that his agency was concerned with any matter that adversely affected the environment. His agency closely monitors conditions of the river, coordinating its efforts and sharing its information with other agencies and the public. In investigating the root cause of the fish kill, there has been no definitive cause identified yet. His agency is implementing strategies to reduce the amount of nutrients in the river that would curtail the potential for algae bloom.

Dr. Jan Landsberg, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, made a PowerPoint presentation that encompassed an overview of the fish kill, a proposed sequence of events and fish pathology. She described how water samples and fish collected from the river were analyzed in laboratories. The effects of a salinity spike in the river and the subsequent release of toxins from a dying algae bloom into the system were linked to the destruction of red blood cells in the fish. Her agency's studies and analyses were trying to discern where the toxins were coming from and if the toxic activity was connected to the algae bloom.

Jeff Cole, St. Johns River Water Management District, said that his agency's responsibilities included collecting and testing water samples, providing cost-share funding that will result in the reduction of nutrients that are put into the river and providing technical assistance to local governments. He indicated that long-term problems required long-term solutions.

Dr. Aaron Hilliard, Duval County Department of Health, said that it was the responsibility of his agency to protect the health of the County's citizens. The Health Department analyzed data provided to the agency by the St. Johns River Water Management District and the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission that indicated any potential toxic threat to humans. His agency put out health advisories to warn the public on the importance of avoiding algae bloom and scum. A hot-line was available, as well.

Robert Schuster, COJ Environmental Protection Board, explained how that body worked with the City on a variety of concerns including the fertilizer ordinance. The Board saw educating the public on how environmental factors impact the community as key.

Dr. Quinton White, Jacksonville University Marine Science Research Institute, also underscored how instrumental educating the public is. He felt that we were not doing enough. Dr. White felt that the nutrients put into the river cause the algae bloom that, in turn, kills fish. He felt that agencies' funds were being cut year after year resulting in a reduction of much needed research. The vitality of the river has an enormous economic impact.

The Mayor observed that the St. Johns River is not a Jacksonville problem, per se, but a Northeast Florida problem.

Senator Thrasher indicated that we needed a plan that would acquire state and federal funding for waterways projects on an ongoing basis similar to the funding plan implemented in the 1990s for the Everglades.

After extensive comments from the public, with responses from the panelists, the Council President adjourned the session at 5:45 p.m.

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07.15.10

Posted: 1:00 p.m.