

**Jacksonville Waterways Commission**

**Lori Boyer, Chair**

**JACKSONVILLE WATERWAYS COMMISSION**

**PRELIMINARY MEETING MINUTES**

*These minutes are unofficial until reviewed and approved*

*by the Waterways Commission at a future meeting*

May 15, 2019

City Council Chamber

1st floor, City Hall

9:30 a.m.

**Attendance:** City Council MembersLori Boyer (Chair), Al Ferraro (Vice Chair), Bill Gulliford Jim Love (Alternate),Jill Haskell, Lindsey Brock,Garrett Barket, Steve Swann, Matt Brockelman, Jed Davis, Steven Davis, Ray Pringle, Marshall Adkison (ex officio), Bobby Baker (ex officio)

**Excused:** Rep. Cord Byrd, Robert Birtalan

**Also in attendance:** Dr. Quinton White and Dr. Gerry Pinto – Jacksonville University; Susan Grandin – Office of General Counsel; Jim Suber – Waterways Coordinator; Jessica Matthews, Jessica Smith and Melanie Wilkes– Legislative Services Division; Richard Distel – Council Research Division

Chairwoman Lori Boyer called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. and the attendees introduced themselves for the record.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Waterways Commission meeting of April 10, 2019 were **approved as distributed**.

Storm Resiliency and Infrastructure Development Review Committee

Ms. Boyer gave a background of the work being done with the Storm Resiliency and Infrastructure Development Review Committee. As a follow-up to the St. John’s River report and discussions concerning water quality impact and loss of wetlands, there was a focus on issues such as development approvals, filling of wetlands and the authority the City had to make an impact on these issues. Then 9 months ago a resolution was adopted which encouraged the Council President to appointment a task force or subcommittee to study those issues and find ways to enhance the storm water infrastructure and resiliency to flooding. This led to the Committee to be formed with leaders in the field. Ms. Boyer stated that there will be a piece of legislation filed at City Council on May 15th concerning these issues.

Legislation Review

**2019-331** (Floodplain management regulations)

Bill Killingsworth detailed the 5 aspects which are covered in the legislation. 1) Sets a 25-foot floodway set back. 2) Changes the required finished floor flood elevation from 1 foot to 2 feet. 3) Sets a standard for field material astral a-3 or better which would be determined by a geotechnical engineer. 4) Clarifies, if you are in the floodway or riverine that there is a no rise standard. 5) Changes the appeal process to now go to the Director of Planning and if appealed it would go to the City Council.

CM Ferraro asked if there was any basis for changing the flood base from 1 to 2 feet. Mr. Killingsworth said the decision was based off looking at pier cities. Chair Boyer stated that these 5 steps are part of a process to enhance the City’s standard and be more resilient and less prone to flood damage. Mr. Swann asked if the changes would be enough to raises the CRS rating. Chair Boyer said that during the subcommittee meeting they went over the changes and had discussions with FEMA. The changes in the bill are modeled around cities in Florida that implemented similar changes to significantly raise their CRS rating.

CM Ferraro and CM Gulliford asked to be added as co-sponsors to the bill.

Public Comment: John Nooney read the legislation aloud.

The Waterways Commission **recommended approval of 2019-252** by a vote of 10-0.

No Wake Zone Signs

Susan Grandin, Office of General, gave an overview on a request from CM Ferraro to investigate the speed zone signs near the Shad Creek Bridge. There was a citizen complaint about boats speeding around Shad Creek. The citizen stated that speed signs used to be present at that bridge. After discussions with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation law enforcement staff, the FWC said that there has never been a sign in that area. If a sign was to be put in that area, there are two signs available. The manatee zone sign and a boating safety sign would be the possible signs put in if it was decided on to need a sign. Ms. Grandin explained the process of filling out an application to the FWC with an ordinance so the 300 ft. zone around the bridge could be regulated. The speed of the boater would not be regulated by the manatee zone. Ms. Boyer added that she has used Google Street View to prove that signs previously existed in areas. Mr. Swann stated that a few years ago the bridge was under construction and during that time there would have been a manatee zone sign. Mr. Swann clarified that if the City wanted to get a manatee sign around the bridge the process would be to apply for a uniform waterway permit through FWC regulating the size and placement of sign. Mr. Adkinson suggested a committee to investigate wake zone signage around Jacksonville.

McCoys Creek Grant

Geoff Sample, Intergovernmental Coordinator at the St. Johns River Water Management District, talked about the timing of the grant contract and how the cost share program will work. The city initially submitted the application for the district wide cost share funding. The projects are eligible for a maximum district cost share of $1.5 million per projects. Funding is limited exclusively to construction related costs and projects may span a maximum of 2 years but must start by June 30, 2020 or completed by September 20, 2021. The first step is entering into a contract which would need to be signed within 90 days. The city received the grant contract on May 14th and is in the process of looking over the details. The grant contract was reviewed by staff based on the core missions of the districts and the quantifiable benefits. The contract scored the best in terms of cost effectiveness and the core mission of flood preparedness.

The flood protection project involves the restoration of 1.5 miles of McCoys Creek in the adjacent floodplain. Including restoration of the creek which includes dredging, reshaping and the creation of various natural system types. The flood protection project covers approximately 52 acres, containing 62 structures for a 100-year storm event.

Hurricane Dock Repairs

Bob Skalitzy from the Parks and Recreation Department gave an update from last time it was discussed. The focus had been on how to get docks functional after a hurricane. Currently the city is in the process of purchasing 100 feet of used floating docks, so that those can be on hand. The city is now looking for a quote on how much it would cost to install the docks. A design build marine RFP contract is being opened, so this would give the City the opportunity to use the current contract or the RFP to install docks. These docks being purchased will not be reimbursable through FEMA. Mr. Adkinson emphasized the importance of having these backup docks.

Zoo Dock Access & Water Taxi Summary

The owner and operator of the Water Taxi service was not able to attend the meeting, so Mr. Davis asked if it could be postponed until June.

Mr. Davis detailed the background of where the main dock at the zoo was destroyed due to Irma. Since the hurricane damage the zoo has been looking for what would be the best location for a new dock. Brian Burket from the Parks and Recreation Department detailed the proposal submitted by Prosser for the design and permitting of a new dock. The current location of the dock has a long and shallow approach and the planning for implementation is based on where is the most sustainable location for the new dock. An alternative location on the eastern side of the property where there are two concrete piers has been the focus for the new dock. The design scope will focus on the structural integrity of these piers. The goal is to have the same capacity in this new location, which would be for 10 to 12 boats and a water taxi service. This design process has just begun. Mr. Davis asked for an approximate timing for the studying, permitting and building. Mr. Burket’s best guess was that after a few months there will be a couple design options and once a decision is made by the zoo then it will be based on how long the review process will be for permitting. Early next year is the goal for having a design and permits in hand to begin the construction. Mr. Davis shared the excitement the zoo has for this new location that allows for more boats to be docked, deeper water and safer location from storms. Mr. Adkinson asked what the committee can do to help move this construction forward at a faster pace. Mr. Burket stated that the speed was based on the ability to receive grant funding. Mr. Pringle echoed the statements of Mr. Adkinson about how long this process has taken. Mr. Swann gave a brief history of the studies of water depth post-Irma.

St. Johns River Status Report – Water Quality and Manatees

Dr. White stated that the algae is not looking good and will get worse before it gets better due to months of impact from Irma and the water coming from Southern Florida that is triggering the algae to bloom. Salinity has returned to normal numbers since Irma. Water is warming up to the 80s. Currently trying to get the NOAA Port System back on at Jacksonville University, so they can measure the salinity and temperature of the water. In the San Marco area, it is being seen that the salinity numbers are increasing, which is typical to pre-Irma. Rainfall is lower than normal at 12.5 inches since the beginning of the year. Low rainfall will be the one thing that can slow down the algae bloom. Dr. White highlighted concerns about the phosphorus levels when the water begins to heat up. Mr. Pringle asked what is being done to correct the issues with nutrients coming down stream. Dr. White deferred to the resolution that was being presented later on in the Committee.

Dr. Gerry Pinto of JU’s Marine Science Research Institute said that manatees are back in town with many sightings from the public quite regularly. There have been two manatee mortalities, one via watercraft on April 29th reported near the Landing. The other one was reported at the JEA San Carlos Creek area with an undetermined cause of death. Mr. Adkinson asked what size watercraft caused the death of the manatee. Dr. Pinto said that information is not normally given in the report.

New Business

The commissioners reviewed a handout grouping previously-discussed Waterways Commission topics into several focus areas with the intention that one Commission member be designated as the point person for all the topics within each focus area.

Lindsey Brock asked to be on groups 4 & 9.

Jill Haskell asked to be on groups 8 &11.

Steve Swann asked to be on groups 2 &14.

Lisa Rinaman, St. Johns Riverkeeper, gave details in regard to the Resolution that was handed out to the committee which expresses the Waterways Commission’s gratitude to Governor DeSantis for convening the State’s Blue-Green Algae Task Force and requesting that the Governor include Northeast Florida and the St. Johns River in the scope of that task force. Ms. Rinaman echoed the statements of Dr. White about the algae bloom and the concerns with elevated levels of phosphorus. The high level of toxins in the algae is a real cause for concern. At the end of session for the State Legislature all water quality legislation did not make it to a vote. Good news coming from the State, there was significant funding from the Governor’s office towards reductions. The focus on relief in the short term, such as a shad fish collection in Lake George which helps to remove the phosphorus from the water. In terms of the Governor’s task force Ms. Rinaman said that the Blue-Green Algae Task Force is focused on Lake Okeechobee and this resolution would be a formal request for the Governor to include Northeast Florida and St. Johns River in his scope of the task force.

The resolution was approved by the Waterways Commission by a vote of 10-0.

Old Business

Mr. Adkinson asked CM Gulliford about the docks at Mayport. CM Gulliford said that the process is still ongoing. The docks are still under design, and the finalized design should be available soon. Mr. Davis asked the Parks Department for an update on the River and Post dock. Brian Burket said that it is currently in a holding pattern. Due to the size restriction, the design needed to utilize the buffer area and to use that area they would need permission from the owner. Mr. Adkinson emphasized the need for action on this process.

Public Comment

Captain Mike Getchell, representing the Jacksonville Marine Transportation Exchange, emphasized the importance of educating the boating public on the dangers of navigating the waters in Mile Point Turn. He referenced the company, Great Lakes Dredge and Dock which has 29 vessels working in an area that is approximately a mile long. CM Gulliford asked Mr. Getchell if they have had conversations with JaxPort regarding the safety concerns for the public navigating water that is being dredged and how they could be utilized to help slow down the traffic. Jim Suber stated that companies working on large projects have historically asked to be able to put up signage. Mr. Adkinson agreed that it is important to educate the public but said it will be hard to do. Mr. Adkinson said that what would help the situation at a faster pace would be adding more lights and lighting on the barges.

John Nooney talked about the issues downtown regarding the kayaking launch.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:23 a.m.

Minutes: Richard Distel, Council Research

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5.31.19 Posted 4:30 p.m.

Tapes: Waterways Commission meeting– LSD

5.15.19