

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION**

**URBAN SERVICES DISTRCT SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**Don Davis Room, 1st floor, City Hall**

**November 8, 2019**

**2:30 p.m.**

**In attendance:** Commissioners Ann-Marie Knight (Chair), Frank Denton, Charles Griggs, Celestine Mills (arr. 2:40)

**Also**: Paige Johnston – Office of General Counsel; Jeff Clements and Anthony Baltiero – Council Research Division; Crystal Shemwell and Ladayija Nichols – Legislative Services Division

**Meeting Convened**: 2:37 p.m.

Chairwoman Knight convened the meeting and reviewed the committee’s goal statement for clarity. Commissioner Denton recommended several wording changes, including changing the word “investment” to “development” so as to avoid a potential knee-jerk negative reaction on the part of those who may associate the word “investment” with “tax increase”. Commissioner Griggs felt the use of the word “investment” was specifically intended to draw a parallel with the Downtown Investment Authority as a mechanism for bringing attention to bear on a particular area in need of redevelopment.

Commissioner Griggs introduced guest speaker David Garfunkel, Project Lead with Lift Jax. Mr. Garfunkel described the mission of Lift Jax to eradicate generational poverty in Jacksonville and said that poverty takes on 4 fundamental characteristics in Jacksonville: 1) it is concentrated in certain areas, particularly near the urban core; 2) it is generational – children born into poverty tend to have lower income as adults; 3) it is racialized – people of color, particularly African-Americans, experience higher levels of poverty, on average, than white residents; and 4) it is multifaceted, manifesting in different ways, and there is no single driver of or solution to poverty. He said that Jacksonville has higher rates of poverty, on average, than the State of Florida or the United States and distinguished between the federal poverty level and the United Way’s ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) poverty level. The highest poverty in Jacksonville (30% or more of people living in poverty) is concentrated in 29 census tracts centered on downtown and the near-Northside and near-Westside. He explained a graph showing that children born into the lowest and highest income levels are very likely to stay in those levels throughout their lives. The most concentrated level of poverty coincides with the parts of the city that have the highest level of African-American population, demonstrating the racialization of the problem. High rates of poverty are highly correlated with other social problems including unemployment, crime, incarceration rates, low birth weight babies, life expectancy and education levels.

Lift Jax is in the early planning stages of implementing the Purpose Built Communities model that is a strategy for holistic neighborhood revitalization that aims to root out concentrated, generational poverty. The pillars of the program are mixed income housing, a cradle-to-college educational pipeline, community wellness, and long-term economic viability. Part of the plan is the establishment of a not-for-profit corporation in each neighborhood to quarterback the revitalization process with the assistance of and for the benefit of the current residents of the community. He cited the East Lake community in Atlanta as an example of the success of a purpose-built community. He noted that even impoverished neighborhoods have valuable community assets to be leveraged for improvements. Root causes of the current situation need to be acknowledged and faced head-on.

In response to a question from Commissioner Griggs about what does and does not work in the various programs already at work in the city, Mr. Garfunkel said that scattered efforts at a relatively high level are ineffective and his agency’s model will deal intensively with one small neighborhood at a time to radically improve its condition. He said that having paid staff whose job is to convene neighborhood residents, service providers, businesses, and other stakeholders is important to coordinating existing efforts and maximizing current and future investments. Mr. Denton asked about the role of LISC and the Newtown Success Zone; Mr. Garfunkel said they operate on somewhat the same model as coordinators and facilitators and not so much as direct service providers. Lift Jax is happy to partner with them. In response to another question, he said that the 1000 in 1000 program deals more with individual families than neighborhoods and is spread citywide rather than concentrated. EPIC Communities is another entity working on these issues, as well as Northwest Jacksonville Community Development Corporation. Mr. Garfunkel said that the problems are very large and will require the cooperation and investment of the public and private sectors, including city government, particularly with regards to infrastructure, zoning and permitting. In response to a question about funding, Mr. Garfunkel said that Florida Blue is contributing the funding for his salary and the organization will be seeking funds from philanthropists and granting agencies and hopes to help coordinate existing funded efforts to produce greater efficiencies and impact.

Commissioner Griggs said that he sees the role of an Urban Core Investment Authority as coordinating the work of many different actors and leveraging funding resources into strategic investments in a coordinated, cohesive plan. Commissioner Denton recommended that community buy-in be gathered to support the Urban Services District Committee’s recommendations to the full CRC and ultimately to the City Council. Chairwoman Knight echoed the fact that there are many actors in the field providing a wide variety of services. What is needed is a full inventory of all the available resources and coordination among them to maximize impact. In response to a question from Mr. Denton, Mr. Garfunkel said that his agency has looked at federal Opportunity Zones and found them to be scattered and haphazard in overlapping parts, but not all, of impoverished neighborhoods. Care needs to be taken that opportunity zones are located and used for the benefit of the area residents and not manipulated for other purposes.

Commissioner Griggs gave an overview of a handout entitled Urban Services District Equity Atlas, which is a tool used by other cities to track changes in measures of inclusive prosperity in the areas of people (educational attainment, median earnings, income growth, police use of force), place (extreme commuting patterns, affordable housing, business ownership) and power (voting, political representation, racial equality income, rent burden). Commissioner Denton suggested the addition of several more measures that are very household-focused (i.e. single-parent households, children living with grandparents, some measure of family and community strength). Commissioner Mills noted Jacksonville’s lack of a rent control ordinance that could help keep housing affordable. Mr. Griggs said he is also working on identifying City policies that may have had a negative impact on the urban core neighborhoods, either intentionally or unintentionally. Mr. Denton said that he has learned of a foundation that identifies programs that actually work to help reduce poverty and other social ills and he will investigate what their research has found.

Chairwoman Knight distributed and discussed a Community Health Needs Survey focused on zip code 32206 produced by her employer, UF Health. The results are very similar to the data and maps already reviewed by the committee, showing the same trends and locations of positive and negative factors. Anthony Baltiero, City Council Research Assistant, answered several questions about the numerous items of data produced and bundled by him for the commission’s information. Ms. Knight wondered whether there was value in looking at City budgets over the years to determine how public investments have impacted the community over the years. Paige Johnston said that looking at budgets and Capital Improvement Programs is very difficult to make sense of; it might help to talk to former Council Auditors who might have a perspective on how infrastructure expenditures were made over the years. Commissioner Denton wondered if it might be more productive to compare conditions now with conditions at the time of consolidation to get a sense of how the community has changed or not changed over the years without having to look at 50 years of budgets and capital project spending. Jeff Clements suggested that there might be value in comparing the conditions in the city and county prior to consolidation as described in the original *Blueprint for Improvement* with current conditions (i.e. percentage of residents on wells and septic tanks vs. public water and sewer, miles of unpaved roads, drainage ditches, etc.).

Future meetings

LISC will be asked to address Opportunity Zones and 1000 in 1000; former Council Member and current School Board member Warren Jones has been invited and will have a historical perspective on City Council; United Way and the Community Foundation; Paul Tutwiler – Northwest Jax CDC. The members compared calendar availability for meeting planning purposes. Paige Johnston described the meetings already scheduled by the other two subcommittees in December and early January and said the full commission will be meeting on November 22nd in the morning. The committee decided on December 6, 2:30- 4:30 p.m.; December 13, 9- 11 a.m.; and December 19, 1-3 p.m. for future meetings.

Public Comment

John Nooney urged the CRC to propose a charter amendment requiring all projects receiving public assistance from the DIA and the Community Redevelopment Areas to provide public access to waterways. He cited the Florida Ocean Alliance Strategic Plan for Florida’s Coasts and its importance to Jacksonville’s waterways. The CRC can be a powerful advocate for public access to the waterways.

**Meeting adjourned:** 4:30 p.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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