

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION**

**URBAN SERVICES DISTRCT SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - amended**

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

**January 13, 2020**

**9:00 a.m.**

**In attendance:** Commissioners Ann-Marie Knight (Chair), Charles Griggs, Celestine Mills (arr. 9:23)

**Excused:** Commissioner Frank Denton

**Also**: Paige Johnston – Office of General Counsel; Jeff Clements and Anthony Baltiero – Council Research Division; Jessica Matthews, Juliette Williams and Jessica Smith – Legislative Services Division; Melanie Wilkes – Council Staff Services

**Meeting Convened**: 9:17 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

Lacking a quorum, the minutes of the December 13, 2019 meeting were deferred.



Commissioner Griggs said that in his contact with the community he hears discontent over the inability of the public to be involved and express their thoughts to the Charter Revision Commission and its subcommittees. He recommends that the subcommittee have a public meeting sometime before it finalizes its recommendations to give the public an opportunity to express its thoughts and suggested the Legends Center or a public library as potential locations. Mr. Griggs said that the public suggestions he has received thus far mostly relate to the big stories in the local news that naturally dominate the public’s attention. Chairwoman Knight suggested that the meeting be scheduled after the committee has developed some recommendations to which the public can then react and add suggestions of their own.

Approval of Minutes

A quorum having arrived, the minutes of the December 13, 2019 meeting were **approved unanimously as distributed**.

Commissioner Updates continued

Jessica Matthew, Chief of the City Council Legislative Services Division, noted that Aundra Wallace, CEO of the JAXUSA Partnership, has been invited to the January 17th meeting, which needs to be delayed somewhat because committee members will be attending the Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast that morning. The meeting start will be delayed to 10 a.m. and Mr. Wallace will be asked to appear at that time. Theresa Eichner of the City’s Finance and Administration Department, who manages the City’s capital improvement program, is scheduled for the January 24th meeting.

Commissioner Mills said that she has attended several neighborhood association meetings to solicit input for the commission and has heard concerns about infrastructure, lack of job opportunities, the low quality of retail opportunities in the urban core, crime, and limited opportunities for positive youth activities.

Chairwoman Knight said that she has been scheduling meetings with individual City Council members to ask about their ideas and concerns for the commission. She felt that the subcommittee has gotten a great deal of research done and spoken to a number of experts in areas relevant to the committee’s work, but asked the members to review the minutes and suggest anyone else that should be invited before the committee begins crafting recommendations. Commissioner Griggs said that tracking down policies embedded in legislation over the 50 years since consolidation has been a difficult task, but he feels that the committee has gathered enough data to craft good recommendations. Jeff Clements of the City Council Research Division summarized his review of the Mayor’s budget messages for the first several years of consolidation and the spending priorities and achievements expressed by the mayor in those first few years, including the extension of public infrastructure and services to the former county area.

The committee talked about septic tank phase-outs and the City’s prioritization list. Mr. Clements answered questions posed previously by the Chair about “infrastructure available” vs. “no infrastructure” septic tanks, which refers to the availability of a public sewer system mains adjacent or near the property in question to which the property owners could connect their sewer disposal lines if they so chose. The reference to “water quality benefit” vs. “no water quality benefit” refers to the proximity of the septic tank to a stream, river or other water body that would benefit from the elimination of the septic tank. The city has long had difficulty meeting state and federal clean water standards due to excessive nutrients and bacteria, particularly in tributaries to the St. Johns River, so part of the ranking process for septic tank phase-outs has to do with whether the elimination of the tanks in particular areas would have the dual benefit assisting in the water clean-up process.

Planning the Committee’s Report

Chairwoman Knight initiated a discussion of the subcommittee’s report drafting process with the question “so where do we go now?” She indicated that she is not so interested in what hasn’t been done in the past as in what can be done in the future. Potential options the committee has heard about for undertaking the work that needs be done include: an independent urban core investment authority; a community redevelopment area/ tax increment district; an economic development trust fund; the intensive care neighborhood model; or project funding via the City’s annual Capital Improvement Plan.

Commissioner Griggs said he is firmly in support of an urban core investment authority mirroring what the Downtown Investment Authority does in its area of jurisdiction. The area of need should be determined within the boundaries of the previous Urban Service District 1 based on the biggest disparities in conditions. It should develop a long-term plan to address and remedy the disparities. Several options for funding sources should be suggested: community benefit agreements with developers; a community redevelopment area/tax increment district; a dedicated millage supporting a bond issue; other. He said the committee can’t be shy about stating the long-standing need and recommending real solutions to remedy the very real disparities. The new agency would develop a long-range strategic plan and funding mechanism and mobilize resources and coordinate with other agencies and plans. Commissioner Mills said she agrees with that proposal but noted that previous guest speakers have cautioned against isolating the area with a dedicated funding source that the rest of the community then feels free to ignore. Accountability is needed and the public has to see real benefit from this new organization and be confident that real progress will take place. The public is very skeptical after so many years of failed initiatives that have left their communities behind. Chairwoman Knight said the CRC is tasked to develop the best recommendations it can, but can’t really guarantee outcomes. It is incumbent on the commission to craft the best plan possible and make that recommendation.

Commissioner Griggs said he doesn’t see that the Northwest Jacksonville Economic Development Fund has a strategic approach to the projects it supports – it doesn’t seem to connect to a greater vision, unlike the DIA’s investment plan that has specific goals for attracting a critical mass of residents and businesses to the downtown area. He believes there’s not enough strategic planning going on for the urban core, just lots of isolated projects here and there that are individually fine, but may not add up to a cohesive plan leading to an overall defined goal. More coordination and cohesiveness is needed.

Chairwoman Knight said the committee needs to lay out the “who, what, why, when and how” of an urban core investment authority and explain why it was recommended and how it will work. The pros and cons need to be summarized and alternatives examined to prove that this is the best alternative of those considered. The committee also needs to explain the specific charter amendment required to accomplish the recommendation because that’s what the CRC is supposed to be about – improving the City Charter. She recommended the members re-read the Blueprint for Improvement II to see why its recommendations failed and avoid that fate for this commission’s recommendations. Commissioner Griggs volunteered to start drafting a proposal for the committee to critique. Ms. Knight asked each of the committee members to draft some thoughts and bullet points to be compiled into a first draft by January 30th for a committee meeting discussion. A committee meeting will be scheduled for 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. on the 30th. The committee discussed numerous date and location options for two town hall meetings, starting with the availability of public sites (community centers, libraries), commissioners and Council staff. January 30th at the Legends Center was selected. Commissioner Mills offered to check the availability of the Open Arms Church for February 18th if a public building is not available on that date. January 27th at the Highlands Regional Library was discussed as a possible backup if the February 18th date doesn’t work.

Future committee meeting dates were discussed and scheduled: January 17th, 24th and 30th and February 14th and 21st.

Public Comment

John Nooney said that he had attended the latest meeting of the CRC’s Strategic Planning Committee and referenced City Council Resolution 2013-79-A which encouraged the Mayor to form a "Council of Leaders" with CEOs of JEA, JTA, JAA, JPA, Downtown Investment Authority, Chief Operating Officer of the Office of Economic Development, School Board Superintendent, and the Presidents of the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce, Jacksonville Civic Council and the City Council. He said he is a great proponent of public access to waterways and repeated his request that the Commission propose a charter amendment requiring that any City-supported projects in the DIA or CRA jurisdictions must guarantee public access to waterways.

**Meeting adjourned:** 11:01 a.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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