

**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**

**February 21, 2020**

**9:30 a.m.**

**In attendance:** Commissioners Ann-Marie Knight (Chair), Charles Griggs, Celestine Mills, Frank Denton (arr. 10:30)

**Also**: Commissioner W.C. Gentry (arr. 10:57); Paige Johnston – Office of General Counsel; Jeff Clements and Anthony Baltiero – Council Research Division; Juliette Williams and Jessica Smith – Legislative Services Division; Melanie Wilkes – Council Staff Services

**Meeting Convened**: 9:35 a.m.

Public Comment

John Nooney thanked the committee for taking public comment. He said that Jacksonville’s waterways are a global asset and the public needs access to them. He urged the committee to recommend a Charter amendment requiring any project supported by the DIA, the CRAs or the proposed UCDA to mandate public access in any publicly supported project. The City has proposed projects in the past that did not include a public access requirement. Unless Jacksonville guarantees public access to waterways, people will go to other counties where access is better.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the December 13, 2019 and February 14, 2020 meetings and the February 18, 2020 committee town hall meeting were **approved unanimously as distributed**.

Committee Discussion

Paige Johnston suggested that the Public Participation opportunity be offered to the public before the committee begins discussion to ensure that the public has its chance to speak before a quorum might be lost later in the meeting.

Public Participation

John Nooney repeated his earlier comments about the importance of public access to waterways and encouraged passage of a requirement that access be mandated via a Charter amendment. He lamented the lack of testimony to the committee by members of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission and other waterways experts on water access-related issues since the topic was referred to this committee by the full commission. Mr. Nooney then departed the meeting.

Commissioner Griggs questioned the nature of the challenge about public access to waterways that Mr. Nooney consistently remarks about to the committees. Paige Johnston speculated that perhaps Mr. Nooney is referring to private property that receives public project funding since public property would very likely be open to public access already. She used the example of the Armory building that Mr. Nooney frequently references, which would have leased the building to a private entity with no requirement for public access to Hogan’s Creek adjacent to the building. That ordinance was subsequently withdrawn. Public access to the waterways over privately owned property (i.e. the dock used for public water access to the Riverside Arts Market) is dealt with now on a case-by-case basis in negotiations over the parameters of the economic development agreement with the private party. The committee felt that Mr. Nooney’s concerns would more appropriately dealt with by the full Charter Revision Commission rather than by this committee. Commissioner Griggs suggested that perhaps the Waterways Commission could be asked to opine on Mr. Nooney’s request for the full CRC to consider.

Chairwoman Knight distributed and discussed some comparative statistics provided by the Health Department showing disparities in poverty, employment, infant mortality, median home value and household income between Health Zone 1 and the entire city. Commissioner Griggs recommended that the data be adjusted to compare Health Zone 1 with the remainder of the city excluding Zone 1 for a true reflection of the inequity of conditions. The committee agreed to request the information in revised form and insert it in the report when received.

**The subcommittee was in recess from 10:21 to 10:30.**

The subcommittee reviewed the transmittal memo sent from Commissioner Denton with his latest revised document. Mr. Denton explained his revisions to reformat the document to match the format of the reports from the other committees and his addition of some transition language between the findings and funding sections. He explained how he attempted to incorporate Commissioner Mills’ comments from the recent town hall meeting about the need for more “passion” in the report and the incorporation of ideas proposed by former City Council member Bill Bishop in a 2014 *Folio Weekly* article. He explained that he did not incorporate her suggestion for a “Marshall Plan” for total revitalization of the urban core because he felt the consensus of the committee from earlier discussions was that that recommendation was not likely to be adopted by the full Charter Revision Commission or ultimately by the City Council. Ms. Mills said that the community expects to read the truth in the CRC’s report and see its concerns really expressed. She thinks the 2014 *Blueprint for Improvement II* report covered many of these same issues and was well written, but produced no action. She advocated for trying a new, more aggressive tack with the CRC’s report to somehow touch the City Council members’ hearts and finally prod some real action.

Commissioner Denton noted his addition of a paragraph on page 6 to attempt to address Ms. Mills’ concerns and suggested that the CRC develop a communications strategy to market the final report to the City Council, the Mayor and the general public. The committee discussed ways to follow up on the work of the CRC after the final report is released to continue pressing public officials for action. Mr. Griggs recommended holding a noticed meeting after the committee presents its report to the full CRC to talk about a publicity campaign for its recommendation.

Commissioner Mills suggested that the recommendation include a dedicated funding stream from the Capital Improvement Program as previously discussed. Mr. Denton noted a reference in the report to a “catch up” mechanism that is general but introduces the concept of setting aside funds to help the target area to overcome its disparities. The group discussed the wisdom of including versus not including a specific dollar amount of funding needed to meet the area’s needs. Ms. Mills suggested the need to strongly recommend the hiring of staff for the Urban Core Development Authority with a specific timeline to get the work underway as soon as possible. Mr. Griggs suggested that a request for funding be included in the FY20/21 budget request and that a UCDA board be appointed by the start of the new fiscal year on October 1st with the goal of hiring an executive director by early in 2021.

The members discussed addition of additional clarifying language in several places.

The committee reviewed several possible UCDA boundary maps, one based on census tracts, one based on zip codes, and a third based on Health Zone 1 but with revisions made by the committee after its discussion at the town hall meeting last week. Commissioner Griggs advocated using the Health Zone 1-based map but omitting the area bounded by I-295, Pritchard Road and Old Kings Road which is largely industrial.

Commissioner Denton will make all of the requested amendments and circulate the document to the committee.

**Motion** (Griggs): approve the committee recommendation as discussed in this meeting, including the revised map – **approved unanimously**.

**Meeting adjourned:** 11:34 a.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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Posted 2.25.20 5:30 p.m.