

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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4TH FLOOR, CITY HALL

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202

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**SPECIAL COMMITTTEE ON RESILIENCY MEETING MINUTES - amended**

**Virtual meeting – no physical location**

 **June 17, 2020**

**2:15 p.m.**

**Location:** Virtual meeting – no physical location

**In attendance:** Council Members Matt Carlucci (Chair), Randy DeFoor, Garrett Dennis, Joyce Morgan, Michael Boylan

*delete* [**Excused**: Council Member Michael Boylan]

**Also**: Susan Grandin, Jason Teal and Kealey West – Office of General Counsel; Jeff Clements– Council Research Division; Steve Cassada, Melanie Wilkes and Eric Grantham - Council Support Services; Cheryl Brown – Council Secretary/ Director; Kristen Reed, Helena Parola, Susan Kelly – Planning and Development Department; Sean Lahav – Northeast Florida Regional Council; Dr. Josh Geller and Evan Maslin – UNF; Phillip Peterson – Council Auditor’s Office; Rachel Zimmer – Mayor’s Office; Mark Middlebrook – Timucuan Parks Foundation; John Pappas and Bill Joyce – Public Works Department

**Meeting Convened**: 2:23 p.m.

Council Member Carlucci called the meeting to order and the attendees were introduced for the record.

Dr. Joshua Gellers, an assistant professor of political science and public administration at the University of North Florida, expressed his pleasure at the Special Committee’s efforts to tackle the resiliency issue. He introduced Evan Maslin, a senior at UNF in economics and international studies to make a presentation on green infrastructure and the “greening” of Jacksonville. Mr. Maslin noted that Jacksonville faces a number of environmental challenges including biodiversity and habitat loss, stormwater runoff, sea level rise and coastal flooding, urban heating and greenhouse gas emissions, and water and air pollution. These issues occur within the larger context of interconnected economic, social and environmental factors. He suggested the establishment of a Side Lot Program to reclaim vacant and underused lots in neighborhoods using a bottom-up approach to address specific neighborhood needs and desires. Vacant lots are identified, classified, acquired, redeveloped for productive use (urban agriculture, affordable housing, constructed wetland, etc.) and some are eventually transferred to new ownership. Mr. Maslin discussed the example of a side lot program in Binghamton NY.

Council Member Dennis suggested that the City explore opportunities to convert vacant lots for affordable housing purposes. Council Member DeFoor suggested combinations of workforce housing and urban farming if lots are big enough and recommended adding it to the Special Committee’s portfolio of issues to be studied. In response to a question about how the lots would be acquired, Mr. Maslin said that in the Binghamton example the Broome County Land Bank purchases properties through the foreclosure process and makes them available to the City of Binghamton for the side lot program. Bill Joyce of the Public Works Department said that his department maintains an inventory of vacant City properties. Council Member Dennis suggested revisiting the idea of the “batch foreclosure” process the City used several years ago to deal with foreclosing on large numbers of properties that had liens to clear their titles. He will add the side lot program concept to his subcommittee’s work program. Arthur Bides, a citizen participating in the call, asked if community groups might be able to purchase the lots to use them for uses like urban gardens. Jason Teal of the General Counsel’s Office described how the batch foreclosure process worked in the early 2000s to acquire properties for affordable housing purposes. The program was discontinued because properties were being foreclosed and acquired faster than affordable housing developers could use them and the City was responsible for maintaining them. John Sapora of LISC Jacksonville noted the existence of a detailed study of neighborhood conditions by the Schimberg Center for Housing Studies at the University of Florida that could be a resource for identifying potential properties.

Mr. Maslin talked about gentrification concerns and Dr. Gellers noted the importance of engaging the public directly and in discussing the program in concrete and understandable terms with the community. Council Member Morgan said that her subcommittee on community engagement will be thinking about those issues. Council Member DeFoor suggested picking a target area of the city to do a trial project to demonstrate feasibility.

Chairman Carlucci invited more good ideas to be presented to the Special Committee by audience members who have wide ranging experience and many good ideas.

**Meeting adjourned:** 3:26 p.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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