

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON RESILIENCY**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONTINUED OPERATIONS**

**Virtual meeting via Zoom – no physical location**

 **July 30, 2020**

**8:30 a.m.**

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

**In attendance:** Subcommittee members Garrett Dennis (Chair), Angela DeMonbreun, Lisa King, Joe Loretta, Amanda Polematidis, Jim Robinson, Jim Seaton, Nikole Ward

**Also**: City Council Members Randy DeFoor, Joyce Morgan; Cheryl Brown – Council Secretary/Director; Jeff Clements, Yvonne Mitchell and Anthony Baltiero – Council Research Division; Steve Cassada, Eric Grantham and Melanie Wilkes – Council Support Services; Susan Stewart – Jaxport; John Pappas – Public Works Department; Kristen Reed – Planning and Development Department; Susan Grandin – Office of General Counsel; Kurtis Wilson and Hai Vu – JEA; Sean Lahav – North East Florida Regional Council; Phillip Peterson and Tommy Carter – Council Auditor’s Office

**Meeting Convened**: 8:31 a.m.

Chairman Dennis convened the meeting and a roll call of the attendees was taken.

The Chairman asked Public Works Director John Pappas to review the department’s preparations being made for the potential tropical storm approaching over the weekend. Mr. Pappas described the drainage system and outfall spot cleaning (92 locations) that is taking place now in preparation for potential heavy rains. Council Member Morgan suggested that the Resiliency Committee could potentially recommend a list of priority areas to remedy so that they won’t be problems in the future. Mr. Pappas described the list that has already been developed of those priority areas and said they are gradually being addressed over time with available funding. Council Member DeFoor asked that the list of the 92 areas be publicized in a way that the general public can know where the work is taking place. Jim Seaton asked about how the storm preparation cleaning areas are identified and prioritized, which Mr. Pappas said is primarily done by general public and council member reports and staff knowledge of the drainage system. Mr. Pappas said the department’s current ongoing drainage study will also identify and prioritize system needs. The study will also examine storm parameters for design (designing for 4 inches of rain in 24 hours is very different than designing for 4 inches in one hour, which sometimes happens in Jacksonville). Lisa King asked about the City’s relationship with FDOT and dealing with problems on state roads. Mr. Pappas said his department has a very good working relationship with FDOT and they share information about drainage problem areas, but Public Works only works on City, not state, roads. He knows that FDOT does storm preparation work but doesn’t know to what extent and in what locations. Ms. King suggested that the subcommittee examine what FDOT does with regard to storm preparation and resilience. Jim Robinson talked about initial design and construction of projects and then the need for ongoing maintenance of those projects once completed to ensure retention of their full design capacity going forward.

Kristen Reed of the Planning and Development Department made a presentation on the Adaptation Action Area (AAA) Working Group’s work and report last year. The AAA process was mandated by the 2030 Comprehensive Plan pursuant to a state requirement for coastal flooding planning. It identified areas vulnerable to coastal flooding and sea level rise using four factors: context, vulnerability assessment, adaptation strategies, and implementation strategies. The report’s recommendations fell into 5 core areas: 1) education, 2) land development regulations, 3) economic and human resources, 4) inter-agency coordination, and 5) infrastructure. Recommendations included: 1) creation of a resiliency office and officer, 2) a vulnerability assessment, and 3) revise the AAA boundary to include more territory including the 500 year flood plain and the Category 3 storm surge zone, predicated on a 2 foot sea level rise by 2060. Lisa King asked if the City is applying for grants for resiliency planning tasks. Chairman Dennis asked about the nature and specificity of the AAA working group’s recommendations. Ms. Reed said they were working at a City-wide Comprehensive Plan level, so the recommendations were mostly about Comp Plan policies and land development policies, not specific remedial actions for specific locations that suffer from flooding. Joe Loretta, a member of the AAA working group, said the group looked at both existing development under current regulations and future development under revised regulations.

Angela DeMonbreun asked about the assumption of the 2 foot sea level rise and whether that is considered conservative or not. Ms. Reed said the Planning Department already has adopted a flood zone based the 2 foot sea level rise, but the AAA working group felt that boundary was insufficient to meet identified conditions. That led to the recommendation to include up to the Category 3 storm and the 500 year flood plain which takes in much more territory. That decision was not based on a particular target year for sea level rise, unlike the Planning Department’s recommendation on the 2060 target year. Council Member DeFoor questioned the need to do yet another vulnerability assessment given all that is already known about where storm surge and rain events regularly impact communities. She said she has a bias toward action rather then yet more studies. Mr. Loretta said that several vulnerability assessments may need to take place in multiple departments to consider the impacts on the expanded storm surge and sea level rise boundary. Ms. DeFoor recommended that the North Florida Land Trust make a presentation about possible land acquisitions to provide flood storage capacity. Chairman Dennis echoed the need to take immediate action and cited the example of Houston which, in the wake of a major hurricane, immediately sponsored and the voters passed a $2.5 billion bond issue for floor control. Amanda Polematidis asked why there were no recommendations regarding power supply. Ms. Reed said that JEA is doing its own study on its infrastructure vulnerabilities. Jim Seaton said that the JEA is ahead of the City in assessing its infrastructure vulnerability. Chairman Dennis suggested that the JEA have a representative on each of the Resiliency Committee subcommittees. Kurtis Wilson of JEA said the JEA’s asset vulnerability study is nearing completion and the recommendations are under review. He noted that Hai Vu of JEA has been sitting in on the Resiliency Committee meetings to date. He offered to send JEA’s draft vulnerability assessment and findings to the committee for its information. They are thinking about ways to address their 100 most vulnerable assets. Mr. Dennis said that would be an agenda item for the subcommittee’s next meeting.

Bond issue for infrastructure: Susan Grandin of the Office of General Counsel gave an overview of the basics of the two municipal bond types – general obligation and revenue. General obligation bonds pledge the full revenue of the city, including property taxes, to payment of the bonds. The City has not issued a general obligation bond since the 1980s. A revenue bond is funded by a specific stream of non-property tax revenue (sales tax, user fee, project revenues, etc.). Special revenue bonds tend to have a lower interest rate because of the revenue stream pledged to its repayment. Bonds must be issued for very specific project lists. Assistant Council Auditor Phillip Peterson said that the largest revenue stream available to back a large drainage infrastructure bond is a half-cent sales tax for infrastructure still available to the City (voter referendum required). The state recently changed the law to require that sales tax referenda must be held at general elections in November of even-numbered years. The deadline to get on the November 2020 ballot is early August, thereafter the next opportunity would be in November 2022. He echoed Ms. Grandin’s observation that the City has not done a general obligation bond since the 1980s, probably because political leaders have felt that there is no public appetite for tax increases. The City of Houston’s voters approved a general obligation bond for drainage improvements as the Chair mentioned earlier, and he understands that the City of Miami did a general obligation bond issue in 2017.

Chairman Dennis said that the City will never have enough funding in the annual budget to do all the resiliency work that needs to be done without a huge infusion of money from some source, so bold thinking is needed. Without new resources, there is really no need for a Chief Resiliency Officer and department because there won’t be money to do the things that they would recommend. Council Member DeFoor disagreed, saying that work can start immediately on the most important needs to begin making progress while a more comprehensive plan and funding mechanism are developed. Mr. Dennis said that the community needs to acknowledge its needs and challenges and commit to paying what is needed to address the problems if progress is ever going to be made. Jim Robinson said that the proposed Capital Improvement Program may be the source of a list of most immediate drainage needs and would be worth reviewing. Mr. Dennis will ask the Public Works Department to circulate its CIP project list to the subcommittee for discussion at a future meeting. Lisa King agreed with the earlier comments on the need for the city to face facts about the magnitude of its problems and funding needs. She said FEMA has a new grant program to fund innovative resilience efforts but cautioned that federal funding is going to be the last funding in as a supplement after the local community has committed the majority of the funding for its needs from its own local sources. Federal funds need to be considered as extra assistance, not the primary funding source for large projects. Joe Loretta said a champion will be needed to lead the charge for funding for resilience projects. Jim Seaton recommended that everyone read the Resilient Houston report which is a long and detailed but very instructive document that may have ideas that could be used here.

Next meeting – August 5, 11:30 a.m.; CIP projects, mayor’s resilience project list, JEA study

**Meeting adjourned:** 10:09 a.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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