

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON RESILIENCY**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING**

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

**August 27, 2020**

**4:00 p.m.**

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

**In attendance:** Subcommittee members Adam Hoyles (Vice Chair), Bill Bishop, Shannon Blankinship Sarah Boren, J. Logan Cross, Bruce Fouraker, Ashantae Green, Patrick Krechowski, Mark Middlebrook, Joshua Rosenberg, Kevin O’Halloran, Adam Rosenblatt, Dr. Todd Sack, Jim Schwarz, Guillermo Simon, Steve Swann, Dr. Quinton White

**Excused**: Subcommittee member Brooks Andrews

**Also**: Council Members Randy DeFoor and Matt Carlucci; Jeff Clements, Yvonne Mitchell and Anthony Baltiero – Council Research Division; Steve Cassada, Eric Grantham and Melanie Wilkes – Council Support Services; Susan Grandin and Kealey West – Office of General Counsel; Susan Stewart – Jaxport; Sean Lahav – North East Florida Regional Council; Kristen Reed and Helena Parola – Planning and Development Department; Kurtis Wilson – JEA;

**Meeting Convened**: 4:01 p.m.

Vice Chairman Adam Hoyles convened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

Council Member Randy DeFoor explained that, due to Government in the Sunshine Law implications, the decision has been made to restrict the official voting membership of the subcommittees to City Council members and the citizen members will be considered as subject matter experts so that they will not be subject to Sunshine Law restrictions in dealing with other members of this body their working and civic lives. Council Member Matt Carlucci has rejoined the Special Committee and will be chairing the Environmental Planning Subcommittee. Susan Grandin of the Office of General Counsel explained that the designation of “working groups” by the subcommittee would constitute a delegation of governmental authority to a group of citizens which would thereby subject them to Sunshine Law regulations, so that term will not be used to designate formal groups.

Tree Canopy as Green Infrastructure

Karen Firehock of Green Infrastructure Center Inc. made a presentation on restoring and preserving the urban tree canopy for stormwater management. GIC partnered with forestry organizations in 6 states to work on this tree canopy project to examine how much stormwater trees absorb and how well they clean the stormwater they capture and release. GIC promotes an understanding of nature as another form of infrastructure as important as road, bridges and sidewalks. It is important that the natural resources, particularly trees, are connected in order to be most efficient, particularly in the new development process when adjacent properties are developed by multiple owners. Ms. Firehock said that trees can take up between 760 and 4,000 gallons of water per year, depending on the species, which is important as more and more land is covered with impervious surfaces.

The urban tree canopy captures water in several ways – by retention on the leaves in the crown and by absorbing groundwater through the root system. The tree canopy’s effectiveness is higher during gentler rains over longer periods of time than during short, intense storms where the volume of water causes it to run off more quickly. Jacksonville’s tree canopy covers 42% of the city’s land area, but that is not equally distributed. Obviously the rural areas are much more heavily treed than the core downtown area that has only a12% canopy coverage. GIC uses a modified stormwater runoff coefficient calculation that factors in the effects of tree canopy on water absorption to determine where and how stormwater moves in the city’s different watersheds. Their model is customizable and allows users to experiment with adding more tree canopy to different watersheds and determining how much more stormwater that canopy could absorb and also to determine the effects of losing tree canopy to development or natural disasters. Tree canopy is affected by things like development policies (i.e. parking requirements) that can be amended to promote more tree coverage.

Bruce Fouraker suggested the downtown riverwalks and former Jacksonville Landing site as areas that definitely need more shade tree canopy. Nancy Powell asked if GIC had reviewed the City’s development policies for their impact on trees; Ms. Firehock said that they did notice that the City often does not require enough planting space to ensure tree survival, particularly in dense urban areas. Sarah Boren asked if the study looked at other codes and regulations beyond the City (i.e. St. Johns River Water Management District) – they did not. Guillermo Simon asked how much the tree canopy affects water supply. Susan Grandin asked about the relative merits of clear-cutting trees to make room for a retention pond versus leaving trees intact to absorb the rainwater.

Breakout Sessions

The group was divided into three resource group breakout sessions: Sea/river level rise; Extreme precipitation events and rain pattern; and Temperature increase and heat waves.

Following the breakout sessions reports were made on the discussions of each of the groups. Adam Hoyles said his session talked mostly about the 18 recommendations of the tree canopy study. Steve Swann said his group talked about the availability of data sets on sea level rise and Shannon Blankinship said that Jacksonville’s many hazards were discussed. Sarah Boren said that her group discussed goal and priority setting and tweaks needed in City ordinances. Social equity is an issue with regard to unequal conditions across the city. Ashantae Green cited a New York Times article on heat islands and redlining of neighborhoods. Adam Rosenblatt said he read the study on which that article was based and Jacksonville was ranked as the fifth worst city in the U.S. for disparate impacts of redlining of neighborhoods on social equity. Council Member Carlucci said that the Finance Committee approved funding for the Chief Resiliency Officer position which needs to be approved in the new budget for the fiscal year starting October 1st. He hopes that the position can be advertised and filled by the end of the year.

Council Member DeFoor asked that Adam Hoyles make the subcommittee’s report to the full Special Committee tomorrow. In response to a question, Ms. DeFoor said that she will have Jeff Clements of the Council Research Division write up the Special Committee’s report when its work is complete.

Next meetings – September 10 at 3:30 p.m. and September 24 at 4:00 p.m.

**Meeting adjourned:** 5:32 p.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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