

**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**

**September 10, 2020**

**8:00 a.m.**

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

**In attendance:** Subcommittee members Garrett Dennis and Randy DeFoor; Subject matter experts Sandra Fradd, Ashantae Green, Lisa King, Joe Loretta, Amanda Polematidis, Jim Robinson, Jim Seaton, Nikole Ward

**Also**: Special Committee member Joyce Morgan; Citizen subject matter experts Mark Middlebrook, Kelsey Cox, John Sapora, Guillermo Simon; Jeff Clements, Yvonne Mitchell – Council Research Division; Steve Cassada, Eric Grantham and Melanie Wilkes – Council Support Services; Susan Stewart and Nick Primrose – Jaxport; Kristen Reed – Planning and Development Department; Shannon Eller – Office of General Counsel; Tommy Carter – Council Auditor’s Office

**Meeting Convened**: 8:05 a.m.

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

Mr. Dennis asked the subcommittee to hone in on a few specific topics on which to concentrate their efforts. He had hoped to have Public Works Director John Pappas present to discuss the department’s “wish list” of CIP projects, but he was unavailable today due to a conflicting meeting. He noted that on Tuesday the City Council passed an ordinance appropriating approximately $5 million in federal grant funds for the purchase and demolition of flood-prone homes located along Ken Knight Drive.

Council Member DeFoor said the Special Committee needs to develop a work plan to hand off to the Chief Resiliency Officer to work on when that person is hired.

Jim Robinson said he hopes Mr. Pappas will present on the Master Stormwater Plan and other pre-existing drainage plans and how they are reflected in the 5-year Capital Improvement Program. He emphasized the importance of maintenance of the drainage system to its proper functioning. The proposed budget has funding for enhanced maintenance of major drainage outfalls, but the upstream components of the systems need regular attention as well. He recommends identifying the amount of additional funding needed to regularly maintain the minor outfalls further upstream in the drainage system, which would substantially help prevent flooding. Chairman Dennis noted that there are only 2 weeks left before the City budget is approved to find a source of dollars and make an amendment to the pending budget ordinance to make that possible. Mr. Robinson suggested that perhaps next year’s budget would be a more reasonable timeframe to develop a cost estimate and get it included in the proposed budget.

Ms. DeFoor reported that Riverside Avondale Preservation has produced an interactive flooding map for its area that will enable citizens to evaluate the flooding potential for their homes. It will be presented to the Education and Community Outreach Subcommittee and could be the basis for a citywide system that would be of educational interest to all citizens to evaluate the flooding potential in their neighborhoods. She feels the City is more reactive than proactive with regard to where drainage work gets done. If there’s a prioritized system for drainage maintenance, she hasn’t seen it.

Council Member Morgan said it’s time for all the subcommittees to evaluate what they’ve learned to date and hone in on a few action areas. Her subcommittee will be producing a Special Committee newsletter to inform the public about what has been happening to date and what ideas are being pursued.

Sandra Fradd said she liked Jim Murley’s (Miami-Dade County Chief Resilience Officer) presentation that talked about evaluating ranges of future possibilities for resiliency impacts (hurricanes, sea level rise, etc.) and hopes that Jacksonville will evaluate a similar range of impacts, from best to worst case scenarios. She thinks the septic tank phase-out issue is important and needs more examination.

Jim Seaton said the subcommittee got an idea about half of JEA’s resiliency planning for its critical infrastructure (water and sewer, but not the electric side) from their presentation at the last meeting, but haven’t heard about the City’s and the other independent authorities’ identification of and planning for their “critical infrastructure”.

Chairman Dennis asked the committee what percentage of the City’s CIP they thought should be dedicated to resiliency each year. Jim Seaton felt the subcommittee couldn’t propose a percentage without knowing the magnitude of the need. That’s the first step, then you can determine what’s needed to deal with the problem. Getting outside funding (state and federal grants, etc.) will be crucial to solving the problems.

Sarah Bohentin (City Housing Division) discussed the Ken Knight Drive CDBG-DR (Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery program) grant through the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. She said there are several funding sources that might be tapped to meet resiliency needs. She explained the property acquisition process, from appraisals through home buyouts to relocation of residents to replacement housing. They can provide more assistance to home owners (closing costs and relocation expenses) than they can to renters. The properties must become public green space after demolition of the buildings. Lisa King said this funding was a one-time allocation from Congress for Hurricane Irma relief and is not a continuing funding source. She encouraged looking at FEMA grants, including a new BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities) grant opportunity. The City’s annual CDBG allocation is focused on low- and moderate-income areas, but has been gradually declining over time. She thinks the City needs to be identifying it most flood-prone areas and trying to deal with them rather than continually being reactive after a disaster. Ms. Bohentin said that the City’s Emergency Preparedness Division tracks damage caused by disasters and can provide that information. She has supplemented that data with storm-related citizen input from the 630-CITY complaint line (flooding complaints, downed trees, etc.) and is happy to share that with the subcommittee. Ms. King felt that the subcommittee could be most helpful in identifying the most flood-prone areas where people and homes are most vulnerable and recommending solutions to protect them. The Riverfront Parks Now initiative offers a once in several generations opportunity to plan for stormwater storage as the downtown waterfront is redeveloped.

John Sapora with LISC said he has been researching funding sources. The CDBG Mitigation program managed by Rebuild Florida could be a source and Jacksonville is eligible for multi-year funding because of its previous storm damage history. The state wants to promote long-term resilience projects. Mr. Dennis said there seems to be numerous grant opportunities out there, but wondered how the City is identifying and pursuing them. Ms. Bohentin said she hears about CDBG-related grants because that’s her field, but someone in the City needs to be seeking out all the opportunities and communicating them to the appropriate department to explore. Lisa King, who is a professional grant writer, said there are lots of grant opportunities out there, but not that much funding to be spread among lots and lots of eligible applicants, so it’s hard to get much funding for any particular project. Many of them are short-term sources and not long-term and sustainable. Some of the grants are based on how much of its own money the local government is willing to invest as a match, with preference given to jurisdictions offering to invest more of their own funds in a project. Council Member DeFoor asked where the City should be looking first for grant availability. Ms. King said the first step is to look internally and invest in yourself. Leveraging the Army Corps of Engineers for a federally-assisted project is good, but the process is slow – 5-10 years before anything really happens. Planning and engineering take years to prepare a project for construction and that’s understandably frustrating but necessary. She said Jacksonville mayors (and chief executives in general from mayors to governors to Presidents) have a habit of re-casting existing planned projects as new solutions to the latest problem, and the public sees through that.

Ms. DeFoor said that prioritization is vital – what is a big hurricane problem versus a summer thunderstorm problem versus as weekly high tide problem? Ms. King said the City needs a citywide master stormwater plan, then individual neighborhood plans can be derived from the master plan, then design and engineering for each of those plans has to take place before there can be construction. Jim Robinson said there is a master stormwater management plan this is continually updated from year to year. It seems like it would be the job of the Chief Resilience Officer to do what the committee has been talking about – bridging the silos, communicating opportunities to departments, coordinating multi-agency responses. The City’s needs are huge (septic tanks, stormwater mangement, etc.) and it will take a long time to rectify the problems, starting with small steps.

John Sapora suggested the need to leverage community participation and local non-governmental funding sources to grow the pool of funding.

Council Member Morgan said it’s clear that the Chief Resilience Officer will be vital in helping the City deal with its long-standing problems, and today’s discussion should inform what sort of qualifications the City should be looking for in that position.

Mr. Dennis asked Renee Hunter, Chief of the Real Estate Division, if her division has a map of low-lying areas and flood risks. She said her division is assisting the Emergency Preparedness Division with the South Shores flood prone properties buyout project so they will be learning how that process works. They have not yet been tasked with assisting the Ken Knight Drive project. Their role is to advise the City agencies about how the property acquisition process works (appraisals, contracts, etc.).

Mr. Dennis identified 3 tasks for the subcommittee: have Public Works describe its plans and priorities; advise the Mayor’s Office about the qualifications and duties of a Chief Resilience Officer; and ask the City Grants Office how they identify and apply for grant opportunities.

Public Comment – none

Next meeting – September 24, 8 a.m.

**Meeting adjourned:** 9:07 a.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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