

**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**

**November 13, 2020**

**4:00 p.m.**

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

**In attendance:** Subcommittee members Randy DeFoor an Matt Carlucci (arr. 4:07 p.m.); Subject matter experts Brooks Andrews, Shannon Blankinship, Sarah Boren, J. Logan Cross, Bruce Fouraker, Ashantae Green, Kevin O’Halloran, Adam Hoyles, Nancy Powell, Joshua Rosenberg, Adam Rosenblatt, Jim Schwarz, Guillermo Simon, Steve Swann, Quinton White

**Also**: Subject matter experts John Sapora, Mark Green, Ramil Mijares; Jeff Clements, Yvonne Mitchell – Council Research Division; Steve Cassada, Eric Grantham and Melanie Wilkes – Council Support Services; Kealey West – Office of General Counsel; Nick Primrose – Jaxport; Sean Lahav – North East Florida Regional Council; Susan Kelly – Planning and Development Department; Kelsey Cox – Public Works Department, Melissa Long– Environmental Quality Division; Jimmy Orth – St. Johns Riverkeeper

**Meeting Convened**: 4:02 p.m.

Council Member Randy DeFoor convened the meeting and turned the meeting over to Brooks Andrews.

Mr. Andrews reviewed the agenda which includes a presentation by the Jacksonville Transportation Authority on its sustainability program and then reporting time from the three hazard working groups and time for discussion among all the participants about what the working groups have been doing to ensure that all important topics are adequately addressed. The meeting will close with discussion of next steps. The next subcommittee meeting is scheduled for November 19th at 2 p.m. The other two subcommittees have cancelled their meetings for next week. The December 3rd meeting has been preempted by a City Council meeting and will either be rescheduled or canceled.

Chairman Carlucci thanked everyone for their continuing participation and great contributions to the work of the Environmental Planning Subcommittee and the full Special Committee on Resiliency. He feels that the community at-large has a greater understanding of resiliency issues as a result of its work. He looks forward to the passage of the ordinance creating the Resilience Division in the Planning and Development Department.

JTA Sustainability

Alexander Traversa, the newly appointed Sustainability Program Manager for JTA, gave an overview of JTA’s operations and wide-ranging transportation services, ranging from the bus system to the Skyway to the St. Johns River Ferry and including design and construction of road and bridge projects. JTA has a Sustainability Committee with representatives from each of the authority’s divisions. Sustainability initiatives in general face a variety of challenges ranging from financial constraints and lack of senior management commitment to lack of knowledge and conflicting priorities. He outlined a number of recent sustainability achievements at JTA including the adoption of compressed natural gas (CNG) for fueling much of the bus system, LED lighting retrofits for numerous facilities, development of a sustainability action plan and LEED certification for the new intercity bus terminal and the Jacksonville Transportation Center.

Transportation is the highest contributing economic sector for greenhouse gas emission in the U.S. and transportation is generally the second most expensive household budget item for most households. Transportation congestion wastes time and fuel and increases harmful air emissions. Travel by personal automobile is one of the least efficient transportation mechanisms. JTA is increasingly moving to a wider variety of smaller, more efficient vehicles and more on-demand service types to meet customer travel needs most efficiently. The bus rapid transit lines are all running completely on CNG and CNG fuels 60% of the JTA bus fleet. Electric vehicles are being tested, including the autonomous vehicles being considered to replace the current Skyway vehicles. Transit oriented development is being pursued to create more sustainable development patterns anchored by easy transit access. Ideally transit oriented development supports multiple active modes of transportation and incorporates public and green spaces and adaptive reuse of historic buildings.

JTA created its Sustainability Action Plan in 2019 with a vision, goals and a portfolio of projects to reach short and long-term goals. The plan focuses on 6 key areas: water use and pollutant discharge reduction; facility energy use; materials management; fleet operations; healthy communities; and economic vitality. They started by prioritizing “slam dunk” projects to create cost savings that can be invested in future projects and to gain acceptability with employees and the general public. The plan projects $2.3 million in net benefits over the next 10 years from savings in water consumption, electricity usage, reduced fuel use, and diversion of waste from the landfill. The plan should also produce a reduction in emissions of 33,000 tons of greenhouse gases. Emerging trends in transit include: Mobility as a Service (MAAS); microtransit; autonomous vehicles; and electrification and alternative fuels.

Mr. Andrews thanked Mr. Traversa for his presentation and for JTA’s forward-thinking attitude toward sustainability, which is a pleasant surprise. He asked Mr. Traversa if there is something the subcommittee could do to help JTA accelerate its action plan. Mr. Traversa said that more publicity about what they’re doing would be helpful and the City could dedicate space in public rights-of-way for transit to enable it to escape traffic congestion and make transit more viable and attractive to users. Greer Gillis, JTA’s Vice President for System Development, said that emphasizing transit on many fronts would be helpful to improving ridership. JTA tries in every project to advance the “complete streets” concept to make multiple modes of transit viable.

Bruce Fouraker asked if JTA’s electric buses are mainly Protera buses or other types as well. Mr. Traversa said they’re using Gillig buses in their fleet. Todd Sack said that transit is an area with huge potential to reduce air pollution by getting cars off the road. We need to find ways to encourage more use of electric vehicles, including private cars, and especially to encourage City Council to promote their use. Mr. Traversa said JTA has been working with North Florida Transportation Planning Organization on installing more electric vehicle charging stations in the city. The TPO probably has many good ideas for promoting electric vehicle use. He noted that electric utilities in other parts of the country are incentivizing electric bus fleets.

Sarah Boren said that a critical facilities evaluation methodology could be an option for JTA to assess its vulnerabilities, along with the possibility of microgrids for vehicle refueling option outside of returning to a centralized hub facility. Getting the community involved is important, with amenities like phone charging stations, WiFi on transit, etc. to help make ridership more attractive. Orlando has gotten grants for electric buses and for electric motorcycles for their police force. Measuring sustainability performance is very important – see Atlantic Beach as an example. Joint efforts by local cities, the JTA and the North Florida TPO could help make sustainability measurement more robust and useful which leads to better decision making. Mr. Traversa described how charged electric buses can be used as batteries to help power buildings such as emergency shelters. JTA is doing more detailed data collection, including building-level and individual device-level sub-metering.

Shannon Blankinship said she feels like green infrastructure often falls through the cracks with regard to road project design and asked what more could be done with landscaping maintenance and water capture standards. Mr. Traversa said the complete streets model does much of that through its design standards (i.e. the LaSalle Street project in San Marco), but they have to follow state requirements and standards, which means they need to get green standards into the FDOT’s prescribed materials list to make them fully available for use. Jim Schwarz noted that trees make a big difference for resilience and asked if trees are included in the complete streets standards. Mr. Traversa said that the standards should include both shading and stormwater runoff considerations, so far less palm trees should be used. Mr. Schwarz said the subcommittee is looking at possible responses to extreme heat event and wondered if JTA could play a role with its buses. Mr. Traversa said JTA provides buses for cooling stations at early season Jaguars games and have also done it at COVID testing sites for cooling purposes for staff working outside.

Brooks Andrews said he has talked to JEA about trying to reach more carbon neutrality and they are interested. He suggested that JEA and JTA could work together more collaboratively toward that goal and asked what the Resiliency Committee could do to help that effort. Mr. Traversa said encouraging more electric vehicles and charging stations and JEA’s use of more non-carbon electric generation would really help. Greer Gillis said JTA has a relationship with JEA, but could be more aggressive. JTA’s CEO Nat Ford is very supportive of more vehicle electrification. In response to a question from Mr. Godwin about whether JEA still has a share in the Plant Vogtle nuclear power plant that would help get Jacksonville to complete carbon neutrality, Mr. Traversa said he understands JEA does have some nuclear power in its portfolio, but don’t know from whom. Mr. Godwin asked if JTA is looking at hydrogen fuel cell technology for long term. Mr. Traversa there’s lots of research going on in that field. Hydrogen fueled vehicles are much more expensive than diesel at present; JTA do more if there were federal incentives to bring the cost down. In response to a question about whether JTA bus real-time location information is being made available to the public via phone apps (because minimizing wait time is the best kind of incentive for bus ridership), Mr. Traversa said JTA feeds next vehicle arrival information to Google Maps, but it uses the fixed schedule time points, but not real-time GPS. In response to a question from Council Member Carlucci about JTA partnering with JEA on charging stations, Mr. Traversa said they are in conversation because that will be so important to the future of an electric bus fleet.

Mr. Andrews said he will pass along any other questions the subcommittee members or subject matter experts may have to JTA. He hopes the subcommittee will be looking for “low-hanging fruit” to be identified by the end of November and other longer-term ideas by the end of December to be passed on to the full Special Committee and then on to City Council for consideration in the new year.

Working group reports

Hazard group 1: Shannon Blankinship said her group has developed 25 recommendations, some of which will overlap with other working groups’ recommendations. The recommendations fall into several categories: wetlands/flood zones; waterways; private property programs/incentives; and green infrastructure.

Hazard group 2: Guillermo Simon said they’ve had several meetings and have developed 5 recommendations: creation of more tree cover and green solutions; strengthen the Ordinance Code regarding tree canopy requirements, especially around stormwater ponds; heat index mapping; plan and implement a major public outreach effort about trees; and tree maintenance operations and funding. Nancy Powell said they have been focusing intensively on green infrastructure, particularly ideas from the presentation the Special Committee heard earlier in its process. These are the easier, quicker steps to achieve. Mr. Andrews recommended that the longer term, harder ideas also be included so the Special Committee has a full range of options to consider. Bruce Fouraker said he is hoping to look at some funding sources for these ideas, especially in conjunction with the Tree Commission. In response to a question from Mr. Godwin about recommendations on particular tree species for particular locations and on long-lived trees, Ms. Powell said planting the right tree in the right place and protecting our existing canopy are very important.

Hazard group 3: Sarah Boren said they’ve developed 28 recommendations in 7 categories: tree canopy and mitigation; horizontal development standards; vertical built environment; heat emergency preparedness and response plan; greenhouse gas inventory and plan; governance, process and performance; community education. They will start with short-term priorities and also list longer-term action items. Ms. Powell asked how the overlapping recommendations of the 3 subcommittees will be coordinated. Mr. Andrews said he and perhaps a few others will consolidated and organize all of the recommendations and the subcommittee will deal with consolidated list that at the next subcommittee meeting. Council Member DeFoor asked that the recommendations distinguish the “low-hanging fruit” from longer-term aspirational goals. In response to a question from Mr. Godwin about what the City can do to lobby at the federal level to get the right kind of change, Ms. DeFoor said the City does have a lobbying presence in Washington.

Next meeting – November 19th, 2:00 p.m. The other two subcommittees have cancelled their meetings for next week. The Council Committee of the Whole on Lot J is that evening at 5:00 p.m. Bruce Fouraker noted that Council Member Boylan will be holding a JEA governance meeting at 10 a.m. in City Hall (not via Zoom), which should be over well before the 2 p.m. subcommittee meeting.

Council Member DeFoor said she is pleased and grateful for the tremendous expertise being shared by all the subcommittees and she thanked everyone for all their hard work.

**Meeting adjourned:** 5:38 p.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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