

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON RESILIENCY MEETING MINUTES**

**Hybrid City in-person/virtual meeting**

**City Council Chamber and Zoom virtual platform**

**November 20, 2020**

**2:00 p.m.**

**Location:** City Council Chamber and Zoom virtual platform

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

**Excused**: Council Member Matt Carlucci

**Also**: Susan Grandin and Kealey West – Office of General Counsel; Jeff Clements and Yvonne Mitchell – Council Research Division; Steve Cassada, Melanie Wilkes and Eric Grantham - Council Support Services; Kristen Reed and Susan Kelly – Planning and Development Department; Melissa Long – Neighborhoods Department; Bill Killingsworth – Planning and Development Department; Nick Primrose – Jaxport; Sean Lahav – Northeast Florida Regional Council; Hai Vu – JEA; Tommy Carter – Council Auditor’s Office; Subcommittee subject matter experts Shannon Blankinship, Joshua Rosenberg, Amanda Polematidis, Ashantae Green, Guillermo Simon, Sandra Fradd, Mark Green, Quinton White, Joshua Gellers, Jim Seaton, Sarah Boren, Nikole Ward, Nancy Powell, Steve Swann, John Sapora, Joshua Gellers

**Meeting Convened**: 2:01 p.m.

Council Member DeFoor called the meeting to order and said the agenda would be taken somewhat out of order for purposes of taking a vote before a quorum is lost.

AAA Working Group Comprehensive Plan amendments

Bill Killingsworth, Director of the Planning and Development Department, presented the proposed text amendments to the City’s Comprehensive Plan. He briefly described the work of the Adaptation Action Area Working Group which stemmed from 2015 state legislation (the Perils of Flood bill) and the requirement for local governments to consider sea level rise and coastal flooding in their comprehensive plans. The AAA report contained 5 recommendations and implementation strategies in core areas: 1) Education and Community outreach, 2) Land Development Regulations and Procedures; 3) Inter-agency Coordination; 4) Infrastructure; 5) Economic and Human Resources. The top 3 fundamental recommendations of the report were: 1) hire a City Chief Resiliency Officer; 2) conduct a coastal flooding and sea level rise vulnerability assessment, taking into account Jacksonville’s unique riverine system; and 3) expand the AAA boundary to include the 500 year flood plain and the Category 3 hurricane storm surge area. The proposed boundary highly correlates with the NOAA 6 foot sea level rise projection by the year 2100. The Special Committee on Resiliency’s Infrastructure and Continue Operations Subcommittee did a thorough review of the AAA Working Group’s recommended Comprehensive Plan amendments and proposed, in addition to minor clarification and grammatical wording changes, that two additional policies be added: 1) seek partnerships for installation of more tidal gauges, and 2) pursue adequate and affordable housing options located on high, dry, connected land or outside the AAA boundary. Those two policies have been added to the document for the Special Committee’s consideration.

Mr. Killingsworth described the next steps in the Comp Plan amendment process. If the Special Committee on Resiliency approves the proposed amendments it can recommend to City Council that the amendments be transmited to the State of Florida for comments. Ultimately the amendments will be returned by the state for adoption, taking any state comments into consideration, then the process of amending the Ordinance Code and land development regulations can begin. In response to a question from Council Member Morgan about whether the amendments need any further community outreach or educational efforts, Council Member DeFoor said they did not because a lot of work has already been done by AAA Working Group and the Resiliency Infrastructure Subcommittee, and more will come later after the amendments come back from Tallahassee for final adoption. In response to a question from Council Member Boylan about how long it would take for implementation of these aspirational policies and goals, Mr. Killingsworth said it could be 18 months to final ordinance adoption with lots of public and industry input along the way. Implementation will be challenging because the changes will be affecting people’s property rights.

**Motion** (Boylan, 2nd Morgan): approve the Comprehensive Plan amendments as proposed by the AAA Working Group and amended by the Infrastructure Subcommittee – **approved unanimously**.

Council Member Morgan said this action is a great start and will help to put the new Chief Resiliency Officer, when hired, on solid footing.

Roderick Scott – Financing Flood Mitigation

Mr. Scott of the Flood Mitigation Industry Association gave a PowerPoint presentation on financing flood mitigation strategies. He listed a number of funding sources for flood mitigation activities: 1) FEMA pre-disaster grants for repetitive loss properties; they are few and far between and lots of paperwork involved; 2) BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities) program – all infrastructure-related; 3) FEMA HMGP (Hazard Mitigation Grant Program) post-disaster grants – assistance for individuals (assistance capped at $35,000 but usually much smaller), local government assistance, and non-profits (including houses of worship); can be spent on infrastructure; 4) HUD CDBG/DR (Community Development Block Grant/Disaster Recovery) funds; Mr. Scott said it seems that HUD has stopped funding building elevations since Super Storm Sandy without explanation; 5) National Flood Insurance Program; 6) homeowner equity – not practical for building elevation if the property is mortgaged because it’s difficult to meet standard loan-to-value ratios; the owner needs to be debt free for it to work in practice; 7) Federal Housing Administration 203K program – construction loan converted into a 30 year mortgage; rates are very good now; 8) proposed federally-authorized state revolving loan program – would work like a special assessment to property owners with payment via their local property tax bill; Florida Rep. Charlie Crist was the sponsor in the US House of Representatives; the banks are in favor and will loan billions of dollars for elevations because they hold the mortgages on these properties and are on the hook for flooding losses; the loan could continue on to a new owner after a sale and wouldn’t need to be paid off at closing; and finally 9) simple cash if you’re wealthy enough.

Council Member Boylan said the CDBG/DR Rebuild Florida program has taken forever to get off the ground and is taking a very long time to rebuild damaged structures; he agrees with Mr. Scott’s assessment about the limitations of CDBG funding. Council Member Morgan asked if a homeowner has to wait for FEMA approval to start rebuilding work or could start rebuilding immediately and get reimbursed later. Mr. Scott said they must wait for FEMA approval first before doing anything, and it can take 2 or 3 years to get authorization and get underway. Florida is notoriously slow about getting work approved. He thinks CDBG disaster recovery work must be very lucrative because a number of very large corporations are getting into that business. It just makes sense to elevate low-to-moderate income homes when they need repairs from flooding, otherwise you’re largely wasting the money because flooding is going to keep coming and get worse.

Guillermo Simon asked if FEMA’s Limit of Moderate Wave Action (LiMWA) line affects elevations. Mr. Scott said it does because it determines what kinds of pilings have to be used for the foundations for the elevated structure; being within the zone can add $50,000 or $60,000 in cost for those pilings because of the type of materials required. He emphasized the need to get valid elevation certificates for every home. He noted that LIDAR (light detection and ranging) technology can be used to determine ground floor elevations. Using artificial intelligence to analyze structures for elevation purposes is the wave of the future. Proper elevation heights need to be determined on the front end of the elevation consideration process to produce good cost estimates for owners to decide if it even makes sense to get into the process. In response to a question from Assistant General Counsel Susan Grandin about how far new construction should be elevated, Mr. Scott you only want to do this process once so it’s best to plan for at least 2 foot of freeboard and higher if possible, which saves you money on insurance premiums. The higher you elevate, the better. Ms. Grandin asked if flood insurance premium increases are definite or just possible. Mr. Scott said Congress made it definite after the impact of Hurricane Sandy several years ago. There will be no more artificial premium subsidy, and premiums will be transitioning to the real rate over the next 5 years except for primary residential properties, which have 11 years to complete the transition.

American Flood Coalition

Alec Bogdanoff, Florida Lead for the American Flood Coalition and principal of Brizaga, Inc., said flood adaption is required from both governments and individuals and the longer we wait the more it will cost. The American Flood Coalition concentrates on 4 pillars for coastal and inland flooding solutions: 1) the economy – investing infrastructure that boosts the economy and protects property values; 2) communities – using smart planning to keep communities safe and save taxpayer dollars; 3) rebuilding – build back stronger to protect communities from future flooding; and 4) military readiness – ensure our military installations are ready to deploy 365 days a year. The organization provides educational guides, tools for effective communication with stakeholders, networking of leaders to share issues and solutions, competitive local resilience pilot projects, and a platform for education and advocacy on the issue of flooding. Two recent new products are a Dual Disaster Handbook, produced in conjunction with the American Public Health Association, with case studies, best practices and recommendations for proactive planning, and a Flood Funding Finder which identifies federal funding opportunities to address flooding and sea level rise, particularly for small communities of under 50,000 people. Membership in the Coalition is free and welcomes governments and individuals.

Subcommittee updates

Infrastructure and Continued Operations Subcommittee: Council Member Dennis said their main work product to date was the AAA Comp Plan amendments approved earlier in the meeting.

Education and Community Outreach Subcommittee: Council Member Morgan said the subcommittee was following the progress of Ordinance 2020-526 which would appropriate grant funds for education and marketing of the AAA outreach effort. Unfortunately no responses were received to the RFP. Kristen Reed said the Planning and Development Department decided to hand the education effort over to the Public Works Department to accomplish as part of its ongoing resiliency study process. The City is hoping to get the grant extended a few months into next summer to accomplish that work. Ms. Morgan reported that the Northeast Florida Regional Council is producing the monthly resilience newsletter. Representatives from each of the 3 subcommittees are writing articles about their work for the next edition. Hiring a CRO is still a top priority. She announced that the subcommittee meeting previously scheduled for December 3rd has been rescheduled to December 2nd. She also announced that Keep Jacksonville Beautiful and Greenscape are doing a tree giveaway and paper shredding event from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. tomorrow at the Prime Osborn Convention Center. The City is also doing tree giveaways via calls to 630-CITY. John Sapora said he will be producing a draft of the subcommittee’s recommendations for the December 2nd meeting and invited any input from subcommittee members.

Environmental Planning Subcommittee: citizen subject matter expert Shannon Blankinship reported that the 3 working groups of the subcommittee have been discussing recommendations in the 3 hazard areas. Top priorities are wetlands protection, a green infrastructure plan, tree canopy and tree planting as a resiliency method, heat index mapping and action plan, a greenhouse gas inventory, and community education.

Chairwoman DeFoor said the overriding theme of all the work seems to be that everything revolves around education, which is critically important to understanding the issues and getting buy-in on solutions.

**Meeting adjourned:** 3:46 p.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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