

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**CITY COUNCIL MEMBER RANDY DEFOOR NOTICED MEETING ON**

**RESILIENCY ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING ISSUES**

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

 **December 3, 2020**

**4:00 p.m.**

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

**In attendance:** Council Members Randy DeFoor and Matt Carlucci (arr. 4:12)

**Also**: Jeff Clements and Yvonne Mitchell – Council Research Division; Steve Cassada, Eric Grantham and Melanie Wilkes – Council Support Services; Kealey West – Office of General Counsel; Melissa Long – Neighborhoods Department; resiliency subject matter experts Shannon Blankinship, Bruce Fouraker, Mark Green, Ashantae Green, Adam Hoyles, Mark Middlebrook, Kevin O’Halloran, Guillermo Simon, John Sapora, Jim Schwarz, Steve Swann, J. Logan Cross, Quinton White, Todd Sack, Sarah Boren

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

Council Member Randy DeFoor convened the meeting and asked Brooks Andrews to review the agenda. Mr. Brooks said that today will be the subcommittee’s last meeting for the year and he sees the current phase of the subcommittee’s work drawing to a close. The full Special Committee will meet on December 11th featuring two speakers on the subject of environmental justice. The subcommittee’s next meeting will be on January 7th. In the meantime he will be meeting with staff to begin crafting a subcommittee report.

Mr. Brooks asked Council Member DeFoor to recount the discussions in the City Councils’ Finance and Rules Committees earlier in the week. She reported that the City administration was reluctant to agree to the bill filed by Council Member Carlucci that would have created a Resiliency Division in the Planning and Development. After that objection, the bill was amended to codify the Chief Resiliency Officer position in the office of the Director of the Planning Department. After the bill passes City Council next week, she will urge the administration to proceed quickly with the hiring process, which should begin just after the first of the new year. Mr. Andrews said that the CRO position is hugely important and he doesn’t want to see anything happen that would make it difficult for the City to hire the “best of the best” in competition with other cities that are committed to resiliency. Ms. DeFoor said she and Mr. Carlucci would urge the hiring of the “best of the best” and felt that the City administration is supportive of the position, just not the creation of a division at this time. In response to a question from Adam Hoyles about the future potential for the creation of a Resiliency Division, Ms. DeFoor said that it would be difficult to do in the short term but once the CRO position has been created and demonstrated its worth, the subject can be revisited. Bruce Fouraker asked about salary range; Ms. DeFoor said it will be advertised at $125,000. The Council had requested $300,000 in this year’s budget for the entire resiliency operation. Council Member Carlucci thanked the citizen subject matter experts for their continued push to get the CRO position created.

In response to a question from Mr. Carlucci, Mr. Andrews said that the three subcommittees are nearing the end of their work. They will discuss their progress and remaining work in today’s breakout sessions. Council Member DeFoor said that subcommittee meetings have been scheduled for the second and fourth weeks of January and she expects that the Special Committee’s work will wrap up in February. Sean Lahav of the Northeast Florida Regional Council will be working with each of the subcommittees to summarize their findings and recommendations for the final report. Mr. Carlucci said he is already being contacted by potential candidates for the CRO position. If the CRO position already existed, he would want that person to opine on the Lot J proposal and the site study produced on the site by England, Thims and Miller engineering. Mr. Carlucci suggested that the Special Committee on Resiliency continue meeting after the CRO is hired to provide a base of support for that person.

Mr. Andrews described his expectations for the three hazard group breakout sessions. He hoped that the groups could finalize their work and recommendations today, and urged that all observations be viewed through the lenses of environmental planning and environmental justice. He asked that the recommendations all be transferred to the master spreadsheet on the Google shared drive and that the recommendations be color coded for short-term “low hanging fruit” versus long-term activities. He will meet with the working group leads and Kealy West of the General Counsel’s Office to consolidate all of the recommendations into a unified report. Mr. Andrews noted that several of the observations and recommendations of hazard group 1 have to do with stormwater and he suggested possibly transferring those items over to the hazard 2 group to incorporate into their report.

The three hazard topic working groups spent 45 minutes in breakout sessions then reconvened to report on their discussions. Jim Schwarz asked how tree canopy recommendations would be handled since two committees have been talking about the topic. Brooks Andrews said he will deal with the overlap of recommendations between working groups.

Hazard 3 working group: Jim Schwarz reported that the group recommends three priorities: 1) increase the City’s tree canopy; 2) adopt a heat emergency plan; 3) conduct a greenhouse gas inventory. Two will need new ordinances (2 and 3), and the tree canopy could be dealt with via an amendment to the current tree ordinance. Sarah Boren said they will be adding more detail to the spreadsheet regarding funding and other research. The group hoped that a few citizens could be involved in the CRO hiring process. Ms. DeFoor said that the administration will hire the person through the usual process and the citizen input can take place at the Rules Committee hearing on confirming the appointment. Mr. Carlucci expressed the hope that the Special Committee and its subject matter experts could meet again in person after the first of the year if social distancing can be achieved to demonstrate to the Council the depth and breadth of the knowledge and experience represented in the subject matter experts.

Hazard 2 working group: Guillermo Simon said they have completed their work and arrived at three main recommendations: 1) ambitious tree planting goals including stormwater control via trees; 2) improving rainfall data and the flood risk identification process; and 3) compile a best practices guide. The group realized they need to coordinate with Hazard Group 1 on stormwater control issues, and will talk to the St. Johns River Water Management District about their rainfall data and the stormwater rule to see if any important points have been overlooked.

Hazard 1 working group: Shannon Blankinship said her group talked about short-term versus longer-term priorities. Implementation will require action by both the City and other regulatory agencies.

Shorter term:

1. 25 foot average development buffer around wetlands;
2. Better enforcement of the existing 6 foot low maintenance buffer along waterways, especially on City properties;
3. No net loss of wetlands within a named tributary watershed (no remote mitigation across town);
4. Don’t allow new septic tanks to be installed in the Adaptation Action Area, or at least prohibit them on lots smaller than 1 acre and require advanced nutrient treatment.

Longer term:

1. Develop a green infrastructure action plan.

Brooks Andrews said Hazard Group 1 highlighted their shorter term priorities in the spreadsheet in color and the most important priorities in red text. He encouraged the other groups to do the same to make the top priorities stand out.

Kealy West said the SJRWMD and Florida Department of Environmental Protection are at work on revising the stormwater rule, so reaching out to them now with ideas is very timely.

Shannon Blankinship asked for someone else with fresh eyes to read the recommendations and comment on how well they read, what might be confusing to a layperson, etc. It can be hard for the original authors to edit their own work after long exposure. Mark Middlebrook volunteered and suggested John Burr as well for that project. Sarah Boren suggested turning the recommendations into PowerPoint slides in order to get a different perspective on how well they can be communicated in a clear, concise fashion.

Ms. DeFoor announced that the full Special Committee will be meeting next week on the subject of social justice in the context of resiliency. Subcommittee meetings are tentatively scheduled for January 7 and January 21, and a full special committee meeting will be held on January 22nd.

**Meeting adjourned:** 5:34 p.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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12.8.20 Posted 4:30 p.m.