

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL INVESTIGATORY COMMITTEE ON JEA**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Hybrid in-person/virtual (via Zoom platform) meeting**

 **December 7, 2020**

**5:00 p.m.**

**Location:** City Council Chamber/virtual via Zoom platform

**In attendance:** Council Members Brenda Priestly Jackson (Chair), Randy DeFoor, Tommy Hazouri

**Also**: Council Members Ron Salem, Joyce Morgan; Cheryl Brown – Council Secretary/Director; Jason Gabriel, Peggy Sidman, Paige Johnston, Sean Granat, Chris Garrett – Office of General Counsel; Heather Reber, Jeff Rodda – Council Auditor’s Office; Steve Cassada, Eric Grantham and Melanie Wilkes – Council Support Services; Jeff Clements and Yvonne Mitchell – Council Research Division; Steve Busey – Smith, Hulsey and Busey law firm; Kurtis Wilson - JEA

**Meeting Convened**: 5:05 p.m.

Chairwoman Priestly Jackson convened the meeting and the attendees were introduced for the record. Council Member DeFoor gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Outside counsel report

Independent counsel Steve Busey reported that the final report is well underway. A handful of witnesses remain to be interviewed. The report will be sent to a web site designer in mid-December, and will be printed and posted and available to the general public by January 11th. In response to a question from Council Member DeFoor about who else remains to be interviewed, Mr. Busey said he will be interviewing Mike Hightower, 2 council persons regarding their disclosure forms, Matt Brockleman, and Alan Mains of the Holland and Knight law firm. Mr. Busey said he is planning to have 100 copies of the final report printed and bound, along with 50 copies of the 350 page chronology of events. The Chair confirmed with Council President Hazouri that he will have Mr. Busey report his findings to the City Council at its second meeting in January.

Office of General Counsel report

General Counsel Jason Gabriel said he had nothing new to report since the last meeting. The General Counsel’s Office disclosure index on JEA was released late last week and is available on the Special Committee’s web site. Council Member DeFoor thanked Mr. Gabriel for that disclosure and the valuable information it contains. In response to a question from Mr. Hazouri about whether he would get the draft report when it’s complete for a review before publication, Mr. Gabriel said his staff is in constant contact with outside counsel and will determine when the time is right to do a review. Council Member DeFoor cautioned that the report was done by independent counsel and it needs to remain independent. Mr. Gabriel clarified that he would just be looking for missing facts and information, not intending to affect the content of the report in any way. Council Member Salem asked if any more interview transcripts would be posted by Mr. Busey for review by council members. Mr. Busey said he had interviewed former JEA CEO Paul McElroy for a third time last week and that transcript will be posted. He has also interviewed Jody Brooks but that will not be transcribed. The upcoming interview with Alan Mains is the only other one that will be transcribed and he said he would inform Mr. Salem when that becomes available for review.

Witnesses/subpoenas/documents

The Chair asked Mr. Busey to repeat who is left to interview. Mr. Busey said that the Joey Greive and Paul McElroy interviews are completed; Alan Mains, Matt Brockelman and Anna Brosche remain to be interviewed, none of which will be transcribed. The committee members all thanked Mr. Busey for great work on a thorough investigation to help the special committee fulfill its charge. The Chair said she looks forward to recommendations for legislative changes and thinks the public will be reassured by the thoroughness of the investigation and findings.

The Chair also thanked Council Member Dennis for having the foresight to file legislation to appropriate funds for outside counsel, which has been invaluable to the success of the process. She thinks the chronology of events will be very enlightening as to what happened and when. President Hazouri said this event should have taught the Council a lesson about the need for paying attention and not taking people and independent authorities at their word without verifying their claims.

Public Comment

None

Chairwoman Priestly Jackson said the Council has learned a great deal and overcome many challenges to deal with this situation and preserve ownership of the City’s important asset. Council Member DeFoor said the Council has learned a lot about what works and what doesn’t work, and she’s looking forward to taking the recommendations and enacting them. The system needs to be improved so that the Council has proper representation when and where it needs to. Mr. Hazouri thanked the committee for its good work and the Chair for her leadership. Ms. DeFoor echoed that sentiment, thanking Ms. Priestly Jackson for her calm leadership on a difficult issue. She considers the proposed sale as a lose/lose proposition for the City. Council Member Morgan said the rest of the Council appreciates the Special Committee and the great work it has done.

**Meeting adjourned:** 5:28 p.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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12.8.20 Posted 9:30 a.m.