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**CITY COUNCIL NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION
DAY 3**

Meeting Minutes

**June 16, 2023
9:00 a.m.**

Location: Jacksonville University River House, 2600 University Boulevard North, Jacksonville

In attendance: Council Members-Elect Ken Amaro, Will Lahnen, Mike Gay, Raul Arias, Rahman Johnson, Joe Carlucci, Chris Miller
Continuing Council Members Matt Carlucci, Reggie Gaffney Jr., Tyrona Clark-Murray, Ron Salem, Nick Howland

Also: Jeff Clements – Council Research Division

Meeting Convened: 9:00 a.m.

Tim Cost, President of Jacksonville University, welcomed the attendees to the university and briefly noted that JU is the largest employer in the Arlington area and a great supporter of the redevelopment of the area and the entire city. The university has over 500 partnerships in the city and the region and stands ready to be a resource to assist the city government.

Council President Salem thanked Jacksonville University for hosting today's event. He thanked President Cost for his tireless efforts to revitalize the Arlington area and to make the university a keystone of the community.

Rick Mullaney, Director of the Jacksonville University Public Policy Institute, welcomed the attendees and expressed the hope that today's sessions would be a great help to the new council members. He noted that JU's Public Policy Institute was the first in the state of Florida to offer the MPP degree, which is now being emulated by other universities. He said that the Institute is a neutral convening and facilitating space for debate and discussion of all kinds of issues by all kinds of groups. Mr. Mullaney thanked the representatives of the independent authorities and the constitutional officers for their attendance today.

Consolidation history

Mr. Mullaney said that Jacksonville has one of the most unique forms of government in the state and the nation, with a more completely consolidated government structure than any other. He reviewed the history of consolidation and the forces that led to that seismic change in 1968. He said that when he has talked about consolidation in other cities interested in exploring that possibility, he has emphasized not only the possibility of achieving cost savings through better efficiency, but also the possibility of focusing accountability and authority and providing the opportunity for strong leadership. Jacksonville's consolidation authority goes back to a Florida constitutional amendment passed in 1934 which authorized Jacksonville and Duval County to consolidate; that initial effort failed in 1935. At the time Jacksonville had a very convoluted and duplicative form of government with a weak mayor, numerous competing governing bodies, and dueling lawyers. The city faced numerous crises in the early 1960s – discredited schools, rampant corruption and indictments of public officials, and raw sewage being pumped into the river daily – that led the public to finally support the consolidation effort.

He outlined the 5 fundamentals of the governments' restructuring: 1) abolition of city and county governments and the creation of a new, unified entity countywide; 2) strong mayor form of government; 3) unified legal services in a General Counsel's Office representing every facet of the consolidated government; 4) centralized services for procurement, personnel, insurance, information technology, etc.; and 5) independent authorities that are still part of the city government. A strong mayor in a unified government structure has the unique opportunity to focus and rally public opinion and the private sector to achieve accomplishments out of proportion to Jacksonville's size, such as getting the Jacksonville Jaguars, passing the Better Jacksonville Plan and Jacksonville Journey, etc. Challenges still remain: 1) responsiveness to individual neighborhood needs in the context of a countywide government; 2) the importance of downtown varies by the desires of particular mayors; 3) perceptions of the role of the General Counsel and the potential for favoritism to one client over another; 4) failure to sufficiently invest in underserved neighborhoods; and 5) failure to retain historical institutional knowledge as mayoral administrations change. Governmental structure is not nearly enough to achieve results – it also takes leadership and an ethic of true public service on the part of the mayor and city council.

Independent Authorities Roundtable

Tony Cugno, COO – Jacksonville Aviation Authority; Jay Stowe, CEO – JEA; Eric Green, CEO – Jacksonville Port Authority; Cleveland Ferguson, CAO – Jacksonville Transportation Authority

Tony Cugno of JAA said that the independent authority model makes Jacksonville a top destination for aviation managers because it allows the airports to operate on a business model within a government structure. The JAA is financially independent of the City, with all revenues raised from operations and from FDOT and FAA grants. Federal regulations prohibit airport-generated revenues from being diverted for any non-aviation purposes such as making a contribution to the city government, JAA's contribution comes in the form of economic impact generated by travelers and the users of the JAA's facilities. The authority is in talks with airlines about extending non-stop service to the U.S. northwest and to Europe, particularly London. JIA is the top-rated mid-sized airport in the U.S. Construction on the new Terminal B should start in 2024 and be completed in late 2026. The TSA screening checkpoint construction project will be completed by November of this year. Parking space is a huge challenge and the design of the new parking garage is underway; construction should be completed in late 2026 as Terminal B is opening. JIA is the authority's cash cow, but Cecil Field has the biggest growth potential with all of its private development. Boeing is making a huge investment in Cecil Field to service its military contracts. Mr. Cugno said the JAA has no intention to lengthen the runway at JaxEx at Craig Airport. Council Member Howland asked if there are other possibilities for JAA to make a financial contribution to the City given its tremendous revenue growth; Mr. Cugno said the regulations on diversion of funds are very strict so that is very unlikely. Council Member-elect Arias asked about the possibility of future flights to Central

and South America. Mr. Cugno said that the status of Miami as the hub for the hemisphere makes that unlikely.

Jay Stowe of JEA said he works for a tremendous board of directors approved by the City Council and is very happy with the authority's progress. JEA is a foundational institution for the city and does its best every day to serve the city's needs. The combination of the electric, water and sewer, district energy, and dark fiber operations make JEA one of the top 5 public utilities in the nation. JEA has among the lowest rates of any large public utility in Florida. JEA makes a \$124M direct contribution to the city, plus another \$100+M in franchise fees and utility taxes. Septic tank remediation is a big issue in Jacksonville and JEA will be bringing forth some ideas for tackling the problem, which will take billions of dollars and a decade or more to solve. The City and the utility have the ability to do great things together, but there are some features of consolidation that are antiquated and don't help JEA in some areas. More support from the Office of General Counsel in the form of dedicated, in-house attorneys is needed to handle their workload. By 2031 JEA will be prohibited from discharging wastewater into the St. Johns River and that will require a multi-billion-dollar initiative as well. JEA has \$5.5B in capital needs and will need to issue some debt for the first time in a number of years. An electric rate increase of 3.5% is upcoming. Council Member Salem noted that the JEA's annual contribution contract expires this year and will need to be renewed. The contribution will increase by 1% automatically until the contract is renewed. Council Member Howland thanked JEA for restoring the trust of the community and the working relationship with the City Council.

Eric Green said JPA's board has split appointments between the Governor and the City and currently has a very diverse board that reflects the community. The authority has an annual economic impact of over \$31B per year. The authority has three terminals – Blount Island, Dames Point, and Talleyrand. Jaxport is Florida's largest container port and tenth largest in the U.S. and the third largest vehicle processing port in the country. Fitch and Moody's have ranked Jacksonville as the most diverse port in the country, with a mix of containers, vehicles, breakbulk, military, cruise, and bulk cargo business lines. The harbor deepening project down to 47 feet of depth was completed earlier in the year ahead of schedule and under budget. Terminal operator SSA is making a \$115M investment in Jacksonville for 3 post-Panamax cranes to grow their capacity by over 60%. Southeast Toyota will be undertaking a \$137M project on Blount Island and their move to there from Talleyrand will open up that site for redevelopment which could be either vehicles or warehousing. Mr. Green thanked JEA for its cooperation in exploring options for raising the utility's powerlines over the river and Mill Cove to allow larger ships to use the port to take advantage of the harbor deepening. Over \$1.2B in capital investment has been made in the Port of Jacksonville in the past 5 years. Jacksonville is also the cargo lifeline from the U.S. mainland to Puerto Rico.

Cleveland Ferguson said the JTA has a great partnership with the City and the City Council. He reviewed the history of the authority beginning as a state-created expressway authority that absorbed 5 failing bus companies to become a transit authority. He explained that a publicly formed corporation operates the bus system because of a holdover provision from the former bus companies that give the drivers the right to strike, which is not true of public employees in Florida. JTA operates the St. Johns River ferry which is seeing its highest ridership in the ferry's history. The authority operates 300 buses, many of which are powered by compressed natural gas and increasingly by electricity. The board is appointed half by the City, half by the Governor, and the regional FDOT Secretary is the seventh member. JTA serves Jacksonville, Clay and St. Johns County. It partnered with the City on the Mobility Works initiative as an offshoot of the Better Jacksonville Plan, provides ready-ride service to constituents to combat food deserts, provided mobile vaccination buses to the Health Department during the COVID pandemic, and partners in many other ways on community initiatives. The 58 miles of First Coast Flyer bus rapid transit (BRT) on four routes is the largest BRT network in the Southeast US and serves as a target for transit-oriented development in partnership with private developers. The Jacksonville Regional Transportation

Center opened in 2020 during the height of the COVID pandemic and serves both JTA and Greyhound, MegaBus and Red Coach buses. JTA is ready to participate in the redevelopment of downtown via transit-oriented developments. A grant has been received to study the possibility of future light rail development, but that would be many years in the future. The School Board is looking at two locations to move its headquarters off of the Southbank riverfront and one site under consideration is adjacent to the Regional Transportation Center on Bay Street. In response to a question from Council Member Matt Carlucci, Mr. Ferguson said that a contract with Groundworks Jax for Emerald Trail work will be signed shortly. In response to a question from Council Member-elect Arias, Mr. Cleveland said the downtown autonomous vehicle program will be implemented in the next two years. In response to another question from Mr. Arias about cruise ships, Eric Green said that the power lines over the river and the height of the Dames Point Bridge limit the size of cruise ships that can use the current cruise terminal west of the bridge. The trend in cruise ships is to build them taller and taller. Council Member-elect Gay asked about possibilities to get convenient transit from the airport to downtown and then on to the Sports Complex which would demonstrate to the community the value of public transit. Mr. Gay asked another question about the status of the proposed Amazon facility at JaxEx at Craig. Mr. Cugno said FDOT has done some preliminary work on access issues and JAA is considering the potential economic impact of that project.

Sheriff T.K. Waters said that Jacksonville is not the murder capital of Florida as is frequently stated and the city needs to overcome that false impression. Jacksonville has far fewer homicides than other comparable cities like Indianapolis. Jacksonville is 45th of 50 largest cities in homicides. He is emphasizing a service-oriented mentality for all JSO employees at all times – every interaction should be courteous and professional. Community policing will be very important and the Sheriff’s Watch program is a vehicle for the public to have input and express their concerns and begin building trust and transparency. The Sheriff said the public is not allowed to participate in some facets of investigations of officer-involved shootings as a result of a judge’s ruling several years ago in a lawsuit filed by an officer under investigation. He pledged to release all legally available information as soon as possible. The Sheriff said it’s been over 30 years since the patrol zones were adjusted and he will be holding a public event at the Prime Osborn Convention Center in July to invite the community to discuss service call levels and potential adjustments to the zones to redistribute manpower to match call volume. That should free up officers to walk beats and meet citizens on the street to build relationships. He will be asking the City Council for 80 additional officers in next year’s budget. The Sheriff said the city is rapidly growing and the JSO needs to have the resources to meet that growth in workload. In response to a question from Council Member Salem, the Sheriff described his increased staffing goals and the use of a federal COPS grant to reach those goals. Council Member-elect Amaro asked about the number of current vacancies in funded positions and praised the Sheriff for posting informational videos on the JSO website to introduce the community to the department. The Sheriff said the department is close to fully staffed. He described the process of police discipline through the Civil Service Board and a disciplinary review board but noted that those boards have the power to override the sheriff’s decision to fire an employee. The Sheriff said he has more difficulty retaining correctional officers and dispatchers than patrol officers. In response to a question from Council Member-elect Arias, the Sheriff said he welcomes council members joining him on Sheriff’s Walks, but doesn’t want a lot of distracting publicity or political posturing.

The session was in recess from 12:09 to 12:30 p.m.

Mayor-Elect Donna Deegan said she feels a great deal of humility and emotion at being elected Jacksonville’s next mayor and especially feels the relentless optimism of former JU President Dr. Fran Kinne when she steps on the JU campus, and she hopes that everyone will partake in that optimism as the new terms begin. She looks forward to a great working relationship with the City Council and believes that everyone recognizes the enormous promise and potential in this moment to move the city forward quickly. She sees great alignment between the City Council’s strategic plan and her own priorities. Public health, infrastructure and public safety are shared top priorities. Taking care of the public’s infrastructure

is fundamental, as are prevention and intervention programs. The new University of Florida downtown campus provides a tremendous opportunity for progress. Smart growth is going to require a resiliency lens and focus. She will be investigating why the City can't hire the employees it needs to make the permitting process run as quickly and efficiently as possible. Her emphasis is on serving the people of Jacksonville on an impartial and non-partisan basis and she is not interested in running for any other office in the future. Council Member-elect Amaro suggested the need for an ad hoc committee to study the permitting backlog issue and provide a solution as soon as possible. Council Member-elect Arias, a small business owner who has had a bad experience with permitting, said the need is real and has to be solved quickly. Small businesses are at a big disadvantage compared to larger companies that have more resources and manpower to engage the system.

Constitutional Officers Panel

Jody Phillips, Clerk of the Courts; Joyce Morgan, Property Appraiser-elect; Sherry Hall, Chief Deputy Tax Collector; Jerry Holland, Supervisor of Elections-elect

Jody Phillips said he works with an amazing group of over 300 employees in the Clerk's office who do the work to serve the public. His budget is funded partially by the City and partially by the state. His is one of only 5 clerk's offices statewide that is not also the county's comptroller. He gave an overview of the functions of his office which include supporting the county and circuit courts and judges, record keeping, licenses, etc. He highlighted several programs including the driver's license restoration project, the property fraud alert notification system, and passport application processing. Mr. Phillips said he and his office are ready and willing to be close partners with the City Council to work on behalf of the public and invited the council members tour his facility and learn about their functions.

Joyce Morgan thanked Jacksonville University for producing the first work of public art in the Arlington area proudly displayed at the main entrance of campus. She emphasized that the City Council is responsible for setting the millage rate and the Property Appraiser's Office is responsible for assessing the property and determining the value to which that millage rate is applied. She intends to be out in the community on a regular basis informing the public about the 15 tax exemptions to which property owners are entitled if they meet the statutory requirements. Ms. Morgan said as a council member, she was assigned as the Council's liaison to the Value Adjustment Board and that experience began her interest in the work of the Property Appraiser. In response to a question from Mr. Mullaney, Mr. Holland said the current projection is that increased property values will generate approximately \$102M in new revenue for the City in the next fiscal year.

Sherry Hall said the Tax Collector's Office provides a wide range of services from driver's licenses and state identification cards to animal and firearms licensing to collecting a great number of fees and fines from citizens. They operate branch offices all over the city, but most functions can be performed remotely via computer or via auto tag renewal kiosks at several Publix supermarkets. She urged that customers make appointments in advance of coming to the office via a cell phone app that will text you when the office is ready to serve you. Vehicle tags can be renewed online and the tag or sticker picked up at the branch of your choosing. Jaxy the Chatbot is available 24 hours a day to answer questions and provide information on a wide range of subjects. The Tax Collector's Office is often the first point of contact for people moving to Jacksonville or to the State of Florida, so they want to provide an excellent level of service and a friendly transaction. More than half of the office's budget is provided by the fees it charges for services, with the City providing the rest as a general fund appropriation. The general fund contribution amounts to approximately 0.5% of the value of the fees charged, while most tax collectors in Florida charge their counties 2% to process the transactions. The office handles more than 3 million individual contacts per year with the same number of employees in 2023 as they had in 2007. Tax Collector Jim Overton will be reaching out to the new council members to arrange personal meetings. In response to a question from Council Member-elect Arias, Ms. Hall said the office has begun purchasing

translation devices for every branch so that persons speaking a wide variety of languages can get instant interpretation services. In response to a question from Council Member-elect Johnson, Ms. Hall said Jacksonville is a training ground that loses many employees to higher paid jobs in adjoining counties so higher salaries are being requested to keep slots filled.

Jerry Holland said the Property Appraiser's web site is one of the most heavily used of the City's sites because of the amount of useful information found there. He is proud that all of the constitutional officers have a great attitude of service to the citizens. He told the new council members that their ECA is the most important employee who will be vital to their success and needs to have the same attitude of public service. He said the election operations center at Imeson is crucial to the work of the Supervisor of Elections Office and the lease for that facility expires in March of next year, but a decision needs to be made by October of this year about extending the lease. He proposes moving both the operations center and the SOE's Monroe Street headquarters office to a new unified site downtown in a newly constructed, purpose-built building. The Imeson center is not convenient for voters or poll worker training because of its remote location. All polling location changes must be approved by City Council. His goal is to get the most people possible to vote before election day either by mail or by early voting because of the convenience and efficiency. A recent news report identified 4 early voting "deserts" that he hopes to fill by rearranging early voting locations. He said that there is relatively little a Supervisor of Elections can do to increase voter turnout other than make polling places and early voting sites easily accessible. New voter identification cards will be sent out to hundreds of thousands of voters because of redistricting.

Mr. Holland noted that the SOE's budget varies up and down depending on the number of elections occurring in a fiscal year. More and more ExpressVote machines will be purchased because they are efficient but there will always be an option for a paper ballot for a voter who insists on that. He believes in the utmost transparency in all electoral processes and welcomes the public to view every step and ask any question to have full confidence in the outcome. Mr. Holland urged the council members to look at the condition of public buildings, some of which are in very poor shape and need major renovations, including the SOE's headquarters on Monroe Street. In response to a question from Council Member-elect Johnson, Mr. Holland said that he would recommend renewing the lease at the Imeson election center for 2 years to give time to design and build a new downtown facility. In response to another question from Mr. Johnson, Mr. Holland said that in future elections, all early voting sites will utilize only the ExpressVote system in order to retire the outdated ballot-on-demand printers. Paper ballot voting will still be available on election day.

Duval County Public Schools

Council President-elect Ron Salem said he hoped during his term that the City Council could develop a closer relationship with the school district. Rick Mullaney said that Florida has 6 of the 10 largest school districts in the nation because the Florida Constitution requires that each county is a single school district. School Board Chair Dr. Kelly Coker said she also looks forward to working collaboratively with the City Council and thanked the JU Public Policy Institute for being a forum for important community conversations. She introduced Sonita Thompson, the district's Chief of Staff representing interim Superintendent Dr. Dana Kriznar who is out of town today.

Ms. Thompson said that DCPS is one of the largest urban school district in the country (126,000 students) and serves a very wide range of students in a variety of school types. The district is also one of the largest employers in the city with over 13,000 employees. The district's 2026 strategic plan drives everything the district does. The plan's primary goals are 1) improved literacy, 2) high performing schools, 3) soft skills development, and 4) vocational career opportunities. The goals are to be achieved by the following means: 1) highly effective educators, 2) fiscal transparency, 3) high quality community partnerships, 4) struggling student supports district-wide, and 5) a culture and climate of safety. DCPS is the only district in the state offering the Duval Ready Initiative that offers industry certification programs and soft skills

training for workforce readiness. The district currently has 93% A, B or C-rated schools (up from 88% in 2018-19) and the number of D and F schools has fallen from 17 to 10 (only 1 F school, which is a small charter school). The graduation rate for 2022 was 85.6%, down somewhat from earlier years due to the COVID pandemic. The district has 62 career academies offering a wide variety of industry certifications in 15 career clusters.

Ms. Thompson discussed the district's master facility plan and pointed out that many school facilities are shared with the City, particularly as emergency evacuation shelters and community pools and playgrounds. The plan provides for construction of 28 new schools, removal of 438 portable classroom units and over \$1 billion in major school repairs. Some very old and smaller schools will be phased out and total capacity reduced by 3,172 seats. Every school in the district will be touched in some way in the first 5 years of the plan, many by safety and security improvements. Ms. Thompson reviewed the progress on several of the schools being rebuilt or replaced using the proceeds of the sales surtax and highlighted the district's very helpful project dashboard on the DCPS website that provides every imaginable data set for the projects. Dr. Coker urged the council members to become good partners with their district school board members. She provided an update on the superintendent search process and said there will be a special board meeting next week to consider hiring a search firm to assist in the process.

Rick Mullaney thanked everyone who participated in today's program and expressed the hope that it provided useful information. President-elect Salem thanked Mr. Mullaney, President Cost and Jacksonville University for hosting the event.

Meeting adjourned: 3:06 p.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division
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