



OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202

August 10th District 5 Community Conversation Minutes

Location: ASPIRE Church, 1435 Atlantic Boulevard, Jacksonville FL 32207

Attendance: Mayor Donna Deegan, CM Joe Carlucci, CM Matt Carlucci, CM Raul Arias, CM Rahman Johnson, State Representative Wyman Duggan, Supervisor of Elections Jerry Holland, and School Board Member Cindy Pearson were in attendance.

The meeting began at 6:07 PM. Pastor Gary Webber from the host location, Aspire Church, introduced Council Member Joe Carlucci. CM Joe Carlucci thanked everyone for coming and introduced the elected officials in attendance. CM J. Carlucci also gave his contact information to the audience and provided updates regarding Friendship Fountain, the San Marco Square refresh, a Quiet Zone initiative, Cuba Hunter Park, Pine Forest Senior Center, and St. Nicholas Street issues.

Mayor Donna Deegan thanked the community for coming and said that the Community Conversations help her office stay connected with the community, emphasizing that she is there to listen to residents' concerns.

Resident #1, William Wentz, spoke regarding a dirt mountain blowing dirt and debris all over his neighborhood. Mayor Deegan responded that the issue would now be on their radar, and they will look into the matter.

Resident #2, Henry Lewis, a Mayport resident, spoke regarding an oil spill that is killing oysters. The resident said that he is starting a non-profit to help with the issue and that the initiative he is working on was successfully implemented in St. Johns County. Mayor Deegan responded that she was aware of the issue and had read about it. She asked Melissa Ross, Director of Strategic Initiatives, to get information from the resident and to follow up.

Resident #3 spoke regarding the Jaguars Stadium development and expressed concern about what the ROI would be on the potential project. Mayor Deegan said that her office is in discussions with national firms to negotiate the upcoming stadium development. She mentioned her conversations with Jaguars Owner Shad Khan, in which he said that he would invest in the City. Mayor Deegan reiterated that there have been no negotiations with the Jaguars yet. She pointed to recent polling that 80% of residents do not want to spend money on the stadium and 80% do not want to lose the Jaguars, and that her office is seeking to find a balance. Mayor Deegan emphasized how valuable having an NFL franchise is for the City within the culture and community pride, and that more than just numbers must be considered. The resident asked the Mayor to remember that every dollar toward the stadium comes from taxpayer pockets. Mayor Deegan thanked the resident for her comments.

Resident #4, Francine Shell, spoke about the concrete median around Wolfson High School and was concerned that it was creating an unsafe situation. She asked that the City remove the median. She also requested that the City work with the School Board before initiating projects like this one. Mayor Deegan said that she had spoken with Traffic Engineers regarding the median and did not anticipate it being an issue. However, if it became an issue within the first few weeks of school starting, she would address the problem quickly.

Resident #5, Byron Alder, said that his neighbor blocks the road to unload sod every day and that he has been dealing with the issue for the past year. He asked CM J. Carlucci if he thought St. Augustine Road was suitable for driving.

Resident #6, Josette Johnson, said that her sidewalks are not level, making it very difficult to walk. Mayor Deegan asked Mrs. Johnson if this has been a problem for long. The resident said that she has been a resident for 3 years, and it has been an issue; she also indicated that she had called the Mayor's Office with no response. Mayor Deegan expressed concern that no one responded and asked for more information regarding her inquiry.

Resident #7, Tracy Irpman, asked for beefed-up code enforcement. Mayor Deegan explained to him that vacancies were a chronic problem and that there were 300 vacancies across the City. They are adding four more permitting employees. She also indicated that she would look at which departments need more or fewer people.

Resident #8 said that he believed Mayor Deegan was the first politician who loved Jacksonville and complained that the City is dirty and that the roads were broken. Mayor Deegan explained that each road is either taken care of by the FDOT, State, or City. She added that everything in the City works in silos, and she is seeking to create better communication.

Resident #9 brought up flooding in her neighborhood and added that there is a private road where drugs are sold, and that the police come once a week to pick up stolen cars. CM J. Carlucci mentioned that it might be dealt with through the Public Nuisance Abatement Board and that he is seeking to hold a town hall in Pine Forest.

Resident #10, Frank Ortega, congratulated both the Mayor and CM J. Carlucci. He said that he was a working artist and was laid off during the pandemic from his job at Tesla. He requested that the City take a look at funding artists, as they do not have the same resources available as other small businesses. Mayor Deegan responded that the Arts and Culture subcommittee will be issuing a report soon, and that she believes artists are truly the key to making young people want to stay in Jacksonville.

Resident #11 Regina made a comment regarding homelessness and homeless veterans. Mayor Deegan added that there are many compounding factors that need to be addressed regarding homelessness, and that housing is a crisis that needs to be fixed as well. The resident then asked about the Mayor's position on an education program, to which School Board Member Cindy Pearson explained that there was a public comment at a School Board meeting which claimed there was a relation between an education program and George Soros.

Resident #12 Mitchell Stolak congratulated both the Mayor and CM J. Carlucci on their campaigns and said that he does not feel safe at night in the neighborhood, adding that it was dangerous. He said the neighborhood needs more police officers and more lighting, offering suggestions of a citizens patrol as well as police call boxes. Mr. Stolak added that the Riverwalk was not being maintained. Mayor Deegan highlighted the funding she included in her budget for 40 more police officers, and that she likes the idea of police boxes and a citizen's patrol. CM J. Carlucci added that the Southbank is walked and used and,

due to that, requires more maintenance. He also added that the San Marco Merchants Association hired private security who are on call 24/7 with a 5-minute response time.

Resident #13 made a comment regarding the Larson neighborhood, where semi-trucks come through the neighborhood at high speeds next to a public park, and Google also put the route through the neighborhood. She also asked for better code enforcement.

Resident #14 Amber Lee spoke regarding flooding caused by drainage. She added that she has a son who goes to Wolfson and that, with all the apartment complexes coming up, it is creating an unsafe environment at the exit. Mayor Deegan said that she would take a look at the issue and that each flooding issue is unique. CM J. Carlucci said that he would take a look at speed bumps and that he would get a map of the pump station to the resident. Mayor Deegan added that her administration is looking at getting as much infrastructure money as they can.

Resident #15 Janella McGrace made a public comment regarding the storage facility that was proposed on Hendricks. Mayor Deegan said that she too believed it was settled and is aware it is now not. CM J. Carlucci highlighted planning department changes which would affect future situations, and added that the developer has the right to challenge it in court due to the tie vote. He added he would keep the residents informed regarding any development. Mayor Deegan commented on the practice of rubber stamping in the previous planning department and that she wants to ensure that citizen voices are heard.

Resident #16 Constance Prowicky said that she loves the parks in the City and informed the Mayor that she was the lead veterinarian for the Street Dog Coalition, which serves pets of homeless people at no cost. She asked if there was any assistance available for rabies vaccines, which cost the non-profit \$20 to administer, from the City.

Resident #17 Pastor Sarah Locke addressed two concerns of housing insecurity as well as the concern of the spiritual and religious life of students due to developments regarding the interfaith center. Mayor Deegan informed Pastor Locke that 147,000 residents are on a waitlist for affordable housing and that she was dismayed that diversity is not something the State is progressing on. She added that diversity is an advantage to the business community and a disadvantage for Jacksonville compared to other cities and highlighted hiring decisions from her administration. She added that she is hopeful that we can get to a point where we can talk about these issues without histrionics.

Resident #18 asked a question regarding the boat ramp at River City Brewing. Lori Boyer, DIA CEO, responded that the boat ramp is public and is open, and parking will be improved due to the park developments.

Resident #19 expressed concern about flooding, adding that it has never been solved. The resident expressed concern about her property, that the building would end up being destroyed due to water eroding the foundation, and said that the bulkhead is eroding. A separate concern of hers was that her local park has unwanted activity at night and that park rules are not followed. Mayor Deegan added that she hears the resident's concerns and is hopeful new police districts will help with her park issue. She also added that infrastructure is her main concern. CM J. Carlucci added that he believes the bulkhead eroding can be fixed without the CIP. Mayor Deegan said that she would look at the permitting process and that infrastructure is most important.

Resident #20 said that speed bumps would be beneficial in Pine Forest and would like a sign for a dead-end street. She also included frustrations with the lack of mosquito spraying. Mayor Deegan indicated she would look into the matter.

Resident #21 Amy Glassman made a comment addressing overgrowth in her Miramar neighborhood. She asked if the fence could be extended. CM J. Carlucci said that this would be a good question for public

works, and that extending the fence isn't unreasonable. Ms. Glassman also said that Lime scooters could be expanded throughout the City, as well as bike expansion.

Resident #22 Joe Honeycut expressed frustration with the sod business that was spreading dirt and blocking UCOM. He also spoke regarding the shooting that took place and the train crossing. Mayor Deegan asked the crowd if they would like more red light cameras, and there was a resounding "no." The resident asked CM J. Carlucci about the Quiet Zones initiative, and CM J. Carlucci said that working with the Federal government is never easy.

Resident #23 Blake Harper spoke regarding his Unity project and Confederate monuments. He added that he was thankful for CM J. Carlucci's presence on the Council. Mayor Deegan responded to Mr. Harper, saying that the community needs healing around the issue of race, and that leaving Confederate monuments where they are is a disservice to the community. Mr. Harper responded that in his discussions, residents have said that addressing Confederate monuments is a waste of time compared to other priorities, and that the country has moved on, and we should look forward. Mayor Deegan responded by pointing to recent developments in the Department of Education, saying that the issue is still too prominent.

Resident #24 Carl Borgan made a comment regarding his connection to Mayor Deegan's family, dating back to his time at Jacksonville University. He has a current issue with code enforcement and asked for citizen involvement in code enforcement.

Resident #25 Zen Bolis commented on why he believed Mayor Deegan would make a great mayor. Mayor Deegan thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and added that she loves hearing from residents. She stated that she has no future aspirations for public office and is working hard to serve the City.

POSTED ON: August 15, 2023, at 9:00 a.m., pursuant to 15.103(c), Ordinance Code.

cc: Council Members and Staff
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