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**JACKSONVILLE WATERWAYS COMMISSION
River Accord Task Force**

Meeting Minutes

March 22nd, 2024 10:00 a.m.

Location: Lynwood Roberts Room, 1st floor, City Hall

In attendance: Chairman Jimmy Peluso; Commissioner Richard Hartley; Commissioner Richard Redick; Commissioner Jon Michael Barker; Ex-Officio member Adam Hoyles; Lisa Rinaman, Riverkeeper; Kurt Wilson, JEA; Dr. Gerry Pinto, Jacksonville University

Also: Lori Burklew (virtual), St. Johns River Water Management District; Hai Vu, JEA

Meeting Convened: 10:00 a.m.

Chairman Peluso convened the meeting. He outlined the agenda; there would be two presentations (one from Lori Burklew of SJRWMD on the Water Supply Plan and one from Hai Vu of JEA on their wastewater system efforts) and then discussion about putting together a framework for a potential new River Accord document. He stated that he would like a new River Accord document to both include specific projects and policy recommendations for the State to implement, understanding the regional nature of the river system.

Lori Burklew, SJRWMD, gave a presentation on the 2023 North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan. She noted that the plan is statutorily obligated to ensure water supply and protection over a 20-year planning horizon. She noted that this plan is not regulatory in nature; the SJRWMD coordinates with agencies and

localities to meet its goals. The first plan was approved in 2017, and the plan is updated every five years as it is a multi-year process involving lengthy data collection.

The study that concluded in 2023 projected a 135 million gallons per day increase in groundwater demand from 2015 to 2045; this projected increase would present major issues for water supply, as existing groundwater would not be sufficient to meet this demand. The North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan (“NFRWSP”) identified 160 million gallons per day (“mgd”) of project options at a total cost of \$2.3 billion. She noted that district, state, federal, and private funds would all be necessary to meet this goal.

She explained that, of these projects, 87.9 mgd were water supply development projects (which involve projects not related to groundwater supply, like stormwater harvesting) that would cost \$892.5 million; 51.2 mgd were water resource development projects (which would involve projects like groundwater recharge and are typically proposed by large utilities such as JEA) that would cost \$1,149.2 million; and 19.1 mgd were water conservation projects (which can delay the need for more expensive development projects) that would cost \$61.6 million. Ms. Burklew noted that about 50% of the groundwater supply is used for irrigation and so conservation efforts could focus on making irrigation more efficient. She stated that the SJRWMD has worked with local governments to review their Ordinance Codes for such opportunities; one such opportunity is to provide for the building of homes to Florida Water Star standards, which saves irrigated water at a 40% rate. She also noted that SJRWMD was meeting with universities such as the University of Florida to evaluate various conservation methods.

Local governments must amend their Water Supply Facilities Work Plans by June 12, 2025, but Ms. Burklew stressed that the project is not regulatory in nature. She added that the SJRWMD wants to focus on regional thinking when discussing potential supply concerns, involving all stakeholders in these conversations; she also noted that conservation projects are of high priority.\

CM Peluso asked where a list of projects included in the NFRWSP could be located; Ms. Burklew answered that Appendix K on northfloridawater.com would provide detailed information regarding these projects.

Lisa Rinaman, Riverkeeper, asked whether there were policies in place to ensure water quality; Ms. Burklew answered that she did not have information regarding specific policies but that there were monitoring requirements for water quality and that she could get Ms. Rinaman in touch with someone who had knowledge of these specifics. Ms. Rinaman also noted that the water plan for central Florida would affect water quality in the lower St. Johns River; she asked whether there were any protections in place to consider regional concerns. Ms. Burklew stated that the SJRWMD had conducted studies to demonstrate regional effects; Ms. Rinaman stated that these studies had demonstrated that water-level rise and saltwater intrusion would offset central Florida’s mitigation efforts. Ms. Burklew stated that she would provide contact information for the person who could speak on specifics of the study.

Hai Vu, Vice President of Water & Wastewater Systems for JEA, gave a presentation on JEA Wastewater System Updates. He explained that JEA provides water services to 372,000 customers and provides wastewater services to 293,000 customers. He showed a graph of the investments that JEA had made into the wastewater system since 2006; these investments have grown massively over the seventeen years that the graph showed, with a massive investment specifically in 2023, which included a new facility planned

for the Greenland area. Mr. Vu also demonstrated a graph that showed where JEA had done work in sewer main rehabilitation; he noted that this work had mostly been reactive and that it was a goal of JEA to be more proactive in this work.

Mr. Vu explained what JEA was doing regarding Sanitary Sewer Overflow (SSO) mitigation. He stated that JEA attempts to be in the top quartile of large utilities in minimizing SSOs and that JEA had been successful in this goal of 2023 – the cut-off for top quartile was 0.56 SSOs impacting waters of the US per 100 miles of pipe, and JEA 2023 number was 0.52. He explained that JEA conducts root cause analyses on each SSO incident, that JEA has increased its monitoring and cleaning efforts, that JEA is finalizing an assessment and plan to mitigate SSOs, and that JEA has made efforts to add generators and diesel back-up pumps to minimize SSOs in flood-prone areas.

Regarding total nitrogen discharge into the St. Johns River, JEA has helped efforts that have led to a steady decrease since 2001. JEA was well below the recommended cap on nitrogen discharge and had sold water quality credits to the City to help the City meet its obligations. CM Peluso asked about City efforts to reduce its nitrogen discharge, and Mr. Vu stated that he could only speak on JEA's efforts. Commissioner Redick asked why JEA had seen a slight uptick in total nitrogen discharge in 2023 from 2022, and Mr. Vu answered that cold winters can affect microorganisms in the water and that there had been a toxic hit to insects in the ecosystem, both of which could have affected this number. He added that there had been some issues at JEA's largest plant. He stated that JEA had discussed solutions to these problems with firms and that the problems were being addressed.

Mr. Vu discussed JEA's resiliency efforts; wastewater systems did well through Hurricanes Matthew and Irma, but SSOs were a large issue during these storms, specifically in Hurricane Matthew. He explained that these problems were likely a cause of lack of power and that JEA had attempted to correct these problems by installing back-up generators in flood-prone areas. He stated that SSO discharge was 80% less in Hurricane Irma than it was in Hurricane Matthew, demonstrating that these efforts had been successful.

Overall resiliency goals of JEA are to understand severe weather risks, identify vulnerabilities in the water and wastewater systems, update design standards, and develop a Resilience Plan. To develop a Resilience Plan, JEA had constructed a System Resiliency Framework, which considers a variety of risks that could affect the water and wastewater systems and prioritizes efforts to mitigate potential harms. Current efforts to mitigate harms include developing a Capital Improvement Plan for resilience projects updating JEA design standards for resilience, continuing to add generators and back-up pumps, converting overhead to underground electric services at vulnerable and critical pump stations, and continuing with staff training.

He concluded by saying that all of these efforts help JEA to understand its vulnerabilities so that it can mitigate harms to citizens and to the river system.

Dr. Gerry Pinto of Jacksonville University asked how specifically JEA planned to be more proactive rather than reactive in its mitigation efforts. Mr. Vu stated that JEA wanted to move from replacing pipes that were already failing to replacing pipes that were deemed likely to fail. Dr. Pinto asked about the procedure for determining pipes that are "likely to fail," and Mr. Vu answered that JEA could use historical data to search for predictors, such as material or surrounding vegetation, that would identify

likely-to-fail pipes. He noted that AI models could be consulted in these efforts. He stated that JEA also had people working directly in the field to identify pipes to be replaced. Dr. Pinto asked whether newly-installed septic tanks were being connected directly to the sewer system, and Mr. Vu confirmed that they were.

Ms. Rinaman noted that JEA's work to mitigate harm in Hurricanes Matthew and Irma was impressive; she noted that tributaries are sick with too much fecal coliform bacteria and asked whether the age of pipes is considered in JEA's evaluation in determining which pipes to replace. Mr. Vu answered that currently pipes are replaced if they are spewing; they are put on a list of potential replacements if they are leaking, but there is a backlog currently for replacement. He stated that JEA's ability to be more proactive in pipe replacement is still a goal and noted that JEA had been working with firms to reduce infiltration and inflow issues.

CM Peluso stated that the next meeting would be held on April 19th at 10:00 AM; he stated that he would submit and distribute a framework for a document to outline a potential new River Accord before the next JWC meeting on April 11th.

Public Comment:

John Nooney spoke on 2024-0178, stating that this bill should have gone before JWC as it disclaimed property in proximity to a creek. He stated that there is a FEMA repetitive-loss house on Pottsburg Creek that should have reverted to City control that would present an opportunity to increase public access to waterways, which is being crushed. He stated that current DIA and Resiliency efforts are insufficient for expanding public access to waterways.

Meeting adjourned: 11:10 a.m.

Minutes: Eamon Webb, Council Research Division
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