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RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN**

**Meeting Minutes  
May 13, 2024  
10:30 a.m.**

**Location:** Council Chamber, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, City Hall

**In attendance:** Council President Salem; Council Members Carrico, J. Carlucci, Diamond, Gaffney Jr., Miller, Peluso, Carlucci and Boylan

**Also:** Mary Staffopoulos, OGC; Kim Taylor and Ed Linsky, Auditor's Office; Colleen Hampsey, Council Research Division

**Meeting Convened:** 10:31 a.m.

Chair Carrico convened the meeting and called for introductions.

Council President Salem spoke about the committee's charge, the pace of downtown development, and assessing the structure of DIA. He noted that the issue of downtown parking will be added to the committee's charge.

Council Member Carrico talked about activating downtown and the riverfront.

Council Member Diamond spoke about the potential of downtown, and government serving as an obstacle to downtown investment and creativity. He indicated 2 options regarding DIA, dissolve/recreate the entity, or provide proper funding and give DIA independence, with no political influence, with the ability to take actions without council approval.

Council Member J. Carlucci questioned whether the various departments are appropriately staffed, such as Public Works, OGC and DIA. He said this committee should look at processes to simplify, and to ensure consistency and stability. He mentioned the future CEO search for when Ms. Boyer's contract ends.

Council Member Gaffney Jr. said he has an open mind and is looking for ways to improve and make downtown a flagship attraction.

Council Member Carrico said the committee will hear from a variety of experts and will continue to work past June 30<sup>th</sup> if necessary, with the approval of the next council president.

Mary Staffopoulos, OGC, reviewed the history of DIA as the Community Redevelopment Agency governed by State Statute for the North and South Banks. She described the DIA Board and their responsibilities, including developing the BID plan and overseeing the CRA plans. She described DDRB and its role in approving design standards for downtown projects. She mentioned DIA's oversight of downtown parking.

Kim Taylor and Ed Linsky, Auditor's Office, gave a presentation about DIA's budget, general fund contributions, parking revenue and CRA tax increment funds (TIF). Ms. Taylor talked about the increase in property tax values, an increase overall of 43% since 2019. She spoke about City employee discounts in parking garages.

Jim Citrano, DIA Board Chair, talked about the need for DIA as the reliable point of contact for downtown developers. He spoke about the citizen expertise provided by the DIA Board members. Mr. Citrano noted that most downtown developers do multiple projects. He emphasized the DIA Board's sense of urgency for success downtown.

Lori Boyer, DIA CEO, gave a presentation about DIA projects and successes. She listed DIA's mission and vision. Ms. Boyer talked about the 3 TIF Districts, Northside West, Downtown East and Southside. Ms. Boyer talked about history of downtown projects and the growth in taxable values downtown. She highlighted the financial health of both CRAs. In FY18 the Northbank had a negative cash flow and was borrowing from the City, but in FY24 the Northbank has \$10 million positive cash flow after payment of financial obligations. For FY 24 the Southbank has a \$1.8M positive cash flow after payment of financial obligations and after full payment of \$23,000,000 for RiversEdge without borrowing from City.

Ms. Boyer spoke about the 200% increase in residential growth since 2012, from 3700 residents to nearly 8000. She talked about the creation of a National Historic District in the City Center that unlocked tax credits, and retail incentives which generate private capital investment. Ms. Boyer listed 4 catalytic projects completed or underway: Four Seasons, McCoys Creek daylighting and One Riverside development, Riversedge and FIS/Florida Blue. She talked about reasons for project delays, such as identifying worthy projects, timing/market shifts, and increased construction costs. Ms. Boyer mentioned local challenges like gap funding insufficiencies and the unhoused population, maintenance and the perception of downtown crime. She talked about operational challenges from the length of the time from DIA approval to the final council vote, restrictive incentive programs, state restrictions on TIFs, ROI requirements, limits of DIA staffing, and DIA's role in contract enforcement.

Council Member Diamond asked about the benefits and drawbacks of an independent DIA. Ms. Boyer said independence would have to go hand in hand with a revenue source that can be flexible to the timing of the market. Council Member Diamond asked about the future CEO search. Ms. Boyer said that the job description would be crafted after the role and functions of DIA are assessed. Council Member J. Carlucci asked about parking and why it is under DIA's purview. Council Member Peluso spoke about what other cities do regarding downtown development. Ms. Boyer talked about concentrated districts within the CRAs with exceptions to ROI requirements and more completion grants to encourage development in the downtown core. Council Member J. Carlucci emphasized the need for concentrated incentives in certain areas without removing support for the other parts of the CRAs.

Council Member Carrico talked about stakeholders and experts to invite to present to this committee, such as DVI, Visit Jacksonville, the legal community, the Mayor's Office, Sulzbacher, Jessie Ball duPont Fund, Community Foundation, the Jaguars, Public Works, JSO, JEA, JSEBs, JTA and the JAX Chamber.

Daniel Davis, JAX Chamber, talked about the Chamber's role in recruiting businesses to Jacksonville and what qualities are valued by employees of those new businesses, like neighborhood walkability. Mr.

Davis expressed support for more autonomy for DIA and a shorter path to project approval. Bill Delaney, Mayor's Office, talked about integrating neighborhoods. Council Member Miller said that downtown should be an attraction that draws local residents. Council Member Boylan suggested adding higher ed entities to the stakeholder list, to include UNF, FSCJ, Edward Waters and JU. Council Member Carlucci talked about the importance of downtown historically and he shared support for increasing DIA's staff.

Public comment

Carnell Oliver advocated for the creation of an urban core authority.

Mari Kuraishi, Jessie Ball duPont Fund, spoke in support of DIA.

John Nooney talked about alcohol permitted on the riverwalk.

Alex Sifakis, JWB, talked about the essential role of DIA, DIA autonomy, and increasing Public Works, OGC and DIA resources and staffing.

Andre Green, Cornerlot, spoke about stability, momentum, and in support of DIA.

With no further business, CM Carrico adjourned the meeting.

**Meeting adjourned:** 12:26 p.m.

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research Division

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