



**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
MAYOR'S BUDGET PRESENTATION**

**Meeting Minutes**

**July 15, 2024  
9:00 a.m.**

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

**In attendance:** Council Members Ken Amaro, Raul Arias, Michael Boylan, Joe Carlucci, Matt Carlucci, Kevin Carrico, Tyrone Clark-Murray, Rory Diamond, Terrance Freeman, Reggie Gaffney Jr., Mike Gay, Nick Howland, Rahman Johnson, Will Lahnen, Chris Miller, Ron Salem, Randy White

**Excused:** Council Members Jimmy Peluso and Ju'Coby Pittman

**Also:** Mayor Donna Deegan; Margaret Sidman – Council Secretary/Director; Merriane Lahmeur, Sharonda Davis, and Maritza Sanchez – Legislative Services Division; Teresa Eichner and Steve Cassada – Public Information Division; Kim Taylor and Phillip Peterson – Council Auditor's Office; Mary Staffopoulos, Carla Lopera – Office of General Counsel; Anna Brosche – Finance and Administration Department

**Meeting Convened:** 9:00 a.m.

Council President White convened the meeting. Council Member Amaro gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance. A roll call of the members present was taken. Council Member Boylan recognized representatives from Jacksonville's Sister Cities Association program. Council President White recognized Sheriff T.K. Waters and Jacksonville Fire & Rescue Chief Keith Powers in the audience. President White introduced Mayor Donna Deegan to give her budget address.

Mayor Deegan thanked Council Member Amaro for his invocation and shared a prayer to demonstrate the importance of love and unity. She stated that she was looking forward to working with Council President White, noting their shared love of the City of Jacksonville.

She commended the Council for its passage of the Jaguars stadium deal via Ordinance 2024-0904-E and stated that she was looking forward to its potential passage of the Community Benefits Agreement. She

noted that the City had finalized union agreements with higher salaries for police and firefighters and recognized Sheriff Waters and Chief Powers. She listed several other recent accomplishments, such as reducing the number of citizens without healthcare insurance; opening the first segment of the Emerald Trail and receiving the largest federal grant in City history for the Emerald Trail; providing roof rehabilitation, eviction diversion, and rental and down payment assistance programs; launching the River City Readers program; creating the JaxEPICS program to reduce permitting timelines; growing the number of small businesses enrolled in the Jacksonville Small & Emerging Businesses program; and providing grants to local artists.

Mayor Deegan presented her proposals for the FY24-25 budget and Capital Improvement Plan. She stated that the budget totaled \$1.9 billion, with \$489 million of it being in the 2025 portion of the Capital Improvement Plan. She explained that it invests in key City priorities: infrastructure, health, economic development, and public safety. She stated that the creation of the budget had to confront the issue that ad valorem property tax revenue was \$62 million less than what had been projected and that Jacksonville's population had increased by 17,000 residents since last year, which would lead to demand for City services. She stated that this fiscal year was also the first since the American Rescue Plan's passage that these ARP funds were not available, which meant that many deserving programs had to go unfunded in this budget. The City has to prioritize the vital over the important.

She stated that the budget funded a handful of one-time expenses from the Operating Reserves but clarified that, even with these one-time expenses, the remaining balance of Operating Reserves was still double the required amount specified by the Ordinance Code. She noted that it was no longer acceptable to justify programs under the logic that "things have always been done that way" given the fiscal challenges that the City will face, and she stated that the administration is on track in its goal to reduce \$250,000 in inefficiency by the end of 2024.

She stated that the budget included a "cleaned-up" Capital Improvement Plan, which should help the City's standing with credit rating agencies. She explained that more than \$150 million in CIP projects attempted to "make good" on the promises of consolidation by investing in critical infrastructure and health programs in Districts 8, 9, and 10, noting that health outcomes in these districts lag behind other districts. She explained the connection between infrastructure and health outcomes.

She noted that Jacksonville has by far the lowest taxes of any large city in Florida and that all desire to maintain low taxes, but she stated that the City must consider creative sources of revenue to maintain this status quo. Several potential sources of revenue include the development of the Downtown Riverfront and attracting events by better maintaining City venues.

She described the importance of a thriving economy and explained several initiatives designed to help the economy flourish. She stated that the budget included the two new employees in the Procurement Division to ensure the successful implementation of the updated Procurement Code, and she described efforts to increase the number of small businesses enrolled in the Jacksonville Small & Emerging Businesses program. She highlighted the importance of art to local culture and noted that the budget included \$7 million Cultural Council grants. She added that the budget included \$5.5 million in library renovations, explaining the importance of having safe facilities for families to learn and play, and \$24 million for park and pool facility maintenance and upgrades.

She stated that four key priorities communicated to her by constituents were affordable housing, solutions to mitigate homelessness, better roads, and public safety and that this budget included initiatives for all four priorities. She explained that the City would place a one-time \$10 million investment into an Affordable Housing Loan Fund to attempt to attract private investment in the area, which would address a funding shortfall for affordable housing. She noted that it was the obligation of the City to pay the

“unfunded mandate” on homelessness, investing \$10 million to address the requirement of the new law that made it illegal to sleep in public places. She called on the private sector to invest in the area as well. She stated that City investment in this area would also help the City to qualify for state and federal grants.

On the goal of maintaining roads, she stated that the City met its annual target funding for infrastructure projects including road construction, drainage, pedestrian crossings, and sidewalk. She explained resiliency initiatives, which would help to cool dangerously hot neighborhoods. She stated that the budget invested \$28 million in JFRD stations so that response times to fires would continue to decrease and provided funding to add 40 new JSO officers.

She announced “Journey Forward,” a community-based crime prevention initiative which would build on the previous work of the Jacksonville Journey. The administration had identified existing funds to stand up this program, and she stated that legislation to create this program would be introduced shortly. She added that improved public safety also requires healthy citizens, noting efforts to combat food insecurity and adverse health outcomes. She stated that the budget included a \$56 million investment into Jacksonville’s safety net hospital, UF Health, and another \$38 million for capital improvements. She added that the City would allow UF Health to operate their own patient transport services, which would save the City roughly \$4 million.

She concluded that Jacksonville must not withdraw from its bold vision and emphasized the importance of following through on promises made to the community.

**Meeting adjourned: 9:31 a.m.**

Minutes: Eamon Webb, Council Research Division  
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