

City of Jacksonville
Office of the City Council

*117 W. Duval Street
Jacksonville, FL 32202*



Noticed Meeting Minutes

Monday September 23, 2024

1:00 pm

VAB

Member To Member Meeting

The Don Davis Room
117 West Duval Street
Jacksonville, FL 32202

Council Member present

The Hon. Rahman K. Johnson, Ph.D. – District 14

The Hon. Will Lehnen – District 3

Meeting Convened: 1:00 pm **Meeting Adjourned:** 1:53 pm

Members in Attendance: CM Johnson VAB Alternate

Also, in attendance were:

Andrew Powers - ECA CM Johnson

Jamey Crozier – ECA CM Will Lahnen

Phillip Peterson- Assistant Council Auditor

Will Lahnen – City Council District 3 and VAB Chair

Dominic Cummings – VAB, School Board, Citizen Member

Merianne Lemure – Chief of Legislative Services

Heather Pellegrin – Assistant Chief

Andrew Gable – VAB Staff

PURPOSE

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed adjustment of the VAB fee to address budget shortfalls and accommodate inflationary pressures. Discussion centered on the historical context of the fee, the need for a \$50 adjustment, and the legislative process for approval. The current \$15 VAB fee, unchanged since 1983, was evaluated against a backdrop of increased court fees and rising city expenses.

INTRODUCTION

Council Member Johnson opened the meeting by outlining the focus of the discussion and introducing the key attendees. He emphasized the significance of the proposed VAB fee adjustment and its alignment with current budgetary requirements.

DISCUSSION

The VAB fee has remained at \$15 since 1983, while court-related fees have risen substantially. The current fees cover less than a quarter of the \$400,000 operating budget, leading to a deficit of \$50,000-\$70,000. A proposed fee increase to \$50 aligns with inflation-adjusted costs and aims to close the budget gap.

The group reviewed the legislative process, noting that the VAB secretary and Office of General Counsel drafted a resolution for the fee increase. Feedback is being gathered from the Florida League of Cities and the Association of Counties, with House sponsorship identified and Senate support in progress.

The meeting also addressed the hardship clause, which will remain intact to protect those in financial difficulty. Concerns over businesses encouraging unnecessary petitions and high no-show rates were noted; an increased fee may help reduce non-serious filings and improve budget efficiency, especially in covering professional services.

Finally, the budget impact of magistrate compensation was discussed, with magistrates currently paid \$125 per hour, which is below market rates, despite the role's appeal to public service commitment.

CLOSING REMARKS

Council Member Johnson summarized the meeting, affirming consensus for a \$50 fee adjustment and outlining the next steps, including preparing for the Duval Delegation presentation, securing a Senate sponsor, and submitting the final resolution.

With no further business, Councilmember Johnson Adjourned the Meeting at 1:53pm.

Minutes: Andrew Powers , ECA District 14

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