



OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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JACKSONVILLE SMALL & EMERGING BUSINESS SPECIAL COMMITTEE

March 24, 2025
9:30 am

Location: Lynwood Roberts Room

In attendance: Council Members Arias (Chair), Amaro, Johnson and Gay

Also: Gregory Grant – JSEB; Shannon MacGillis – Office of General Counsel; Colleen Hampsey – Council Research

Meeting Convened: 9:30 am

Chair Arias convened the meeting and called for introductions. He reviewed the work from last year's JSEB Special Committee. Gregory Grant, JSEB, shared the progress related to the committee's recommendations last year. Mr. Grant said that the JSEB website has been updated and now includes a dashboard for added transparency. The dashboard displays registered JSEB's by council district, among other things. He noted there has been an increase in engagement since the improvements were implemented.

Mr. Grant talked about marketing efforts to increase awareness of the JSEB program, and he mentioned community meetings held in various districts of the city. Mr. Grant talked about the shift of the JSEB program to the Office of Economic Development and how that has been beneficial due to support from the Administration and the Public Affairs Office, and through gaining access to Salesforce and DocuSign.

Mr. Grant spoke about adding to the JSEB staff and how that has improved service and productivity. He said that the number of enrolled JSEB's has increased to 466, from 215 in 2023. He mentioned a 30 percent increase in contract dollars, now at \$107 million. Mr. Grant talked about the JSEB prime program for graduated JSEBs to serve as mentors after 15 years.

Council Member Johnson spoke about the need for an ease of process to enter into the JSEB program, more digital friendly with less paperwork. He talked about the separate certification process used by independent agencies and how that presents an additional hurdle. Council Member Johnson said there are roughly 25,000 small businesses in Jacksonville, and he suggested rebranding or changing the name to promote the program. Council Member Amaro asked why the independent authorities use separate certification processes. Mr. Grant said that some of it is related to federal requirements, particularly for JTA and JPA. Mr. Grant talked about collaboration on a shared database. Council Member Amaro asked

about the recent inclusion of nonprofits to be eligible to be JSEBs. Mr. Grant explained that the nonprofits will compete amongst themselves for contracts, not against for-profit entities. Council Member Gay asked about the procurement process. Mr. Grant said that new staff member, Greg Pease, is assisting with procurement as he was once the Chief of Procurement for the City. Chair Arias asked about JSEB centers and how much staff they will require. He described the 7 initiatives for this special committee.

1. Increase Minimum Program Funding: Mr. Grant said more funding will be needed for the JSEB centers, with 4 planned for this year (Golfair Blvd, Phoenix Art District, Main Library and Cecil Field).

2. Remove the Disparity Study Requirement: Mr. Grant said that the JSEB program is gender and race neutral, making the disparity study an unnecessary requirement that may serve better under the Human Rights Commission.

3. Refocus Reporting on Payments to JSEB Contractors: Mr. Grant talked about tracking actual funds going to JSEBs as a better measurement, and not just tracking the number of JSEB contracts.

4. Expand Reciprocity Among Regional Counties: There was discussion about reciprocity with neighboring counties and what that would look like, while still supporting local businesses and workers. Council Member Arias suggested charging a fee for out-of-county participation. Council Member Johnson mentioned using interlocal agreements. Mr. Grant also talked about working with the private sector because City contracts are not sufficient to sustain JSEBs long term.

5. Expand the JSEB Prime Program: There was discussion about the pros and cons to offering incentives (tax rebates or REV grants) to private companies to use JSEBs. Council Member Gay said that OED incentives, and all City contracts, should have JSEB requirements.

6. Centralized Database Sharing: Sharing in a unified database system would have a recurring annual cost but could potentially save money in the long term.

7. Increase Capital Access: Mr. Grant advocated for an increase in funds to offer JSEBs more for capital investment loans. He suggested increasing it to \$5 million, to be disbursed as low interest loans (4%) with caps that reflect the JSEB income tiers. The interest payments could be reinvested to bolster the capital access program.

The group talked about the JSEB centers, the hours of operation being accessible to folks outside of regular business hours, and the possibility of an online JSEB center. They talked about slowing the roll out of the centers to be just 2 this year instead of 4, to save money.

Public comment: None

With no other comments from the committee, Chair Arias adjourned the meeting. The next meeting will be April 2, 2025 at 9:30 am.

Meeting adjourned: 10:55 am

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research

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