

City of Jacksonville

*117 W. Duval Street
Jacksonville, FL 32202*



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 15, 2025

2:00 PM

**Council Chamber,
1st Floor, City Hall**

Jacksonville Waterways Commission

CM Mike Gay, Chair

CM Ken Amaro, Vice Chair

CM Jimmy Peluso

CM Tyrona Clark-Murray, Alternate

Jon Michael Barker

Robert Birtalan

General Public Rep - Vacant

Representative Kiyan Michael - Excused

Mark Devereaux

Andrew Fraden

Marc Hardesty

Richard Hartley

Richard J. Redick

Jill Haskell - General Public Rep

Jack Meeks, Ex-Officio

Adam Hoyles, Ex-Officio

Rebecca Bolton, Legislative Assistant

Shannon MacGillis, Office of General Counsel

Dr. Gerard Pinto, Jacksonville University

Nayeli Jimenez, Council Research

Jim Suber, Waterways Coordinator

Meeting Convened: 2:00 PM**Meeting Adjourned: 3:05 PM****1. Call To Order****2. Roll Call**

Present 8 - Chair Mike Gay, Vice Chair Ken Amaro, Council Member Jimmy Peluso, Commissioner Jon Michael Barker, Commissioner Andrew Fraden, Commissioner Richard Hartley, Commissioner Marc Hardesty, and Commissioner Richard Redick

Excused 3 - Commissioner Robert Birtalan, Commissioner Rep. Kiyan Michael, and Ex-Officio Adam Hoyles

Absent 3 - Commissioner Jill Haskell, Ex-Officio Jack Meeks, and Commissioner Mark Devereaux

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Mike Gay called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees to the Waterways Commission meeting. Members introduced themselves and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

4. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the April meeting were unanimously approved by voice vote.

Update on Artificial Reef Grant

Commissioner Marc Hardesty announced that they have received a \$120,000 grant from FWC's Artificial Reef Program to redevelop the City's reef efforts. He credited many people for their critical roles in securing the grant.

Joe Kistel explained that the grant was highly competitive, with limited funding statewide. Despite not have a match or finalized project, Jacksonville was awarded funds to support deployment at Harm's Ledge, 28 miles east of Mayport. He stated that the target timeframe for deployment is spring 2026, pending logistics.

Melissa Long noted the impact the letters of support had and encouraged future funding to strengthen future applications.

Council Member Peluso confirmed that the City's Artificial Reef Fund currently has about \$1,000 and expressed for identifying additional funding sources.

5. NEFRC: Resiliency Program Presentation

Beth Payne and Fara Ilami from the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) gave an overview of the agency's regional planning work and how it relates to the Waterways Commission. NEFRC serves seven counties, including Duval, and focuses on areas like emergency preparedness, economic development, community planning, and climate resilience. They highlighted their Resilient First Coast Collaborative, a network promoting regional coordination to address environmental, infrastructure, and economic risks. The presentation emphasized the importance of coordinated regional resilience planning and the need for partnerships to support sustainable waterway and environmental management.

Ms. Ilami outlined several ongoing projects, including the Regional Resilience Action Plan, a Military Installation Readiness Review that will include a technical advisory committee to address issues like shoaling, the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative focused on habitat preservation, and a shrimping industry market study aimed at supporting sustainable shrimping practices.

Chair Gay asked if NEFRC was working with FWC on shrimping-related research. Ms. Ilami said she would follow up. Commissioner Hardesty raised the prior shoaling discussions near Clapboard Creek, and Ms. Ilami confirmed those concerns would be addressed through the military resilience project. Commissioner Amaro praised NEFRC's role in guiding local governments and encouraged continued collaboration.

6. St. Johns River Status Report on Water Quality & Manatees

Dr. Pinto provided an update on the St. Johns River. He noted that recent heavy rains, following a month-long dry period, have begun to lower elevated salinity levels. Water levels are about two feet higher than normal in some areas due to runoff from the intense rainfall. Temperatures are already reaching 90 degrees, about a month earlier than usual, creating conditions favorable for algae growth. While recent sampling shows no toxins, early signs of fixed algae blooms are present and will be monitored closely. Manatee deaths have increased slightly, with five reported this month, including several perinatal deaths. Dr. Pinto explained this may be a result of improved health among manatees following past starvation events, leading to more births. One manatee death was due to a watercraft collision in the Mayport NAS training basin, the first such incident this year. He also conducted an aerial survey on April 25, spotting 46 manatees, which is typical for this time of year. Another flight is planned for the following week, when higher numbers are expected. Sightings are being reported regularly, and recoveries are ongoing.

7. Public Comment

John Nooney highlighted the need for public access to Jacksonville Waterways.

8. New Business

2025-0238 ORD Adopting a Small-Scale Amendmnt to the FLUM Series of the 2045 Comp Plan at 0 Normandy Blvd, btwn Nathan Hale Rd & Manning Cemetery Rd - (20.81± Acres) - AGR to RPI - Hoose Homes & Investments, LLC (R.E. # 002320-0020) (Appl # L-6026-25C) (Dist. 12-White) (Anderson) (LUZ) (PD & PC Apv) (JWC Apv) (Rezoning 2025-239)
4/8/25 CO Introduced: LUZ, JWC
4/15/25 LUZ Read 2nd & Rerefer
4/22/25 CO Read 2nd & Rerefer
5/13/25 CO PH Addnt'l 5/27/25
LUZ PH - 5/20/25
Public Hearing Pursuant to Sec 163.3187, F.S. & Ch 650, Pt 4, Ord Code - 5/13/25 & 5/27/25

Ed Lukacovic explained the bill and stated that it is seeking to change approximately 20.81 acres on the south side of Normandy Boulevard from Agriculture (AGR) to Residential-Professional-Institutional (RPI). Of the site, about 17.5 acres have been confirmed as wetlands, primarily concentrated away from the road frontage. The area drains into Yellow Water Creek and ultimately into the St. Johns River. The current agricultural designation allows eight single-family homes; the proposed RPI category permits professional office space or a mix of residential and commercial uses.

Zach Miller, representing the applicant, clarified that although the RPI category allows multifamily use on paper, the high percentage of wetlands and cost of mitigation make that impractical. The intended use is primarily for office development, with low-density residential as a fallback.

9. Old Business

a. St. Johns River Accord Task Force

Council Member Peluso stated there was no update on the St. Johns River Accord Task Force.

b. Derelict Vessel Task Force

Captain Jim Suber provided an update on derelict vessels, noting ongoing issues with abandoned boats at Bert Maxwell and Ortega River docks. One vessel at Bert Maxwell has been sitting for three months, and though declared derelict, removal is delayed due to a hearing scheduled for July with potential appeals extending the process another six months. Two sailboats in Ortega River are similarly stalled, with one abandoned by its owner. Captain Suber, with assistance from the Office of General Counsel, clarified FWC procedures allowing local removal and storage of derelict vessels once officially declared. Jacksonville Parks staff will remove the Bert Maxwell vessel for upland storage, with associated costs billed to the owner. The Ortega River boats may be returned to anchor to clear dock space. Captain Suber stated that the City is also considering installing a kayak cradle to deter future misuse of public docks for abandoned vessels.

c. Shoaling and Artificial Reef Task Force

Commissioner Marc Hardesty provided an update on the Shoaling and Artificial Reef Task Force, noting encouraging developments regarding resilience efforts, including the integration of shoaling investigations and potential future remediation. He suggested reconnecting with Congressman Bean's office for updates and emphasized the need to continue moving forward with planning. Mr. Hardesty also shifted focus to the Artificial Reef Committee, expressing interest in learning how to secure matching funds and whether a budgetary process is needed. Council Member Peluso recommended a noticed meeting with council auditors and General Counsel to explore how the artificial reef fund operates, how it is replenished, and how future allocations could potentially support reef initiatives. Mr. Hardesty noted that Keith Milley, the state coordinator for the artificial reef program, is willing to present at the June meeting. Chair Gay agreed to check the calendar and agenda to accommodate the presentation and proposed scheduling a noticed subcommittee meeting prior to the full commission meeting.

10. Adjournment

Chair Gay adjourned the meeting.

Pursuant to the American with Disabilities Act, accommodations for persons with disabilities are available upon request. Please allow 1-2 business days notification to process; last minute requests will be accepted; but may not be possible to fulfill. Please contact Disabled Services Division at: V 904-255-5466, TTY-904-255-5476, or email your request to KaraT@coj.net.

Minutes: Nayeli Jimenez- Council Research Division
njimenez1@coj.net 904-255-5140
Posted: 05/16/2025 8:30 AM