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**JACKSONVILLE WATERWAYS COMMISSION
ARTIFICIAL REEFS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**June 12, 2025
1:00 PM**

In attendance: Marc Hardesty (Chair), Captain Jim Suber, Commissioner Richard Hartley, and Dr. Pinto

Also: Brian Burket, Waterfront Project Manager, Vanessa Galan, Legislative Assistant, Nayeli Jimenez, Council Research, Joe Kistel

Meeting Convened: 1:03 PM

Chair Hardesty convened the meeting and members introduced themselves for the record.

Artificial Reef

Chair Hardesty noted the start of planning efforts for both the deployment of an artificial reef and the establishment of a sustainable reef program through partnerships, such as with the Jacksonville Offshore Fishing Club. He emphasized Jacksonville's historical leadership in reef development and its associated economic benefits. Mr. Hardesty noted the absence of Keith Miley (FWC) and hoped he would attend a future meeting to discuss economic impacts of reef investments.

Joe Kistel reported that Jacksonville has 21 active permits for artificial reefs, though only two have been used over a decade. He detailed the importance of site selection, materials sourcing, and the logistical and regulatory complexities involved. Mr. Kistel highlighted the time-sensitive nature of securing materials, regulatory requirements, and the limited funding available through FWC grants.

Discussion followed on the need for specialized expertise to coordinate projects. Mr. Hardesty raised the potential for a sole-source arrangement on using the City's marine construction design build contract.

Mr. Burket stated the current contract with Hal Jones Construction could be leveraged, allowing them to engage experts like Mr. Kistel. He explained the process and justification needed for a sole-source procurement should that route be pursued.

Mr. Burket explained that Hal Jones Construction could rent offshore certified barges and integrate required logistics into project contracts. Capt. Suber and Chair Hardesty confirmed the \$120,000 grant from the State of Florida as the current funding source. Mr. Burket added that the grant does not require a city match and that Hal Jones has in-house engineering staff for survey and design work.

Commissioner Rick Hartley suggested reviewing successful reef programs in other counties. Mr. Kistel explained the site selected (Harm's Ledge, ~28 miles offshore) was chosen due to existing survey data, which made the grant application feasible and although the location is farther out, it was the only viable option due to lack of survey work at other sites. He emphasized the importance of community access in grant scoring and stated the future nearshore reefs within 3 miles are possible but require foundational survey work and infrastructure.

Mr. Hardesty and others noted the economic and recreational value of reefs, citing the potential for broader regional cooperation with Nassau and St. Johns counties. The committee discussed reef coordination with shrimpers to avoid interference with trawling operations and support mutually beneficial placement.

Dr. Pinto asked about the need for site surveys during grant applications. Mr. Kistel affirmed their importance, explaining that Okaloosa County likely conducts surveys per project using funding beyond FWC grants. The biggest barrier remains funding, especially for proactive survey work to capitalize on material opportunities when they arise.

Mr. Hartley suggested developing a parallel project budget and plan for future reef deployment. Mr. Kistel agreed that such planning is best done by the city or a consultant and confirmed ongoing discussions with CCA to support additional projects this year.

The commission agreed on the need for continuity, technical expertise, and securing sustainable funding to maintain the city's artificial reef program.

Public Comment

John Nooney stated he is in support of artificial reefs and the members associated with it.

Meeting adjourned: 1:59 PM

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