August 21, 2025

**Meeting Minutes**

**The Changing Paradigm of Indigent Care**

**Date:** August 20, 2025

**Location:** Lynwood Roberts Room, 117 W Duval Street

**Attendance:** Council Members: Michael Boylan District 6, Will Lahnen District 3, Randy White District 12, Reggie Gaffney Jr. District 8, Matt Carlucci At-Large 4, and Rahman Johnson District 14. ***Please refer to the Attendance Sheet for a complete listing of meeting attendees.***

**Guests:** Dr. Matthew Thompson – Emergency Medical Specialist - Baptist Health and co-founder of Telescope Health

Dr. Mario Peludo, Chief Medical Officer – Ascension St. Vincents

 Angela Strain, Executive Director – We Care Jax

 Dr. Ali Kasraeian, President – Duval County Medical Society

**Convened:** 5:00 p.m.

**Councilman Boylan** - welcomed all and stated that this is a “listen and learn” meeting to understand the change in paradigm in indigent care as this not about compromising the funding to U.F. Health as the state is growing in population and is instead hopeful that others will fully embrace the work of safety net collaboration. This is to reinstate what the council committed to 2 years prior – $500,000 to We Care to administer the program and $1 million divided among the six clinics – and because this was not included in last years’ budget, we were not able to reinstate the additional dollars to the clinics, and we will hear about the challenges that created. Jax Care Connect is not a pilot program and we have been supporting their work for the past five years; we will hear about the tremendous impact both the collaborative and Health Link Jax have in diverting individuals from emergency rooms and tremendous savings to the citizens in Jacksonville. My support for reinstating both funds is not a political issue but a commonsense issue.

**Dr. Matthew Thompson** – Goal is to clear up misconceptions and explain what Health Link Jax is as faced with this grave situation – as there are two simple purposes to this program as the main priorities, 1) it keeps the uninsured out of the E.R and , 2) it connects them with a medical home, and it works because it is created by local physicians that understand Jacksonville. They provide 24/7 access to nurse navigators, health care support specialists, board certified E.R. Doctors thru Telehealth and all you have to do is call 925-CARE anytime and talk to someone who will direct you for the right care in a cost-effective way because uninsured patients are admitted to hospitals and we outreach those patients to keep them from going back as re-admissions and bounce backs to the E.R. is a massive problem, and also have EMTs and Paramedics that are sent out into the community to check vital signs and connect people with physicians. This is a working-class solution for uninsured workers or business owners, and homeless individuals, and have many partners using this program from JFRD, DCPS, and have diverted over $10 million dollars in E.R. costs. And removing these services is going to skyrocket the burden on our system and put a strain on emergency medical dispatches.

**Dr. Mario Peludo** – spoke to the patient experience and outcome as it is in their mission statement that they prioritize the vulnerable and those without access to care and have seen the benefits of having partnered with the program when the patients transition back into the community as the larger benefits comes with having medications compliance as related to care. This is an agnostic program with a commonsense solution that is patient-centric to invest in their well-being and get on the other side of recovery to become a meaningful contributor to society and is a benefit to the entire community. This is an investment that Ascension is committed to as a clinical partner to the longevity of this program.

**Angela Strain** – Our community with stake holders from all sectors, developed a strategy that leverages public/private partnership involving collaborations with government and agencies in the healthcare organizations, non and for profits businesses, fueled by the urgency of the need to address the fragmented healthcare for all 900 square miles of Duval for the uninsured – with a central component of the promotion of a primary care medical home with team-based approach to healthcare and manages preventive care, screenings, chronic conditions and referrals to specialty physicians. Last year, 30,000 neighbors were served. Jax Care Connect is the front door solution to the safety net for uninsured neighbors and born from the Duval Safety Net collaboratives after 10 years of studying the local healthcare environment with partners from volunteer physicians, COJ, hospital donations, private foundation grants and individual gifts. Last year the five hospital partners donated $23 million. Without the safety net, it shifts the costs to the emergency rooms, homeless shelters, the local jails, to bankruptcy and foreclosure proceedings, and to local employers and taxpayers. We ask that you please consider restoring full funding to these local programs.

**Dr. Ali Kasraeian** – This is a program that was created from looking at a problem and creating a collaborative physician led patient-centric treatment focused program that allows you to save money because how to pay for healthcare is a profound issue and here, we found an amazing collaborative program that works. Healthcare is a concept of healthcare, quality, cost and accountability and here you have all four, with proactive and innovative solutions that are saving the city money while taking great care of patients with continuity of care and this program can be a model for the rest of the country as all the data shows that it works with the positive outcomes. The financial aspect shows that the program is a no brainer as it saves money while helping people along the way, while collecting data that reflects the best of what Jacksonville can do, and we should build on this success as opposed to dismantling it.

**Jenica Ervin** – shared her personal story of how she found the support that she needed at the Jax Care Connect booth that made her new normal manageable after she was facing a health care crisis, she was presented with treatment options and is worried that the funds cut will be detrimental to the community as Jax Safety Net saves money and lives.

**CM Michael Boylan** – the $2.5 million dollars proposed for Health link Jax to continue the program and most of that amount was recommended to be taken out by the Finance committee, and although he appreciates the deliberate work they have to do, but he also believes that they do not have an appreciation for the impact that this program has on our community, and this is the rationale for this meeting for his colleagues to understand that this is a wise investment.

**CM Matt Carlucci** – Stated that this is about patient’s quality of life and so many people have benefited from this program. We are paying for emergency rooms while we could be paying the primary cost at a lesser rate and believes that we can save this program and urges all to email and contact council members to also save meals on wheels. It will be tough to get it back if we lose the funding this year – and health system is a major factor for people that are moving to Jacksonville.

**CM Rahman Johnson** – stated that one of the things he is working on is launching a series of amendment meetings that gives an opportunity to masticate what we are trying to understand. As they cut the millage rate by 1/8 of a mil, he is not in support of such as it is more important to save lives, and he urges to be vigilant with doing research and collecting data shows that what saves money is keeping us healthy, because people who are healthy and can work will put money back into the economy and we have to perform with greater excellence to come together to move Duval forward – he is committed to this fight and will work to make sure that the data and the narrative matches.

**CM Michael Boylan** – thanked all for participating and stated that the small common-sense investment we make as a city benefits taxpayers as well as saves lives and that is what it’s all about.

**Adjourned** 6:05 p.m.

**Minutes:** Sonia Johnson – soniaj@coj.net 904-255-5158

 Posted 8/21/2025 @ 3 p.m.

**Attachments:** Sign-in sheets, Agenda, meeting handouts, for verbatim statements please see the meeting video link below:

<https://archive-video.granicus.com/jaxcityc/jaxcityc_54984950-8182-41a9-bb79-2c023cd772b0.mp4>

MTB/sj

**cc:**

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