

City of Jacksonville

117 W. Duval Street
Jacksonville, FL 32202



Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 14, 2026

9:30 AM

Council Chamber,
1st Floor, City Hall

Jacksonville Waterways Commission

CM Ken Amaro, Chair

CM Mike Gay, Vice Chair

CM Jimmy Peluso

CM Matt Carlucci, Alternate

Jon Michael Barker

Robert Birtalan

General Public Rep - Vacant

Representative Dean Black - Excused

Mark Devereaux

Andrew Fraden

Marc Hardesty

Richard Hartley

General Public Rep - Vacant

General Public Rep - Vacant

Charles Garrison, Planning Commission

Adam Hoyles, Environmental Protection Board

Barbara Ireland Hobson, Legislative Assistant II

Shannon MacGillis & Carla Schell, Office of General Counsel

Dr. Gerard Pinto, Jacksonville University

Brandon Russell, Council Research

Jim Suber, Waterways Coordinator

1. Call To Order**COUNCIL RULE 4.505 DISRUPTION OF MEETING**

Any person who disrupts a regular meeting of the City Council, standing committees, special or select committees, sub-committees or any other public meeting presided over by a City Council Member may be forthwith barred, removed, or otherwise ejected, in the discretion of the presiding officer, from further attendance at that meeting. If necessary, due to the nature of the disruption, the audience may be cleared from the Council Chambers or meeting location in the discretion of the presiding officer.

Any person who refuses to leave the City Council Chamber may be subject to arrest.

Disruption of a meeting includes the following types of behaviors:

- 1) Any form of political campaigning or electioneering regarding a specific candidate or group of candidates in City elections;**
- 2) Impeding the orderly progress of the meeting by shouting, yelling, whistling, chanting, singing, dancing, clapping, foot stomping, snapping fingers, cheering, jeering, using artificial noise makers or musical instruments, waving signs of any size, or engaging in any other display of excessive noise, sounds, or movement;**
- 3) Displaying or waving signs of any sort, except where used to support the speaker's presentation at the podium, and only where the sign is 21 inches by 21 inches or smaller in size and cannot be displayed in a manner which unreasonably obstructs the view of the dais for any member of the audience, regardless of message;**
- 4) Audible noise from cellphones or other electronic devices;**
- 5) Consumption of alcohol or controlled substances;**
- 6) Making vulgar or offensive remarks or gestures, or using threatening language or gestures, including but not limited to pantomiming discharging a firearm, choking, or throat-cutting;**
- 7) Refusing to stop speaking when his or her time has expired or is otherwise directed by the presiding officer to do so due to disruptive behavior as described herein;**
- 8) Returning to the meeting after having been removed or ejected, or attempting to do so.**

2. Roll Call**3. Pledge of Allegiance****4. Approval of Minutes**

Approval of November 13, 2025 JWC Minutes

Approval of the minutes from the November 13, 2025, meeting was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously.

Approval of December 10, 2025 JWC Minutes

Approval of the minutes from the December 10, 2025, meeting was moved, seconded, and approved unanimously.

5. St Johns River Status Report on Water Quality and Manatees & 2025 Manatee Protection Plan Implementation Report

Dr. Pinto corrected an error in the handout provided to Commission members, noting that the new moon calendar dates should be January 4 and 18. He said that salinity is higher than what the tables show, due to low rainfall. He said that temperatures were 63-64 degrees Fahrenheit and that water levels were normal, though there was a 6-inch rainfall deficit.

Dr. Pinto said there were some algal blooms, including Microcystis at Mandarin Point, mixed algal blooms at Doctors Lake, and Microcystis at Shands Bridge; none were toxic. He also reported that there have been no manatee deaths in the area since the start of the new year. There were 14 deaths in the area reported for 2025, with one death caused by a watercraft. In Florida, there were 98 manatee deaths due to watercraft and a total of 632 deaths overall. Dr. Pinto said they were setting up an app for individuals to report manatee sightings.

Mr. Fraden asked when manatees return to the area. Dr. Pinto said manatees can remain year-round, depending on the temperature, but they usually return sometime in March.

Contact: Dr. Gerard Pinto
Jacksonville University

6. Presentation on the State of the River Report

Dr. Pinto presented some highlights from the 18th State of the River Report for the Lower St. Johns River Basin. He explained that the annual report began in 2008 and is funded by the City's Environmental Protection Board. He stated that the report is intended to provide an update on the river's health status. He provided an overview of the website used to access the report and the other resources available there.

Dr. Pinto described the report's findings related to fecal indicator bacteria (FIB). He explained that the mainstem's level of FIBs was satisfactory, while the tributaries' levels were unsatisfactory; both remained unchanged since the last report. He stated that several projects are conducted each year to address high levels of FIBs. He listed Miller Creek, Little Pottsburg Creek, Red Bay Branch Creek, Silversmith Creek, and Cowhead Creek as the five worst creeks based on levels of FIBs.

Dr. Pinto showed the prioritization list for septic tank removal and said that there were over 60,000 septic tanks in the area, with 24,000 needing to be connected to the sewer system. He noted that the Biltmore and Beverly Hills neighborhoods on the North Side have been completed and that Christobel is in progress. Dr. Pinto then reviewed the number of sanitary sewer overflows, stating that there were 181 events in 2024, with a decrease in the volume of the overflows. He said, overall, that septic tanks are the biggest problem and added that biosolid disposal sites are contributing to rising phosphorus levels.

Dr. Pinto then discussed algae blooms and stated that he relies on the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Algal Bloom Network for data. He explained that the report found unsatisfactory amounts of algae blooms in freshwater and marine areas of the river, with the trends uncertain. He further explained that algal blooms are higher in freshwater systems. He also said that there was a massive reduction in the amount of data collected in 2024.

Dr. Pinto then reviewed phosphorus levels in the river. He said levels in the mainstem of the river are satisfactory and unchanged. He said that levels in the river's marine areas are currently satisfactory but worsening. In tributaries, levels are unsatisfactory and worsening.

Dr. Pinto said that most fish species are not at risk of overfishing, but that blue crab landings are starting to decrease. He then explained that wetlands are constantly under pressure with many people using mitigation banks, which will increase as development continues. He said that preservation and restoration activities have diminished, and improving those efforts would be beneficial.

Salinity levels were unsatisfactory, largely due to sea-level rise, which affects underwater grass beds. He reported that threatened and endangered species took a hit in previous years but are doing well now. Nonnative aquatic species were reported to be unsatisfactory, as they are continually increasing due to climate change. Dr. Pinto reported that oxygen levels in the mainstem were satisfactory but unsatisfactory in the tributaries. Nitrogen levels were satisfactory in all parts of the river, but in some areas they are rising. Dr. Pinto concluded his presentation.

Chair Amaro asked if there was a way to access the full report. Dr. Pinto explained how to access the report online. Chair Amaro then asked about the overall condition of the river. Dr. Pinto said it depended on many variables, such as the time of year, the specific location along the river, and other conditions. He said that the river was in a better place than in past years, but that there were more

people and development projects, which put pressure on the system. He added that this was common in other urban areas and that it would be essential to create and preserve natural areas. He also explained that data collection presents challenges.

CM Peluso asked whether the biodisposal sites mentioned in the report were permanent; Dr. Pinto confirmed that they were. CM Peluso then asked who managed those sites. Dr. Pinto said that the Water Management District was following those sites and had been collecting data on phosphorus levels since 2020. He noted that the Riverkeeper was also involved in monitoring. CM Peluso asked who holds the permits for the sites. Dr. Pinto said the sites are privately owned and held by farmers.

Mr. Suber asked if there was a projection for when septic tank removal would be complete. Dr. Pinto said that the list from the presentation represented the priority locations for septic tank removals. He added that the time required depends on the funding and resources available and noted that the project would cost several billion dollars.

Mr. Barker asked why data collection on algae levels decreased in 2024. Dr. Pinto said he did not know why the number of samples decreased.

Contact: Gerard Pinto
Jacksonville University

7. Public Comment

Leatrice Bell spoke about the George Crady Bridge and raised concerns about an email from CM M. Carlucci indicating that the City had not been contributing to the bridge's maintenance and upkeep since 2023.

John Nooney spoke about 2025-0867 and other matters, including the School Board, Northeast Florida Regional Council, and FIND projects.

CM Gay addressed Ms. Bell's comments and expressed his surprise at the e-mail sent out indicating that the City had not been contributing to the upkeep of the George Crady Bridge. He said he understood that the City had been contributing and that he would investigate what was occurring. He said he was planning another meeting with state representatives.

8. New Business

2025-0859

ORD Transmitting to the State of FL's Various Agencies for Review, a Proposed Large-Scale Revision to the FLUM Series of the 2045 Comp Plan at 0 Yellow Water Rd, North of Normandy Blvd, btwn Yellow Water Rd & POW-MIA Memorial Pkwy - (337.29± Acres) - RR in the Rural Dev Area to LDR in the Suburban Dev Area - Yellow Water Land Holdings, LLC (R.E. # 002275-0005) (Appl # L-6082-25A) (Dist. 12-White) (Read) (LUZ) (PD & PC Apv)
11/25/25 CO Introduced: LUZ, JWC
12/2/25 LUZ Read 2nd & Rerefer
12/9/25 CO Read 2nd & Rerefer
1/13/26 CO PH Add'l 1/27/26
LUZ PH: 1/21/26
Public Hearing Pursuant to Sec 163.3187, F.S. & Ch 650, Pt 4, Ord Code -
1/13/26 & 1/27/26

Ed Lukacovic presented on 2025-0859, a large-scale transmittal ordinance. He provided the upcoming hearing dates for the bill: Planning Commission on January 8, 2026; City Council first hearings on January 13, 2026; LUZ Committee on January 21, 2026; and final City Council hearing on January 27, 2026.

He said the property being revised is located at 0 Yellow Water Road, on the south side of Wells Road, the east side of Yellow Water Road, and north of Normandy Boulevard. It is 337.29 acres with 61.39 acres of wetlands. Its current land use is rural residential, and the proposed land use is for low-density residential. Its sub-drainage basins are Yellow Water Creek and an unnamed stream, and the drainage basin is Black Creek.

He said the current development potential was either 337 single-family dwelling units with no sanitary sewer or water lines, or 674 single-family dwelling units with sanitary sewer and water lines. The proposed development potential is 1,686 single-family dwelling units, with sanitary sewer and water lines.

He said the surrounding land uses include agricultural, rural residential, public buildings and facilities, low-density residential, community/general commercial, recreation open space, and residential-professional-institutional.

He showed a map of the proposed expansion of the suburban development area. He said that sanitary sewer and water lines would have to be brought to the application site. He presented an area map showing pasture, woodlands, and wetlands. He noted multi-family units along the application site's southeast boundary. He then showed images from the southerly and easterly views of the application site. He said that 18.10 acres of the site are in Flood Zone A, and 10.39 acres are in an undocumented wetland Flood Zone. He also noted that 61.39 acres are wetlands, of which 54.60 acres are Category II and 6.79 acres are Category III. He showed an elevation map of the site and a soil map. He said the two most important are the Surrency soils and the Goldhead, Wet, and Lynn Haven soils, as they frequently flood. He showed a map of the subdrainage basins and a drainage path map starting at the site and ending in the St. Johns River after exiting the Black Creek basin.

Mr. Hartley asked about the drainage from the proposed project and if it would cause the flood zones nearby to increase. He also asked if mitigation would be needed. Mr. Lukacovic explained that once approved by the City, developers will submit a site plan to the City showing the lot development and any stormwater retention facilities to be placed on the property. He added that flooding in the area should not increase. He said if there were access roads crossing wetlands, then mitigation would be necessary. He said mitigation could be done on-site or at the nearby Loblolly mitigation bank.

Mr. Fraden asked if there were plans to fill or mitigate the category 2 and 3 wetlands in the area. Paul Hardin, representing the project, said the area was already developed and that there would be no impact on any of the wetlands.

Mr. Barker asked for assurance that the development would not impact drainage to the Black Creek basin. Mr. Hardin confirmed there would be no impact and that they had already obtained their permits.

Mr. Hardesty asked about groundwater contamination around Yellow Creek. Mr. Hardin said the

contamination area was remote from this site and had been cleaned.

The bill was moved and seconded. The bill was approved unanimously.

Contact: Ed Lukacovic

Peluso Resolution

CM Peluso explained a resolution he wanted to introduce that would express support for HB 981 and SB 1066. He said the bill calls for restoring the Ocklawaha River and finding a solution for the Rodman Dam, including breaching it. He added that it was a priority of the Riverkeeper and had bipartisan support. He explained that a commission would be created to determine how to restore the river and support the Palatka area should the reservoir be eliminated. He said that restoring the river would benefit the lower basin of the St. Johns River. Dr. Pinto added that it would help the ecosystem by allowing more freshwater to enter the river. It could also add 5,000-6,000 acres of wetlands and improve bass fishing.

CM Peluso asked Ms. MacGillis to guide the Commission on how to proceed with approving the resolution. Ms. MacGillis said she had a hesitation about the Commission voting formally on the bill, since it was not included on the agenda to allow public comment. She recommended asking for public comment on the resolution. She also recommended that since the resolution was to go through City Council, Commission members could indicate their support, since waiting until the next Waterways Commission meeting would not allow the resolution to be approved in time for the state legislative session. CM Peluso said he favored that option.

Mr. Barker, referencing Dr. Pinto's estimation that 5,000-6,000 acres of wetlands could be generated by restoring the Ocklawaha River, asked who owned the acreage that may be converted to wetlands and if any consideration had been given to the impact on those property owners. CM Peluso said the bill would create a commission to address those concerns before any action is taken.

Mr. Fraden asked if the Rodman Dam was the endpoint for boaters travelling along that route. CM Peluso said that there were small streams where boaters could navigate around the dam, but most of the time, the dam blocks traffic, with occasional openings.

Mr. Hardesty said he supported the resolution and that the commission's study could address some longstanding environmental issues affecting the river. He said it would be prudent to seek public comment so they could move the resolution forward.

Mr. Birtalan said the bill seemed like something he would support, but he was not comfortable expressing that support because he was unfamiliar with it.

Mr. Devereaux noted that most on the Commission seemed supportive but asked what the counterargument to the bill would be. CM Peluso said the bill had been in the works for years and that Putnam County tended to oppose breaching the dam because of the impact on the reservoir and, thus, on sport fishing in the area. He continued, explaining that Putnam County had been receiving more state resources and that the quality of the reservoir had declined over the past couple of years. He said the bill would create the Northeast Florida River and Springs Recreation and Economic Development Advisory Council to determine how to get more resources to Putnam County and to navigate the next few years. He said that the Governor's office, environmental groups, and Putnam County are now more aligned on the issue. Mr. Devereaux asked if the Governor would appoint members to the Commission. CM Peluso said the bill states that the Commission would be housed within the Department of Environmental Protection and that nine of the 15 commissioners would serve at the pleasure of the Governor and the remaining 6 would be appointed by the boards of the county commissioners of Putnam, Marion, Clay, and St. Johns County.

Chair Amaro asked Ms. MacGillis how they should proceed. She said they could forgo a formal vote and have Commissioners voice their support or lack thereof, and that CM Peluso would submit the legislation to the City Council. She said they could also call a formal vote, and the legislation would then be updated to reflect the Jacksonville Waterways Commission's sentiment. She again expressed her hesitation regarding its exclusion from the agenda and lack of public comment, since it was technically new business. She clarified that in either case, it would be a measure of support for the bill, which would create a commission to study potential solutions for the Ocklawaha River and Rodman Dam; it would not indicate support for any changes to the Dam.

CM Peluso said he wanted the bill introduced as an emergency and supported an informal measure of support. Chair Amaro said he wasn't comfortable moving forward based on the concerns raised by Ms. MacGillis, but also understood CM Peluso's sense of urgency. Ms. MacGillis recommended that the Commissioners state their support, and then that could be added to the legislation; she did not recommend a formal vote for the reasons stated earlier.

Mr. Hardesty suggested allowing the audience to comment. Chair Amaro asked if that was sufficient without proper public notice. Ms. MacGillis said that taking a consensus was not the same as voting. She added that taking public comment now would not resolve the point of taking a formal vote, but it would be a good procedural step toward reaching consensus.

CM Gay stated he would support the resolution and suggested allowing public comment.

Public Comment:

John Nooney said he did not support the resolution. He was the only commenter.

Chair Amaro then allowed each Commissioner to indicate their support or lack thereof. Commissioners Devereaux, Hardesty, and Fraden each expressed strong support for the legislation. Commissioner Hartley and CMs Peluso, Amaro, and Gay expressed support for the resolution. Commissioner Barker expressed support with hesitation due to lack of information. Commissioner Birtalan stated that he neither supported nor opposed the resolution due to a lack of familiarity with the House and Senate bills.

9. Old Business

Shad Creek Resolution

CM Gay said that more constituents have reached out in support of the Shad Creek resolution, which would create more slow-speed zones. Chair Amaro asked what they needed to do to move the resolution. Ms. MacGillis said that it had been noticed, and the Commission could take a formal vote. She said the vote would be to approve the resolution as written, reflecting changes to the bill that included estimates for signage.

The bill was moved and seconded. It was approved unanimously.

Contact: CM Gay

10. George Crady Bridge

Contact: CM Gay

11. Adjournment