

The Jacksonville Symphony

The DOGE report highlighted that The Jacksonville Symphony received \$538,000 in CSG dollars. All CSG dollars were used to fund musician salaries.

As information on the Jacksonville Symphony:

- The Symphony is one of the largest drivers of business in Jacksonville's arts sector, with 110,000 residents attending the Symphony's downtown concerts annually.
- The Jacksonville Symphony is one of the city's largest cultural organizations, employing 60 full-time musicians, 40 full-time staff and 120 part-time personnel reaching over 180,000 people annually, which includes 70,000 students. The Symphony also works with 110 vendors annually.
- The Symphony's annual economic impact in Duval County is over \$17 million.
- Virtually all of the Symphony's \$14 million operating budget for Fiscal Year 2026 will remain in Northeast Florida, contributing to the economic vitality of the area, including services paid to over 100 small business vendors.
- The Symphony earmarks nearly \$1 million annually for education and community engagement and is the largest provider of music education in Duval County. More than 70,000 students, over 50% from Title I schools, participate in the Symphony's education programs each year.

The Cathedral Arts Project Program

The DOGE report highlighted that the Cathedral Arts Project program received \$480,356 in CSG dollars. No CSG dollars were used to fund the “Justice Involved Youth” program.

The “Justice Involved Youth” program cost is \$11,100 annually, and The Moran Family Foundation currently funds this program in its entirety and has since the pandemic.

While not funded with taxpayer dollars, through the “Justice Involved Youth” program CAP delivers weekly, structured visual arts instruction inside the Duval County juvenile detention system. Instruction is provided by trained teaching artists and focuses on:

- Communication and cooperation
- Literacy skills
- Self-regulation through consistent engagement in a highly structured environment

Outcomes and Accountability Metrics from CAP’s most recent annual report:

- 27 justice-involved youth served, exceeding projections
- 95% demonstrated increased engagement, cooperation, and participation
- Measurable improvements in focus, task completion, and peer interaction
- These outcomes are direct predictors of reduced disciplinary incidents and future justice involvement.

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DOGE COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS FLORIDA DOGE REPORT

JACKSONVILLE, FL., (February 2, 2026) – The Special Committee on Duval DOGE, chaired by City Council Member Ron Salem, will discuss the Florida Department of Government Efficiency report on local Government Spending that was recently released. The meeting is scheduled to be held in Council Chamber.

When: Tuesday, **February 03, 2025**

11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Where: **City Council Chambers**

117 West Duval Street, First Floor

Who: Ron B. Salem, Chair

What: The Committee will discuss the Florida DOGE report and to address the questions/matters as initially stated in the March 17, 2025, Special Committee Charge Memorandum as extended by Council President Carrico.

About: The Special Committee on Duval DOGE was extended to analyze the growth in city departments and programs, evaluate services for potential savings and consider implementing budget adjustments while being mindful of service impacts.

The Committee announced a breakthrough in government accountability efforts: nearly \$25 million in savings throughout their initial review of city government.

The Committee has an email address where the community at large can send in their ideas, thoughts or information directly to the members of the committee. The email is duvaldoge@coj.net. For more information or to access the committee's resources, visit the official webpage at: <https://www.jacksonville.gov/city-council/standing-committees/special-committee-on-duval-doge>

For more information, please contact Nikki Evans at 904-255-5116 or nevans@coj.net.

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From Florida DOGE Report		Council Auditor's Office Comments Related to Financial Amounts Stated
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5	<p>The 10 largest cities in Florida budgeted \$6.39 billion to spend from their general funds in Fiscal Year 2025- a 36% increase from Fiscal Year 2021, and a 67% increase from Fiscal Year 2017. While this increase is disproportionate to population and inflation increases, this underscores the need to protect the opportunity for families to own their own home by enacting property tax relief, as Governor DeSantis has urged. This increase is not driven primarily by core government functions such as law enforcement, firefighting, and emergency management. (Note that the graph on this page shows Jacksonville with budget numbers for their general funds at \$1,197,619,690 in FY 17 and \$2,069,543,712 in FY 25)</p>	<p>FY 16/17 budget for general fund was \$1,197,619,690 and FY 24/25 budget for general fund was \$2,069,543,712. (Note that the general fund reference is not the same as the general fund/general services district as the General Fund as a whole would include the Emergency Reserve for example).</p> <p>Additionally, when looking at the general fund/general services district budget numbers for the City of Jacksonville there were significant amounts in contingencies due to collective bargaining for example. When adjusting for this, other departments' budgets increased 46.5% from FY 16/17 to FY 24/25 and JSO and JFRD combined budgets increased 66.5% from FY 16/17 to FY 24/25.</p>
6	<p>Even those that have given the pretense of reducing millage rates nonetheless sit atop a much-increased revenue stream, in part due to continually increasing property taxes. In Jacksonville, a nearly 95% increase since Fiscal Year 2017.</p>	<p>From FY 16/17 to FY 24/25, total gross Ad Valorem revenue budget (including to CRAs) increased by 95%.</p>

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18	<p>A graph notes that the City of Jacksonville's personnel spending increased 29.7% or \$228 million from FY 20/21 to FY 24/25, which the report indicates is in excess of the Population Growth and Inflation Rate combined.</p>	<p>The concept is correct that the City's personnel costs have increased. However, without further context from the report we are unable to verify the exact percentages in the report. Using population growth rates adjusted for inflation, we calculate that the expected percentage increase would be about 30% when comparing FY 20/21 to FY 24/25. Based on salaries in the general fund/general services district and taking into account the collective bargaining contingencies in FY 24/25, our data shows an overall increase from FY 20/21 to FY 24/25 of 39%; however, the growth in ISO/IFRD was approximately 42% and in other departments was approximately 22%. Additionally, we also considered salaries and benefits combined for the general fund/general services district for the same time period, and calculated overall growth was approximately 40%; however, the growth in ISO/IFRD was approximately 43% and growth in other departments was approximately 23% .</p>
19	<p>In Orlando, for example, wage and salary expenses increased by 79% between Fiscal Year 2015-16 and Fiscal Year 2023-24; while benefit expenses increased just 36% over the same time period. Similarly, in Jacksonville, salaries have grown 71%, more than twice the rate of benefits.</p>	<p>When looking at the citywide salary costs compared to citywide benefits, we are able to get reasonably close to the amounts stated. However, when looking at General Fund/GSD only (portion funded by Ad Valorem) the difference is much less. A couple of things to keep in mind: -Were it not for pension reform in FY 17/18 that greatly reduced the benefit costs, benefit cost percentage increase would exceed salaries by 30% in the general Fund and be about the same as the salary increase if citywide. -Salaries for many positions were kept flat and even reduced for many years from FY 08/09 through when pension reform was passed.</p>

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30	<p>The City of Jacksonville initially told the DOGE team that the city made only one DEI-themed grant, excluding the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville (CCGJ) from its responses to DOGE requests.</p> <p>-When confronted, Jacksonville conceded that the CCGJ exercises the grant-making authority of the city</p> <p>-As illustrated by Jacksonville's initial response, this outsourcing of the grant-making function – and the limited information provided to the public by the CCGJ – serves to conceal the city's extensive support of DEI through grants</p>	<p>Pursuant to Section 6 of Chapter 118 of the Municipal Code, the Cultural Service Grants are awarded by the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville.</p>
34	<p>The City of Jacksonville directed the Jacksonville Electric Authority to develop a plan for converting 100% of the city's non-emergency on-road vehicles to EVs, at a cost of \$105 million</p>	<p>Per the Administration, "At the initiation of JEA prior to 2024, the City (via Fleet Management) entered into a no-cost, no obligation agreement with JEA and an external vendor of JEAs to develop a plan to convert 100% of the City's non-emergency on-road vehicles to EVs. The resulting analysis presented a plan to convert 744 vehicles over a 15-year period with a cost of \$105 million, which provided savings over the "business as usual" fleet replacement strategy for internal combustible engine vehicles. The City is not obligated to adopt the plan and implemented a pilot in FY25 for select building inspection division vehicles due for replacement at a total vehicle count less than the plan presented by the JEA vendor."</p>
34	<p>In Jacksonville and Pinellas County, DOGE identified sidewalk projects estimated to cost \$2 million-\$3 million or more per mile – compared to an FDOT average of \$900,000 per mile</p>	<p>See comment to Art Museum Drive Sidewalks below</p>
43	<p>Population: 1,062,593 FY 2024-25 General Fund Budget: \$2,069,543,71 City Employees (FY 24-25): 8,195 Millage Rate: 11.3169 Median Household Income (FY 23-24): \$68,069.00 DOGE Site Team Visit Date: August 7th and August 8th</p>	<p>Population - In line with state numbers; Budget - This is overall General Fund Budget including Emergency Reserve Fund; City Employees - Citywide Employee Cap in FY 24/25 was 8,176; Millage Rate - Verified; Median Household Income - In line with state numbers.</p>

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43	Since Fiscal Year 2016-17, Jacksonville's Ad Valorem Revenue Nearly Doubled and General Fund Spending Expanded Over 70%, While County Population Grew Just 16%	Confirmed amounts and population change are in line with state amounts. This analysis does not factor in inflation.
44	Jacksonville's City Council deserves partial credit for the actions taken during 2025 to approve a millage rate reduction from 11.3169 to 11.1919 mills, with the City Council voting 10-9 to do so, and to impose modest restraints on elements of the Mayor's proposed budget, such as reducing the budgeted number of non-public safety city employees from 3,794 to 3,768. The City Council also established a Special Committee on Duval DOGE to analyze recent growth in City Departments and programs to identify areas for potential savings, evaluate services provided to identify areas for potential savings, and to otherwise review the City's activities.	Millage Rate - Verified Rates; Non-Public Safety Employees - Non-ISO/JFRD citywide cap stayed flat at 2,864 from FY 24/25 to FY 25/26. We are not sure how non-public safety is being classified and what funds are being included, which may explain the difference.
44	Florida DOGE notes that even with the reduction in millage rates, Jacksonville's budget still projects a \$76 million increase in ad valorem tax collections from the prior budget year. The non-public safety city employee count remains 44 above the number in Fiscal Year 2023-24, and this follows on years of substantial budget growth. The city also continues to fund external organizations which make DEI central to their missions.	Ad Valorem Revenue - Budgeted to increase \$76 million for FY 25/26 compared to FY 24/25. Non-Public Safety Employees - Non-ISO/JFRD all funds went from 2,821 in FY 23/24 up to 2,864 in FY 25/26. We are not sure how non-public safety is being classified and what funds are being included, which may explain the difference.
44	Mentions a \$480,000 Grant to Cathedral Arts Project	Confirmed that in FY 24/25 the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville awarded \$480,356 to Cathedral Arts Project
45	\$1.9 million in Fiscal Year 2024-25 in "cultural" grants to organizations that have made DEI their central mission. Jacksonville makes these grants through an arrangement designed to insulate these grants from transparency by deputizing the "Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville" as the awarding agency, excluding the CCGJ's specific spending from public budget documents, and leaving out this spending from responses to initial Florida DOGE requests	\$7 million was appropriated to Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville in FY 24/25 of which \$6,007,092 was to be awarded in grant programs consistent with Part 6 of Chapter 118 of the Municipal Code.

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45	\$7.5 million for a single, 1-mile sidewalk project. FDOT estimates that a 5-foot sidewalk on both sides of a road typically costs about \$900,000	<p>This may be referring to the planned Art Museum Drive Sidewalks project that has \$7.5 million in planned funding between FY 26/27 and FY 27/28. The project has the following scope:</p> <p>"Design and construction of missing sections of sidewalk on both sides of Art Museum Drive from Beach Boulevard to Atlantic Boulevard. Project will include bridge construction and modifications to the slope walls under the Emerson Street Overpass."</p>
45	\$54 million more in capital spending for bike lanes and sidewalks than provided for Fire/Rescue in a recent capital improvement plan	<p>Without more background on how this information was pulled, it is more difficult to confirm this information.</p> <p>In going back to FY 21/22 through FY 25/26, we do not see where the current year or future spending had total projects more for bicycle and sidewalk projects than JFRD, except for when looking at the 5 year plan in FY 25/26 when bicycle and sidewalks exceeded JFRD by \$12 million.</p> <p>It is possible the Florida DOGE team may have looked at the "Total Costs" of projects in the CIP countywide recurring projects such as "Sidewalk - Curb Construction and Repair" or "ADA Compliance - Curb Ramps Sidewalks", which include large amounts of previous funding because we use one project and they show up in the CIP every year compared to when we finish completion or upgrades of a fire station that fall off when fully funded.</p>

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45	<p>Over \$500,000 of excessive overtime, including: - 27 Parks and Rec staff who recorded an average of 650+ hours of overtime (equivalent to 16 additional full-time weeks of work) each. This included 4 staff members who exceeded 900 hours of overtime - 8 staff in the Traffic Engineering division who averaged 700+ hours of overtime each - 4 parking staff who exceeded 500 hours of overtime</p>	<p>If this is referring to FY 24/25, we can reasonably confirm the hours. Given that we were not able to assess how the \$500,000 was determined, the Administration provided the following responses.</p> <p>Parks – The higher overtime hours reflected for certain team members are the result of operational requirements tied to their assigned roles and responsibilities. These employees provide essential coverage for weekend park and riverwalk maintenance, revenue generating community center, stage, and bleacher rental operations, supervisory oversight, and emergency responses, including safety, plumbing, and electrical call-outs. Additionally, overtime hours include support for permitted special events, city-sponsored programming, and large-scale sports and entertainment activities, all of which require extended hours for event setup, maintenance, and post-event restoration.</p> <p>DIA – Most of Public Parking's regular business activities take place Monday – Friday between 6am and 6pm. These employees all work in the parking garages. Their overtime would be a combination of opening the parking garages for special events after business hours and on weekends. The secondary contributing factor would be covering shifts where there are open positions due to a high level of turnover.</p> <p>Public Works- The Signal section has 18 positions, during the 21-month time period, vacancies went from 3 to 6 and one position was placed in the vacancy pool. We were short 1/3 of our workforce. Vacancies required remaining staff to work overtime to complete the critical safety work of repairing traffic signals. During this time, we experienced a vehicle shortage due to backlog of vehicle repairs. OT was used to make use of available lift trucks during a second OT shift. Our crews worked OT to set up detours for Jaguar games.</p>
45	<p>A part-time Special Advisor to the Mayor paid at a rate of \$105 per hour</p>	<p>There is a part-time employee in the Mayor's Office paid \$105 per hour (Carla Miller), which equates to an annual salary of \$136,500 (assuming 25 hours per week is worked).</p>
45	<p>The Holo-Donna, a hologram of the mayor to greet visitors to Jacksonville International Airport. Originally advertised as a \$30,000 purchase, the price tag was closer to \$75,000</p>	<p>Confirmed payments of \$66,302.06 for hologram unit at JAA including creation of the avatar, photoshoot, and wrap for the unit. Per the Administration, "Technology Solutions has not incurred any additional costs, beyond COJ personnel, each time the messaging is changed or if there is a new photo shoot. These changes are included in the original cost."</p>

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45	<p>DEI funded through the CCGJ, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$480,000 to the Cathedral Arts Project, which promotes "equity in arts education" for "Justice-Involved Youth" - \$57,000+ to Hope at Hand, which uses "therapeutic art" and poetry to help youth "overcome barriers" - \$538,000 to the Jacksonville Symphony, which boasts of "being featured [as a] case study on DEI" and made a single executive responsible for both DEI and education before changing her title to hide her activities in 2025 	<p>In FY 24/25, Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville awarded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$480,356 to Cathedral Arts Project - \$61,402 to Hope at Hand - \$538,875 to Jacksonville Symphony
45-46	<p>\$27,000 grant to the Jacksonville Area Sexual Minority Youth Network (JASMYN), which aggressively supports the transgender agenda for children, primarily serving youth who indicate a gender "other" than male or female. JASMYN is also guided by "racial equity" principles and adopted as its logo the rainbow bridge-lighting system that FDOT has prohibited</p>	<p>The Public Service Grant Council awarded \$90,339 to JASMYN in City funding in FY 24/25.</p>
46	<p>\$30 million in police and fire pensions have been invested with Victory Park Capital (VPC), based on a 2022 presentation that highlighted VPC's commitment to DEI. As of 2025, VPC remains one of Jacksonville's money managers and continues to highlight its commitment to DEI and ESG on its website</p>	<p>Confirmed per Police and Fire Pension Fund Quarterly Performance Report that it had a commitment of \$30 million and paid in capital of \$32.2 million.</p>
46	<p>Jacksonville directed the Jacksonville Electric Authority to analyze the costs and benefits of converting 100% of the city's non-emergency on-road vehicles to EVs</p>	<p>Per the Administration, "At the initiation of JEA prior to 2024, the City (via Fleet Management) entered into a no-cost, no obligation agreement with JEA and an external vendor of JEAs to develop a plan to convert 100% of the City's non-emergency on-road vehicles to EVs. The resulting analysis presented a plan to convert 744 vehicles over a 15-year period with a cost of \$105 million, which provided savings over the "business as usual" fleet replacement strategy for internal combustible engine vehicles. The City is not obligated to adopt the plan and implemented a pilot in FY25 for select building inspection division vehicles due for replacement at a total vehicle count less than the plan presented by the JEA vendor."</p>