

# City of Jacksonville

*117 W. Duval Street  
Jacksonville, FL 32202*



## Meeting Minutes

**Wednesday, February 11, 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 - Excused Late Arrival*

*CM Matt Carlucci, Alternate*

*Jon Michael Barker*

*Robert Birtalan*

*General Public Rep - Vacant*

*Representative Dean Black - Excused*

*Mark Devereaux - Late Arrival*

*Andrew Fraden - Excused*

*Marc Hardesty - Absent*

*Richard Hartley*

*General Public Rep - Vacant*

*General Public Rep - Vacant*

*Planning Commission Rep - Vacant*

*Adam Hoyles, Environmental Protection Board*

*Rebecca Bolton, Legislative Assistant II*

*Shannon MacGillis, Office of General Counsel*

*Dr. Gerard Pinto, Jacksonville University*

*Brandon Russell, Council Research*

*Jim Suber, Waterways Coordinator*

**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.

**REQUEST TO SPEAK:**

1. Fill out a speaker card.
2. Sign it if you are going to speak.
3. Read the rules on the back of the card.
4. Return the card to the Legislative Assistant.

1. **Meeting Convened: 9:30 AM      Meeting Adjourned: 10:29 AM**
2. **Attendance**
3. **Pledge of Allegiance**
4. **Announcements**

**Updates Regarding Vacancies and Applications**

Ms. MacGillis provided updates on vacancies. She said there were a couple of vacancies on the Commission, but an application had resulted in a resolution that she estimated would be approved by the City Council in the next cycle. She said applications were available online for individuals interested in serving.

5. **Approval of Minutes**

Ms. MacGillis informed the Commission that a quorum was obtained at 9:59 a.m.

Approval of the January 14, 2026, meeting minutes was moved and seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

6. **St. Johns River Status Report on Water Quality and Manatees**

Dr. Pinto provided the St. Johns River Status Report. He said conditions have been dry, resulting in high salinity. Salinity at Mayport was 26 ppt, similar to Dames Point Bridge, while Jacksonville University's salinity was 16-18 ppt. Downtown salinity was 12 ppt, and Buckman Bridge's salinity was 2 ppt. Water temperature was 54 degrees Fahrenheit. Water levels are normal, but rainfall is at a 2-inch deficit.

Regarding algae blooms, Dr. Pinto said *Microcystis* was present in Doctors Lake and Shands Bridge, and normal conditions were observed at Mandarin Point. Overall, no toxins were detected at these locations.

Dr. Pinto stated that there have been no manatee deaths in the area so far this year and noted that, as temperatures rise, manatees will begin to return. Statewide, he said, there had been 10 watercraft deaths and 43 total deaths.

Chair Amaro asked what the public could expect of the new manatee exhibit opening at the zoo. Dr. Pinto said he had not been involved with the exhibit but said it would open in March. He explained that the design would resemble a lazy river and could house up to 15 manatees. He said it would be a fantastic exhibit and would positively impact rescue and rehabilitation efforts. Chair Amaro then asked about the elevated salinity levels in the river, noting they were high as far as the Buckman Bridge. Dr. Pinto said the estuary extends 100 miles upstream, with tidal influence reaching Palatka. He added that salinity is exacerbated during droughts and dry seasons. He also said that dredging has increased saltwater intrusion into the river, compounded by rising sea levels from climate change. He said that up to 14 billion gallons of saltwater can flow into and out of the system daily, with an average of 5-7 billion gallons.

Mr. Devereaux asked why there were more manatee deaths in Brevard County compared to other areas of the state. Dr. Pinto said one reason was the higher number of manatees present. He also said there were more canals and watercraft in the area. Mr. Devereaux then asked whether Duval County did a good job educating the public about manatees and boating speed zones. Dr. Pinto said that the county was doing a good job, noting that they increased the number of officers on the water from 2 to 8. He also said that of the citations issued by those officers, few pertained to manatees or to speed zone violations. He also said that officers will provide educational resources to watercraft operators.

## **7. 2025 Manatee Protection Plan Implementation Report**

Dr. Pinto presented the 2025 Manatee Protection Plan Implementation Report. He said a link in the executive summary of the report directs people to a site where they can report manatee sightings. He said that the number of manatees in the area has decreased over time due to a lack of food sources. He then showed images of manatee distributions across the county, noting that manatees use the Intracoastal Waterway as a travel corridor into the area. He also noted that there is often a concentration of manatees near Doctors Lake because of more abundant food sources from fresher water.

Dr. Pinto then reviewed information on the manatees' habitats, reiterating that grass beds are in poor condition, with many areas bare. He said that the Port had posted signage with a QR code that leads people to a website to report sightings. He said that Mayport Basin used to report regularly but has not recently. He added that there was one crushing death in the basin.

Regarding watercraft deaths, Dr. Pinto said there were very few, with only one in the area among 14 total. He said another manatee died in a canal lock, bringing the total to two deaths from human activity. He then presented two graphs comparing deaths in Duval County with those statewide. He noted that the running five-year average of watercraft deaths in Duval County has trended downward. Dr. Pinto said this reflected that the protection plan was working. He then showed maps that indicated the locations of manatee deaths in the area.

Dr. Pinto explained that boat slip inventories were tracked as part of the protection plan and had not changed since last year's report. He said the State has required the tracking of slip locations downtown going forward. He added that the report is prepared annually to provide state and federal regulators with justification for not changing the plan.

Dr. Pinto then provided a law enforcement summary, which compiled data on citations, warnings, and manatee-related incidents. He noted that there were zero manatee-related incidents. He said that they were working with the Fish and Wildlife Commission to address sign replacements. He then provided an overview of the educational summary, which detailed efforts by various agencies, organizations, and individuals to raise awareness about manatees.

Ms. MacGillis explained that the Manatee Protection Plan and the Manatee Protection Plan Implementation Report are City of Jacksonville products, produced annually. She said that, currently, the Jacksonville Waterways Commission has no role in the Report and that it is an expression of the plan's working. She said the Commission's role in the annual report is to receive it, a change made in 2014.

## **8. Public Comment**

John Nooney commented on 2026-009, 2026-0004, 2026-0032, 2026-0066

Latrice Bell commented on the George Crady Bridge Fishing Pier and invited the Commissioners to tour the site to understand why community members are passionate about reopening.

## **9. New Business**

**2026-0032-E** ORD Auth the Mayor to Apply to the FL Inland Navigation Dist (FIND) for 2026 Grants to Undertake Specified Waterways-Related Projs; Auth the Mayor, or Her Desig, & the Corp Sec to Execute & Deliver All Grant Agrmts btwn the City & FIND, as Well as All Docs Related to Such Grants; Acknowledging Willingness to Meet Funding Requirements; Prov for City Oversight by the Dept of Parks, Recreation & Community Svcs (Dillard) (Req of Mayor)  
1/13/26 CO Introduced: NCSPHS, F, JWC  
1/20/26 NCSPHS Read 2nd & Rerefer  
1/21/26 F Read 2nd & Rerefer  
1/27/26 CO PH Read 2nd & Rerefer  
2/2/26 NCSPHS Approve 5-0  
2/3/26 F Approve 5-0  
2/10/26 CO Approve 18-0  
Public Hearing Pursuant to Ch 166, F.S. & CR 3.601 - 1/27/26

Ms. MacGillis said Ordinance 2026-0032 was on the consent agenda at the February 10, 2026, City Council meeting and passed. She said the ordinance was included on this meeting's agenda out of an abundance of caution. She noted that it was properly discussed at the November 12, 2025, meeting of the Waterways Commission.

**2026-0096** ORD Approp \$2,249,117.00 from Federal Grant Contributions to Provide Funding for the McCoys Creek Branches Proj; Amend the 26-30 5-Yr CIP Appvd by Ord 2025-505-E to Reflect this Approp of Funds; Prov for Oversight by the Dept of Public Works, Engineering & Construction Mgmt Div (B.T. 26-040) (Wilson) (Req of Mayor) (JWC Apv)  
2/10/26 CO Introduced: NCSPHS, TEU, F, JWC  
Public Hearing Pursuant to Ch 166, F.S. & C.R. 3.601 - 2/24/26

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

## **10. Old Business**

### **Shad Creek Resolution Update**

CM Gay said he received communication from FWC acknowledging the resolution and invited Ms. MacGillis to explain.

### **George Crady Bridge Update**

CM Gay said he reached out to the Mayor's office, which reported that the City's payment toward the bridge was sent to an employee who was no longer with the City. He said he had been assured it would be addressed and was looking forward to getting local state representatives to continue pressing for a resolution to the issue. He also encouraged community members to continue attending meetings and applying pressure.

CM Peluso spoke about the resolution that expressed support for HB 981 and SB 1066. He said there has been pushback against the bill from the Putnam County delegation. He reiterated that the bills would establish a council to secure state funding for the region and that the bills were expected to pass easily. He said the Governor has not indicated whether he will sign it. He said his advocacy for the bill had been misconstrued as an attempt to prioritize Duval County's needs over Putnam County's. He said the City Council resolution previously supported by the Waterways Commission would be deferred until action was taken by the state legislature or until the end of the legislative session.

CM Gay said he had spoken with Rep. Duggan about the bills and now feels confident about the resolution moving forward, but would defer to CM Peluso on whether to defer the bills.

Mr. Barker said he had received additional information since the last meeting and was more comfortable with the state legislation and with moving the City Council resolution forward.

Mr. Hartley asked whether it would be appropriate to present the bills to inform the Commission better. CM Peluso said the Riverkeeper could potentially provide a presentation, but at that time, the legislative session would be wrapping up. He offered to obtain an update on the dam but noted that it may be outside the Commission's purview, as it was in Putnam County. Chair Amaro said he liked the idea of the Riverkeeper providing a presentation.

Mr. Devereaux noted that there are dozens of fishing tournaments in Duval County and asked whether the Commission could be more involved in manatee protection and awareness. He said he would pay for signage and informational sessions regarding manatees for the tournaments. Mr. Suber said most tournament captains' meetings include law enforcement presentations on manatee zones. Mr. Devereaux said the meetings held at his restaurant did not have any presentations from law enforcement. Mr. Suber said they would likely need to discuss those meetings to ensure they are properly permitted. Chair Amaro agreed that the Commission should play a role in raising awareness and said he would determine the appropriate way to do so. Mr. Devereaux said he would produce posters and a presentation for the Commission in future meetings. Mr. Super said he and Dr. Pinto, in collaboration with other agencies, hold a press conference each Spring to promote manatee zones.

## 11. Adjournment

**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: Brandon Russell, Council Research  
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Posted: 2/13/26, 12:00 p.m.