City of Jacksonville

117 W. Duval Street
Jacksonville, FL 32202

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, November 12, 2026

3:30 PM

Council Chamber,
1st Floor, City Hall

Special Committee on Drowning Prevention

Council Member Reggie Gaffney, Jr., Chair
Council Member Tyrona Clark-Murray, Vice-Chair
Council Member Mike Gay

Legislative Asst: Vanessa Galan
Research: Steven Libby
Auditors: Heather Reber
OGC: Shannon MacGillis

I. Call to Order

Chair Reggie Gaffney, Jr., convened the meeting at 3:32 p.m. and called for introductions.

II. Introduction

III. Approval of October 21st Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the October 21, 2026, meeting was made, seconded, and approved without objection.

IV. Chair's Opening Remarks

Chair Gaffney, Jr., provided a recap of events since a child drowned off Broward Road in District 8 in mid-August. He stated that he then reached out to the Office of General Counsel (OGC) and the Mayor's administration to discuss drowning prevention measures. He added that the following day, another drowning occurred in District 8, at the River City complex.

Chair Gaffney, Jr., stated that he then held a publicly noticed meeting to discuss the drownings, which led to the creation of the Special Committee. He added that Council President Howland tasked the Special Committee with six responsibilities, and that the Special Committee would review them to ensure they had been fulfilled. Chair Gaffney, Jr., stated that he was also discussing future legislation with OGC.

Chair Gaffney, Jr., then thanked the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department (JFRD), the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC), the Legislative Services Division, the Council Auditor's Office, OGC, and the Working Group for their work on the Special Committee.

V. Working Group's Presentation Recommendations

Mr. Tyler Nolen, NEFRC Special Projects Coordinator, began the presentation to the Special Committee to provide an overview of the Working Group's recommendations. Mr. Nolen stated that the Working Group's goal is to deliver a final report to the Neighborhoods Committee by the end of December. He provided a brief overview of the Special Committee's six charges.

Mr. Nolen explained that the Working Group's first recommendation is to complete its risk analysis of stormwater facilities within a 1,000-foot buffer of high-risk properties. He then explained that the next recommendation is to integrate the GIS water hazard layer directly into the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system and combine it with the REVAMP program to reduce response times.

Chair Gaffney, Jr., asked Mr. Nolen how to ensure that children with autism or developmental disabilities are enrolled in the REVAMP program. Mr. Nolen stated that the Working Group would recommend expanding its partnership with Duval County Public Schools (DCPS). He added that rather than overwhelming parents with information at the beginning of the school year, it would be better to take a more targeted approach by integrating water safety education into the curriculum.

Chair Gaffney, Jr., asked whether the City currently had a program that teaches children to swim for free. Mr. Nolen stated that it did. Chair Gaffney, Jr., explained that he had received an email from someone interested in teaching children to swim, and that he wanted to point her in the right direction.

Mr. Nolen then explained the Working Group's next recommendation, for increasing home safety and preventing elopement. He stated that targeted outreach could be conducted to perform in-home safety walkthroughs and deliver equipment to pre-identified participants in the Special Medical Needs (SPMNS) registry, with hardware and tiered toolkits sourced with an emphasis on door alarms.

Chair Gaffney, Jr., asked where parents could access these resources. Mr. Nolen stated that he would address that later in the presentation. Mr. Nolen then explained the next recommendation, which is to create a centralized landing page for all water safety, life-saving, and public awareness assets and event schedules, and to maintain a unified calendar of relevant trainings and events.

Chair Gaffney, Jr., emphasized the need for a unified page so that everyone has easy access to the information and resources. He added that, with the peak seasons and months now known, a targeted approach to education could be taken, and that someone would need to be identified to manage the page. Chair Gaffney, Jr., asked Mr. Phillip Peterson, Council Auditor, whether he could research funding sources for a dedicated staff member who could oversee drowning prevention efforts.

Mr. Nolen explained the Working Group's recommendation to enhance community outreach by standardizing physical materials and coordinating outreach to military families through the administration's Military Affairs and Veterans Department. Mr. Nolen then explained the next recommendation, which is to sustain drowning prevention efforts through the creation of a formal Drowning Prevention Coalition and the identification of an autism, elopement, and water safety framework that integrates prevention, early identification, rapid response, environmental safety, and individualized water competency skills. He added that the Working Group is also recommending funding and establishing a full-time Special Projects Manager position to oversee drowning prevention initiatives.

Chair Gaffney, Jr., stated that he appreciated the thoroughness of the report, but that he would like to review what could be done to prevent an eloping child from wandering into a pool. He added that he was discussing with OGC the possibility of implementing a nuisance process for ponds, signage, or increased vegetation around ponds. He stated that he was also looking into the possibility of incentivizing subdivisions to be proactive. He stated that the issue of drownings in retention ponds would continue to grow as the city continues to grow and as developers build new homes. Mr. Nolen stated that the Working Group is looking into the elopement recovery aspect, so that a child or individual who leaves their home can be recovered quickly. He added that the Working Group believes its CAD project would help with elopement recovery and with sending resources to the home. He stated that the Working Group is also looking into the Safer Communities Initiative that CM Mike Gay mentioned at a previous meeting, as well as a no-mow buffer policy for City-owned ponds.

VI. Committee Discussion

• Legal review and next steps for proposed legislation

CM Gay stated that he wanted to discuss with the Public Works Department having the City take the lead and set the example on pond safety, without violating Senate Bill 180. Chair Gaffney, Jr., agreed, stating that the Land Use and Zoning (LUZ) Committee approves numerous developments with retention ponds, and that something could be done internally to improve safety. CM Gay specified that, regarding the LUZ Committee, the effort would involve encouraging the private sector, and that the Safer Communities Initiative mentioned earlier would be a target for developers who want the designation.

VII. Public Comment

No public comment cards were submitted during the meeting.

VIII. Chair's Recap and Next Steps

Chair Gaffney, Jr., emphasized that drowning prevention is not one person’s responsibility but everyone’s. He added that drowning is a nationwide issue and that Jacksonville needs to be proactive. He stated that he wanted parents to believe that they have a City government that cares, and that it is now up to them to implement the solutions.

Chair Gaffney, Jr., asked Mr. Nolen to finalize the report and send it to the Special Committee members, and stated that the report would also be provided to the other Council Members. He added that he planned to introduce legislation in the future.

IX. Adjournment

Chair Gaffney, Jr., adjourned the meeting at 4:09 p.m.

Minutes: Steven Libby, Council Research
slibby@coj.net, (904) 255-5147
Posted: 11/16/26, 3:00 p.m.