

LYNETTE SELF, CHAIR
OFFICE (904) 630-1392
FAX (904) 630-2906
E-MAIL: LSelf@coj.net



117 W. Duval Street,
Suite 425
4TH Floor, City Hall
Jacksonville, FL 32202

**JACKSONVILLE
WATERWAYS
COMMISSION**

JACKSONVILLE WATERWAYS COMMISSION

April 1, 2004

The monthly meeting of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission was called to order on Thursday, April 1, 2004, at 9:05 a.m. in the Council Chamber, by the Chair, Council Member Lynette Self.

The minutes of the March 4, 2004 meeting were approved.

In Commissioner Ed Grey's absence, Commissioner Lamb reported on the work of the Docking Fee Subcommittee. The Subcommittee had met to review and revise Ordinance 92-1708-255.

Ordinance 92-1708-255 had established rules and regulations and certain user fees for vessels utilizing the Northbank Riverwalk and Southbank Riverwalk at a time when it was considered likely that large, cruise ship vessels would dock downtown. The Docking Fee Subcommittee met with the City Auditor and Office of General Counsel and others to make changes in the existing laws so as to have the regulation of fees compliant with the existing uses of the riverbank for docking. Large cruise ships are now docked at Jaxport facilities. The new regulations and fees would be applicable for smaller cruise ships and vessels that take require hundreds of gallons of water as opposed to thousands of gallons of water and other ancillary services such as electricity and waste disposal. The Subcommittee looked at a number of other port cities to assess their rates for dockage fees. Attorney

Greg Radlinski, Office of General Counsel, drafted new, proposed legislation to revise dockage regulations currently in the Ordinance Code. Council Member Self will introduce the proposed new legislation in Council.

Lt. Brian Knapp of the United States Coast Guard, Alonzo McQueen of Jacksonville Fire & Rescue Department and Waterways Coordinator & Dockmaster Steve Nichols made a presentation on reduced boat rafting for fireworks displays and reduced capacity for river taxis.

The Coast Guard has an issue with downtown fireworks events that the Dockmaster is charged with coordinating. There are two permitting components for fireworks events. The Marine Safety Office of the Coast Guard issues a 500-yard radius safety/security zone around any fireworks barge. The Coast Guard is concerned about vessels in the security zones, particularly boats that are rafted in front of the Landing. (Fireworks events barges are on the river either in front of the Landing, in front of the Adams' Mark Hotel or at Metro Park.). Fire & Rescue determines what size shell can be utilized for the fireworks events: 4 inch shell for the Landing area, 6 inch shell for Adams' Mark area, 10 inch shells for Metro Park area. Another Coast Guard concern is enforcement of the security zones. Group Mayport (Coast Guard), the JSO Marine Unit and Florida Fish & Wildlife are all responsible for enforcement of security zones during fireworks events. The Coast Guard is concerned about the policy of rafting 5 boats deep in front of the Landing's courtyard area. The concern is that this is too congested in the event of an accident. The Coast Guard would be more comfortable with boats rafted 3 boats deep. It was observed that this would greatly reduce the number of boats at fireworks events.

Lt. Knapp explained that Group Mayport issues safety zone permits. The authority to close a waterway rests with the Captain of the Port (i.e., Coast Guard). The safety zone has a 500-yard radius. Vessels operating within the zone do so with the permission of the Captain of the Port, including those vessels rafting at the Landing.

There were recommendations to move the barges so as not to restrict the boaters. Moving the barges would create a safer environment and create a better view.

Agreeing that the core issue was safety, all parties agreed to work together for a solution.

There were no official recommendations.

On the matter of reduced water taxi passenger capacity, Waterways

Coordinator/Dockmaster Nichols reported that in March, Mr. Greg Samuels, operator of the SS Marine Services (our water taxi service) received notification informing him that he (SS Marine Services) was only allowed to carry 49 passengers on any of his vessels. This notification came in the aftermath of the Baltimore incident where there were fatalities resulting from a sudden storm causing a water taxi to capsize in Baltimore Harbor. Commissioner Bailey noted that SS Marine Service has had a contract with the City for two years, now, and that things have worked out rather smoothly. The contract requires that Marine Services have at least 6 vessels for a capacity of at least 400 seats for large events that that the taxi service had met that requirement. These vessels were inspected and certified by the same Coast Guard that is now restricting capacity. Coast Guard Lt. Commander Torres of the Marine Safety Office reported that after the Baltimore Harbor fatality, the Coast Guard was reviewing all vessels. It was decided that to be certified, any vessel that proposed to carry more than 49 passengers had to pass a *subdivision* test. This test would determine (particularly with pontoon vessels) how quickly a vessel would sink if one of its pontoons were punctured. Lt. Commander Torres allowed that the Coast Guard was trying to assess water taxi vessels on a one-to-one basis and that exceptions could be made, but vessel owners were being advised to be in touch with the Coast Guard Safety Center in Washington. The likelihood was that vessels would pass the subdivision test. Greg Samuels said that there would be a minimum cost of \$10,000 to put things in order, and that \$10,000 for certification was burdensome seeing that certification was previously granted by the Coast Guard. Samuels said that he saw the new pitch for another round of certification as a knee-jerk reaction to Baltimore, that the situation on a narrow portion of the St. Johns River differed greatly with conditions on Baltimore Harbor.

Commissioner Bryan reported on a March 7, 2004 incident. Upon returning from Fernadina, near the Blount Island security zone, his vessel was accosted by the Coast Guard as being too close to the Naval Protection Security Zone (erected when ordnance is being delivered or transported to ships). Commissioner Bryan said that there had been no announcements about the zone or situation on Channel 16. The Coast Guard said that it only monitored Channel 24, that the Coast Guard did not monitor Channel 16. Lt. Knapp indicated that he would look into the matter.

Dr. Gerard Pinto of Jacksonville University provided the Commission with the monthly manatee update. The latest aerial survey was on March 26, 2004. There were 13 manatees cited in the County, 5 north of the Buckman Bridge, 6 south of the Buckman Bridge and 2 in the Intracoastal Waterway. There had been 2 reported manatee deaths in January, one from cold stress, the other undetermined, but no deaths

reported in February or March.

On proposed Legislation before the Council, the Commission voted to defer Ordinance 2003-1132 (changing manatee protection motorboat speed zones from year-round to seasonal).

The Commission voted to recommend approval of Ordinance 2004-217, appropriating funds for a Beach Blvd property appraisal; 2004-280, urging Congressional support for increased funding for dredging projects and Ordinance 2004-334, appropriating funds for Sail Jacksonville.

David Scott discussed an Ortega River siltation that is the result of the construction of a home.

An FDOT representative provided the Commission with an update on what FDOT and DEP has been doing to alleviate the concerns raised at the Timmuquana Road construction site.

Helen Willoughby discussed what she felt were promises made to dredge Morven Lake to alleviate siltation at that site.

John J. Jackson
Council Research Division