



Jacksonville Waterways Commission Lynette Self, Chair

The monthly meeting of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission was called to order on Thursday, January 4, 2007, 9:00 a.m., in the City Council Chamber, by the Commission Chair, Council Member Lynette Self.

The minutes for the December 7, 2006 Commission meeting were approved.

Paul Aldridge of the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office made a presentation on the Manatee Protection Plan Brochure that JSO will be distributing in the County.

JSO received funds from the State (Florida Boater Improvement Program) and one of the things that JSO proposes to do is to take the JU manatee protection brochure and modify it somewhat, update it and include boater safety information. The current plan is to print and distribute 5,000 brochures. Assistant General Counsel Greg Radlinski cautioned the Commission that a recent change in *Florida Statutes* forbade the use of Florida Boater Improvement funds for manatee protection and recovery.

Representatives from the Jacksonville Transportation Authority made a presentation on a Waterborne Feasibility Study. JTA has a new study that it is beginning to consider the utilization of the river as a part of our transportation network. JTA had contacted the Commission Chair and requested an opportunity to bring the feasibility study before the Commission. JTA is partnering with MPO and the planners of nearby Counties. JTA Executive Director, Michael Blaylock, had to be away from the City. Steve Arrington and Mike Miller made the PowerPoint presentation. The presentation focused on the role of the river in our community, the potential of commuter service from as far away as Palatka to the south and hovercraft ports. The concept was last considered in 1992. The river has always had a major role in our commerce, industry, culture, agriculture, recreation, water resources, fishing and the military. A major connection is commuter service up and down the river connecting downtown Jacksonville with Orange Park, Mandarin, Green Cove Springs,

Palatka and other areas, as well, including the possibility of connecting all the way to Mayport. Technology is critically important. What kind of a vessel would be appropriate? Environmental factors such as noise, pollution, the effect on water dependent activities and wildlife such as the manatee had to be carefully considered. A public/private partnership concept was under consideration. JTA would be working closely with the Coast Guard, the MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) and others. JTA has just received four proposals from their consultant and is in the process of evaluating the proposals with the hope of completing the process at the end of January or early February.

Pete Baci, President, Jacksonville Maritime Museum, addressed the Commission on the problem of size that the museum had encountered. The museum's limited space limits the size and number of exhibits. Mr. Baci said that the maritime museum celebrates the city's heritage with its river and provided the Commission with some historical background. The maritime museum is a non-profit that has had its doors open to the public since 1985. It was the first museum of its kind in the State of Florida. Initially, the museum was located at the Jacksonville Landing. It subsequently moved to a 5,000 square foot facility at Friendship Park. To remedy its limited-space dilemma, the museum has endeavored to acquire necessary funding through a building fund, identifying and soliciting private donations for the estimated \$2 million needed for a new building. The maritime museum is concerned about whether or not it can remain located on the Southbank considering that there are a number of development plans for the Southbank underway. The maritime museum is currently eyeing a piece of property near the Acosta Bridge. The museum will be seeking the City's assistance in acquiring the property. The museum needs a sponsor. Senator King asked if the museum had approached and talked with the City or State. Senator King said that he would be more than happy to carry the museum's concerns to FDOT. Commissioner Nichols noted that in 2014, the easement that the whole Southbank rests on is up for renewal and that the whole Southbank will be in play. Dr. White raised parking as a big issue. The Chair, Council Member Self, announced that she will meet and discuss these concerns with the Mayor.

In the monthly Manatee Update, Dr. Quinton White reported that there had been no manatee deaths since he last updated the Commission a month ago. In an aerial observation the previous day that had been curtailed by the weather, Dr. Jerry Pinto saw no manatees. In November and

December, there were reports of two or three manatees near the District 2 Wastewater Discharge coming out of Arlington. One manatee suffering from cold stress was rescued on December 19th. A second manatee was rescued from Goodby's Lake. Later this month, there will be an attempt to rescue the third manatee if it comes back to the wastewater discharge. The discharge coming out of the plant is warmer than the surrounding water but there is no food and that presents a problem for manatees. On another issue, because we have exceeded the cap on watercraft-related manatee deaths in the County within the last twelve months, there will be a January meeting with federal and state officials.

Jody McDaniel, Planning/Grants Coordinator, Parks, Recreation, Entertainment & Conservation Department, provided the Commission with a FIND update. A FIND update report had been distributed to the Commissioners. There was a ribbon-cutting for Mandarin Park Boat Ramp on December 20, 2006 where FIND Commissioner Michael Mesiano presented the Mayor with a FIND check for the boat ramp project. We have the option on the Palm's Fish Camp property; we are performing the necessary due diligence and legislation for funding is currently in the process. For Goodby's, the City has received 100 drawings and a fully executed FIND grant and with the money in place, the process is underway to put the project out for bids. The City's 2006 FIND grants that are currently in the legislative process and once approved will be sent to FIND for execution. The 2007 proposed FIND grant projects will be discussed at a Commission Subcommittee on January 11, 2007. Commission Chair, Council Member Self, inquired as to when we would actually begin the dredging at Goodby's. Ms. McDaniel replied that the Parks & Recreation Department was recommending that the dredging be done after the manatee season. Chair Self said that it was her understanding that we had wanted to have the dredging done *before* the manatee season was underway. The Chair will meet with Ms. McDaniel and the Public Works Department.

There was no Pending Legislation to address and vote on.

In Old Business, Commissioner Steve Nichols apprised the Commission on SAIL JACKSONVILLE. He noted that the event, scheduled for the first week in May, is one of the biggest family-oriented waterfront activities that Jacksonville hosts and that we have had two very successful ones before. A major concern is the condition of the Northbank where a number of the tall

ships dock.

Commissioner Grey had previously raised a question relative to the charts for the Ortega River dredge project and wanted to know if any progress had been made. Jim Suber reported that the lights are correct and all of the markers are in place where they are supposed to be. There are some problems with the preliminary map that had been prepared and corrections are being made.

Senator King inquired as to whether or not the Commission has heard anything since the Commission's last meeting relative to the status of the Beach Marine-Army Corps of Engineer easement. The Chair indicated that she had not heard anything. Senator King requested that the Chair copy Commissioners with any communications from the Beaches on the Beach Marine issue. Kelly Boree, Deputy Director, Parks & Recreation, indicated that the Mayor's Office has, in fact, received a letter from Jacksonville Beach regarding the easement. Jacksonville Beach does not support the revocation of the easement. The Mayor's Office is deferring to Jacksonville Beach's position.

In New Business, Ms. Marcia Tjoflat, representing South Shoe Marina, also known as River Point Marina, the project that is planned for the area between the Acosta Bridge and the Fuller Warren Bridge, brought the issue of the permitting process before the Commission. Her client's project has been in the process of planning since 2003. They have been in the permitting process with the Army Corps of Engineers and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. The specific issue that she addressed was the Conservation Element Policy of the Comprehensive Plan that puts a moratorium on the permitting process for marinas when the cap on manatee fatalities is exceeded. Ms. Tjoflat is hoping that in working with the appropriate City staff, her client's proposed marina site can be designated as an appropriate site without having to await the federal and state official's examination of marina sites and facilities throughout the entire county.

Ms. Tjoflat expressed the hope that her client could move forward on a site-specific basis. The Chair suggested that Ms. Tjoflat discuss the matter with Margo Moehring of the Planning & Development Department. Though the City supports the development of marinas, especially in the downtown area, the City's hands are tied by federal and state regulations. Dr. White reminded the Commission that the City does not permit the marina, that

the state and federal authorities do the permitting. Ms. Tjoflat observed that there has already been a precedent for site-specific decisions with the state recently allowing the tugboat facilities to relocate onto Blount Island. The Chair reminded the Commission that the federal and state stakeholders on the manatee fatality and the City's manatee protection issues would be held on January 30th.

Commissioner Grey lamented that the Waterways Commission had too little impact on the Mayor/Administration and the Planning Department in the decision-making process on many of the issues that come before the Commission.

Mr. Dick Smith, representing Standing Watch, state-wide boaters' rights and waterways access coalition of groups that support boaters, commented on the parking issue relative to the Maritime Museum's plans on acquiring downtown waterfront land for its new facility. He expressed concern that the new facility might curtail the access that boaters now have to park their trailers. He also commented on the feasibility of the Jacksonville Landing as a stop for the hovercraft in the JTA's proposed plans for a waterborne transportation network. He expressed concern that a hovercraft stop could result in less dockage space at the landing for boaters. The Chair commented that the Waterways Commission would never support any kind of development that would take away the public's access to waterways.

The next meeting of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission is scheduled for Thursday, February 1, 2007.

John J. Jackson, Council Research Division
(904) 630-1729