



News Release

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Abandoned Cemeteries Project News Conference planned June 14

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA (June 8, 2007) – The Jacksonville Community Council Inc. (JCCI) is assisting the City of Jacksonville in facilitating a new project to develop a plan for the maintenance and preservation of the many abandoned cemeteries in Duval County.

A press conference announcing the new project will be held Thursday, June 14 at 11 a.m. at the Old City Cemetery, located at the intersection of Union and Washington streets, just north of Downtown Jacksonville. The project is based on Resolution 2004-1349 sponsored by Councilwoman Gwen Yates and Councilman Art Shad that called for the creation of a “Blue Ribbon Commission” to do the following:

The City Council determined that the Commission should study the issue of abandoned and neglected unincorporated cemeteries in Jacksonville and make recommendations regarding cemetery maintenance and record keeping. The basis for this determination is that there are more than 120 separate cemeteries in Duval County in size from one grave to 60,000 graves; a significant number of unincorporated cemeteries have not been maintained; a number of these cemeteries show no owner of record; and some family members are having a difficult time finding markers and graves for their loved ones.

Therefore the City Council determined that the issue of unincorporated cemeteries, their maintenance and record keeping is of great concern to the citizens of Jacksonville.

City Council President Michael Corrigan has appointed a nine-member Blue Ribbon Commission to serve as the Task Force for the project. Appointed are: Joel McEachin from the City’s Planning and Development Department; Brenda Ezell, a member of the Jacksonville Bar Association with real estate and foreclosure experience; Marion Graham, a representative of the licensed funeral home/mortician industry; Richard Mueller a licensed cemetery operator; Hazel Mack representing a small faith based cemetery; Jon Ferguson, Emily Lisska, and Louise Warren, three at-large citizens with an interest in abandoned cemeteries; and Jerry Spinks from the Jacksonville Historical Society, who will serve as Chairman of the Blue Ribbon Commission.

The Blue Ribbon Commission will begin its research for the project this summer starting with a general public hearing in City Hall during July. The Commission and local interested citizens will hold a series of meetings to address the issue starting in September. Completion of the project and its presentation to the community is anticipated in December.

Jacksonville Community Council Inc. (JCCI) is a nonprofit civic organization that seeks to improve the quality of life in Northeast Florida. Since 1975, JCCI has convened diverse groups of citizens each year to identify significant community issues for in-depth study. Its goal is to increase public awareness and promote positive action. JCCI’s study process and indicator reports have served as models for hundreds of communities around the world. For more information, visit the JCCI web site at www.jcci.org.