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JACKSONVILLE WATERWAYS COMMISSION

JACKSONVILLE WATERWAYS COMMISSION October 7, 2004 9:00 a.m.

The monthly meeting of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m., Thursday, October 7, 2004, in the Council Chamber by the Chair, Council Member Lynette Self.

Approval of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission minutes for the September 2, 2004 meeting was deferred.

Mark Latch of the Florida Parks Service made a PowerPoint presentation on the Ft. George Inlet and the proposed EcoSystem Restoration project. He discussed the course of the inlet's development from the 1940s and the 1950s (the development of the shoals, jetties, channels, etc). Dan Haubner, United States Army Corps of Engineers, discussed the inlet from the civil engineering works aspect of the project. He has been involved with the project since 1996. The process of program development was explained. Projects are identified. Sponsors have to be identified. Authority to proceed with the project and funding are then sought. A planning process follows. Congressional authorization must be acquired. A cost sharing agreement must be acquired, followed by the development of a design. Federal interest is determined by such issues as: shore protection; navigation; flood control; eco-system restoration.

Commissioner Bryan suggested that Jacksonville might not be a sponsor, that as a matter of dredging priorities, Jacksonville had dredging needs and priorities. Dr. White said that what we have is a situation where man is trying to control nature. It was observed that man-made jetties created all of the sand and silt. Brad Thornburn, Mayor's Office, suggested that we move ahead with the study of the project. The Chair, C/M Self, thought that Jacksonville funds should not be committed to the Fort George Inlet project.

Terry Lorince, Executive Director, Downtown Vision, Inc. (DVI) made a presentation on creating a downtown experience, improving the riverfront, the result of a study, "Jacksonville and the St. Johns River," by Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Chan Krieger & Associates that DVI had commissioned. Components included: creating a magnificent half-mile; creating a "Riverside Drive" on Bay Street; creating a Main Street Bridge Park; using the courthouse site and parking lot area; paying attention to perpendicular streets. DVI's priority is in creating a strategic action plan for the river.

Nanetta Upchurch's presentation on Shipyard Creek was postponed.

In his monthly Manatee Report, Dr. Quinton White reported that we had 5 manatee deaths scattered around the County. Dr. White and JU contingent are entering a new contract year with the City.

At this juncture, Commissioner Tullis referenced the letter, dated October 4, 2004, that the Waterways Commission Chair, C/M Self, had received from R. Kipp Frohlich, Section Leader, Imperiled Species Management Section, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Mr. Frohlich's letter said, in part, that formal notification was being given regarding five watercraft-caused manatees between May 29, 2004 and August 18, 2004 and that this amount of watercraft-caused manatee mortality is unacceptable according to the state-approved Duval Manatee Protection Plan, and that it would be inconsistent with the plan to recommend approval of any new proposed activities or projects that could further put manatees at risk. Commissioner Tullis motioned that the Commission answer the Frohlich letter stating that we in Duval County are not sitting idly by, but that been proactive in addressing the problem, most recently by reducing the boater speed at Goody's Creek to an idle speed zone and getting increased patrols from the State and local authorities for our waterways. The Chair announced that motion or not, she had every intention of answering the Frohlich letter. In conjunction with the status of the Goody's Creek boat ramp, Parks, Recreation & Entertainment Director Bob Baughman advised the Commission that funding would not be available for dredging at the boat ramp now under construction. A lengthy discussion ensued as to where we stood regarding the boat ramp and how to move forward. It was suggested that the City postpone the boat ramp's opening after completion of the construction work. C/M Copeland called for an emergency meeting with Public Works Director Lynbrook, C/M Shad, in whose district the boat ramp is located, Dr. White, Bob Baughman, former Council President Matt Carlucci and others to determine how to move forward. It was recommended that the Council and the Mayor's Office be asked to look for potential funds for an engineering study for dredging Goody's Creek.

In an update on the River Watch Program, JSO's Sgt. Suber announced that there had been a short delay in the River Watch Program and that he anticipated the program kicking off in 30 days.

On pending legislation before the Council, the Commission voted to defer Ord. 2003-1132 (Changing Manatee Protection Motorboat Speed Zones from Year-Round to Seasonal); and voted to recommend approval for Ord. 2004-956 (Amending Section 387.102, Ordinance Code, to define "Idle Speed Zone."

The next Commission meeting is scheduled for November 4, 2004.

John J. Jackson
Council Research Division