



Jacksonville Waterways Commission Don Redman, Chair

JACKSONVILLE WATERWAYS COMMISSION ARTIFICIAL REEF SUBCOMMITTEE
Wednesday, April 25, 2012
City Council Conference Room B
9:30 a.m.

In attendance: Commissioner Scott Shine (Chairman), Commissioners Ralph Hodges, Stephen Swann were excused; Waterways Coordinator Captain Jim Suber; Dr. Quinton White, Jacksonville University; Kristina Nelson, Office of General Counsel; Jody McDaniel, Planning Department; Vince Seibold, Betsey Deuerling, Environmental Quality Division ; Shauna Allen, National Parks Service; Connie Holt, Executive Council Assistant (Holt); Janie Thomas, Executive Director, Shrimp Producers Association; Ed Chesser, Carl Steen, Elton Jackson, Becky Jackson, Doug Jones, Shrimp Producers Association; Joe Kistel, Executive Director, Think It Sink It Reef It (TISIRI); Ed Kalakaukis, Chuck Darner, Jacksonville Offshore Fishing Club; William Hibbard, Harbor Waterway Special District; Lindsay Brock; George Strate, Mayport; Jessica Stephens, Legislative Assistant; John J. Jackson, Council Research Division.

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m.

The Chair explained the purpose of the meeting, namely, to discuss Florida Statute 328.66, legislation that enables counties to impose an annual registration fee on vessels registered, operated, used or stored on waters within its jurisdiction. Chairman Shine explained how Duval County's registration fee works; the revenue collected is allocated for boating activities and could be applicable to artificial reefs. A typical \$14 or \$15 fee is imposed for 17 to 19 foot vessels.

The first dollar of the County's current registration fee goes to the Save the Manatees Trust Fund, a fund administered by the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission; contrary to the view of some, none of these funds are ever sent to the Save the Manatee Club.

The Chair opened the discussion on a local option surcharge, a new vessel fee.

Chuck Darner of the Jax Offshore Fishing Club wanted to know where the money from this new vessel surcharge fee would go. The Chair explained that the funds would go to a special County trust fund to be allocated to spend on specific criteria.

Ed Kalakaukis of the Offshore Fishing Club asked if it was possible to acquire matching funds. Jody McDaniel explained what some of the possibilities could be.

Lindsay Brock suggested that we have a list of the specific projects that the revenues collected could be used for and that there be a sunset provision once the specific projects are completed.

Shauna Allen of the National Parks Service wanted to know if the City had a special fund currently in place to receive revenue collected by a surcharge fee. Captain Suber answered in the affirmative; such a special account already exists.

Chuck Darner wondered whether we needed this proposed surcharge. Isn't it possible to support reef projects without the proposed fee? The artificial reef program has been deploying reefs all along without funding from a surcharge fee. The whole process of implementing a surcharge fee could very well become an impediment to the program.

As the meeting awaited copies of a newly approved Waterways Commission resolution in support of the artificial reef program, William Hibbert, who lives in the Harbor Waterway Special District, brought to the meeting's attention a problem that the homeowners have encountered in Mill Cove. The channel and canal system in Mill Cove is inundated with silt. He wanted to know if an artificial reef could help alleviate the problem. A reef could be constructed behind a breakwater to create jetties.

With the arrival and distribution of copies of the resolution, the Chair explained the resolution and reiterated the resolution's statement that the artificial reefs deployed would not have a negative impact on shrimping or recreational fishing.

The Chair asked the shrimpers in attendance at the meeting for their response and impressions of the resolution.

Janie Thomas, Executive Director, Shrimp Producers Association, said that the shrimpers were adamantly against any artificial reefs within the three-mile limit. She indicated that with as many as 534 shrimp boats in the vicinity, there was not enough room for the shrimpers and artificial reef activity. There are already enough reefs in the off-shore waters. She said that blue crab fishermen were opposed to the artificial reefs, as well. Ms. Thomas hopes that we would leave natural habitats alone.

Captain Suber inquired about the figure '534' that Ms. Thomas cited in the number of boats in the area that she mentioned in her remarks. Ms. Thomas explained that that number included shrimp boats that were from afar as well as local boats. There were shrimp boats that come from Alabama, Georgia and elsewhere.

Local shrimp boat operators Doug Jones and Elton Jackson saw nothing positive in artificial reefs. Operator Carl Steen said that an increasing number of rules and regulations are a threat to put shrimpers out of business. The small, independent shrimpers are going out of business. Only the larger, commercial vessels can operate further off-shore, as far as 10 miles off shore, something that the locals are not capable of doing. The larger vessels are refrigerated; the locals depend on ice to cool their catch until they can get to market.

Chairman Shine asked how the City of Jacksonville could help the local shrimpers. Local operator Dog Jones responded that the City could help by building a City dock, a dock with fuel and ice.

Chuck Darner of the Jacksonville Offshore Fishing Club reiterated what he had said at the outset: those that are supportive of artificial reefs wanted to work *with* the local shrimp boat operators.

The local operators implored the artificial reef promoters to not bar or restrict the shrimp operators from areas where there are artificial reefs deployed. Ed Kalakaukis said that there are no restrictions at all.

Janie Thomas indicated that the shrimpers wanted an environmental impact study; they wanted to know what species of fish would be attracted to the artificial reefs and if there would be shrimp-eating fish.

Jody McDaniel reported that after doing some bottom sampling of the river south of the Fuller Warren Bridge, the City was in the process of filling out permit application materials. Dr. White indicated that sediment analysis is about to get underway.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:44 a.m.

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

04.27.12

Posted: 4:00 p.m.