



Jacksonville Waterways Commission Lynette Self, Chair

The monthly meeting of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission was called to order Thursday morning, February 2, 2006, in the City Council Chamber, by the Chair, Council Member Lynette Self.

The minutes for the January 12, 2006 meeting were approved.

Brad Thoburn, Chief of Government Affairs, Office of the Mayor, provided the Commission with an update on the Mayor's Growth Management Task Force on river issues. Bob Rhodes heads the 30-member group. Of the three major committees, the General Government Committee, chaired by Kathy Watley, has taken on water quality issues, the river, access to the river, wetland protection and other issues. The full Task Force report is due at the end of March.

Paul Steinbrecker, Director, Permitting & Regulatory Conformance, JEA, provided the Commission with an update on algae bloom & TMDL. Mr. Steinbrecker, in his PowerPoint presentation brought a utility perspective to the discussion of TMDL and the river, beginning with a chronology of pertinent events. TMDL, Total Maximum Daily Load, is a process to identify the level of nutrient reductions needed to restore the river to a fishable/swimmable status. The over-abundance of nutrients exceeds the amount the river can receive and maintain its health. Algae blooms are the result of an over-abundance of nutrients in the Lower St. Johns River Basin, the portion of the river that runs from Welaka to Mayport, the river's mouth. The St. Johns River Water Management District and Florida's Department of Environmental Protection are jointly responsible for determining TMDL. Numerous stakeholders met over a period of three years before the Florida Department of Environmental Protection adopted TMDLs in 2003 for the Lower ST. Johns River basin. A plan was devised to achieve reductions of nutrients in the river in both the marine and fresh water portions of the river. JEA is 75% of point source in the marine sector of the river basin, though nothing emanates from power plants. The nutrient discharge from wastewater plants is the result of what citizens are putting in the river from their toilets, baths, etc. Though JEA set goals for TMDL and acknowledged the need for additional regulatory work litigation ensued because the Riverkeeper felt that greater reductions were needed. The Department of Environmental Protection was mandated to pursue and develop a SSAC (site specific alternative criteria) for dissolved oxygen as a means to reduce nutrient discharge as much as technologically possible.

Neil Armingeon, Riverkeeper, provided his perspective on algae blooms, nutrient

reduction and the TMDL. The Riverkeeper was originally a part of the shareholders group that Mr. Steinbrecker alluded to. Mr. Armingeon said that concerns about TMDL and comments to the Department of Environmental Protection were largely ignored which is why subsequent litigation followed. It was felt that the State of Florida was not meeting its obligation and mandate to reduce nutrients that would protect the quality of the St. Johns River. The consensus was that all parties were interested in reducing the nutrients in the river that threaten the health of the river. The Riverkeeper's view was that the cost of cleaning up the river ought not be a determining factor in moving forward.

Mark Shelton, representing Arcadis, made a presentation on the St. Johns Point development. Mr. Shelton discussed the attributes of this downtown, mixed-use riverfront development, a development that entailed residential towers, office space, retail, marina and parking garages. The development would create 800 new jobs. In the question and answer segment, Commissioner Grey wondered whether we are losing public access to the river in downtown Jacksonville for small boaters and parks? Commissioner Lowe raised a concern about the percentage of dockage that would be reserved for John Q. Public.

In the monthly Manatee Update, Dr. Quinton White, Jacksonville University, indicated that no manatees were cited in recent aerial surveys. The manatee brochures had been distributed and mailed (distributed through JSO, marinas, boat shows, etc.). There has been increasing press coverage referring to the possible down-listing manatees from the endangered species category to threatened. The State of Florida is looking at the classification change.

In the FIND update, Paul Crawford, Interim Deputy Director, Parks, Recreation, Conservation and Entertainment, reviewed the list of proposed projects that had been discussed at the FIND Subcommittee meeting. Commissioner Lowe, Chair of the FIND Subcommittee, followed up with remarks on the status and prospects of projects.

In Old Business, Mr. Crawford announced that the search for a new Dock Master is proceeding, with 22 candidates.

In New Business, Riverkeeper Armingeon indicated that he was troubled that Florida Department of Transportation projects will no longer be monitored by the City. FDOT construction projects would be monitored solely by the St. Johns River Water Management District. The Riverkeeper implored the Waterways Commission to look into this matter because many of FDOT projects are around waterways.

Senator Jim King urged the Waterways Commission to prod the Governor for help in earmarking funds for the river. In a unanimous vote, the Commission voted to draft a resolution for presentation to the Governor.

The next scheduled meeting of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission is Thursday, March 2, 2006, 9:00 a.m., City Council Chambers.

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