

LYNETTE SELF, CHAIR
OFFICE (904) 630-1392
FAX (904) 630-2906
E-MAIL: LSelf@coj.net



117 W. Duval Street,
Suite 425
4TH Floor, City Hall
Jacksonville, FL 32202

**JACKSONVILLE
WATERWAYS
COMMISSION**

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May 6, 2004

The monthly meeting of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission was called to order on Thursday morning (9:05 a.m.), May 6, 2004, in the Council Chamber, by the Chair, Council Member Lynette Self.

The minutes of the April 1, 2004 minutes were approved.

Reid Sigmon and Steve Nichols, members of the Jacksonville Super Bowl Host Committee, made a presentation on Super Bowl Committee Plans for the River. Several subcommittees relating to the River have been formed to concentrate on three areas: Jaxport; downtown; and law enforcement. The subcommittees are assessing the logistics for the floating hotels (cruise ships) that will be berthed at the Adams' Mark Hotel, Jaxport's Tallyrand Terminal and Blount Island (West Channel). The committee is focusing on the logistics of the cruise ships as floating hotels and the security that these arrangements entail. The NFL will be in town later this month to make decisions that will finalize what will be taking place when. Decisions can then be made, locally, regarding boat traffic and docking downtown. By the end of the month, the Coast Guard will publish its RNA (Regulated Navigation Area), the area between the Matthews Bridge and the FEC Bridge, determining operations, hours and what boaters can expect. The Coast Guard's RNA regulations are expected to be published sometime in November. In the areas around the Stadium and Metro

Park, events will be credentialed, events requiring tickets and closed to the general public. All of the events downtown, at the Landing and on the Southbank are public access areas. On Thursday of Super Bowl Week, there will be a boating parade (similar to the Lighted Boat Parade that helps initiate the Christmas holiday season) and fireworks. By August 1st, the Host Committee will be able to public announce specific events and timing.

Waterways Coordinator/Dockmaster, Steve Nichols, provided the Commission with an update on the matter of artificial reefs. As far back as 1959, the County had been involved in efforts to place artificial reefs offshore. In the 1980s, volunteer, nonprofit groups spearheaded the drive to build artificial reefs to encourage fishing and recreational sports diving that would, in turn, stimulate tourism. Offshore fishing would flourish because of the habitat developed by the reef drops. In 1995, the Federal government, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in particular, decided that they wanted government entities to hold these off-shore permit sites, to permit specific sites for reef drops. The City was given the responsibility to issue permits as to where artificial reefs could be constructed. Along with this responsibility, the City incurred the liabilities, as well. In 2000-2001, concerns were raised that while the City had the responsibility for permitting, the City was not adequately monitoring the reef building program, and whether valid or not, complaints were made. A moratorium on reef building was therefore imposed in 2002. Presently, Mayor Peyton wants to begin the reef-building program, anew. There is new, proposed legislation (Ordinance 2004-471) to accept grant funds (from the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission) and to appropriate those funds and a City match to review/apprise the 20 to 30 sites that the City has off-shore for artificial reefs. The new Side Scan Sonar Survey would locate sites for potential new artificial reefs that would not be a detriment to navigation, that would not harm fish and the current habitat of fish, and a site where the artificial reef would not be washed ashore by storms. The survey/study has to be completed by August 31, 2004.

The artificial reefs would ensure a long-term marine habitat. Mayor Peyton has instructed the Parks & Recreation Department to create a position to monitor the artificial reefs. (This would not be a full-time position).

Greg Evans and Don Werkema of the White Shell Bay Homeowners Association, addressed the Commission in response to the recent decision of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' decision to abandon the dredging project for White Shell Bay. In a power point presentation, Mr. Evans observed how the whole process started in 2000 and that up until March, 2004, there had been an excellent relationship

between the White Shell Bay area residents and the Army Corps of Engineers. It was in March that the Corps, citing environmental concerns, announced its withdrawal from the project. Mr. Werkema cited an e-mail that Cynthia Perez sent to Ron Littlepage in response to Mr. Littlepage's request for information on the White Shell Bay issues. In the e-mail, the Corps raised environmental concerns and mentioned strong opposition of the National Park Service (the Timucuan Preserve). Based on a survey, there would be increased marsh loss if culverts were enlarged. (There has been a 12% marsh loss over a period of fifty years). Mr. Werkema stated that he had an impression from a Timucuan Preserve representative had indicated that the Preserve did not have a major issue with the culverts. The Corps was also concerned that the manatee habitat could be threatened with increased boating on the bay. Council Member Alvarez suggested that the retaining wall erected by Corps ought to be removed by the Corps. Commissioner Lowe suggested that weirs be removed because the weirs keeps silt, brought by high tides, in the bay.

In his monthly update on manatees, Dr. Quinton White said that there had only been one reported manatee death in April (on the 18th) in the Trout River. There had been 2 manatee deaths reported for January, none for February or March. With the water warming up, there has been the return of the manatees. 77 were seen during the last (April 19th) aerial survey. 66 were in the St. Johns River, most of whom were south of the Fuller Warren Bridge, and 11 in the Intracoastal Waterway.

Commissioner Tullis suggested that the City Council have a shade meeting to map strategy in the litigation over the manatee speed zone on the County's waterways, particularly in light of the continued actions of the Save the Manatee Club. Dr. White said that it was his belief that the City is doing everything that it can do to protect the manatee and to protect the interests of the boating public.

On proposed legislation before the City Council, the Commission deferred Ordinance 2003-1132 (changing the manatee protection motorboat speed zones from year-round to seasonal); recommended approval for Ordinance 2004-466 (appropriating a \$50,000 grant to replace 50 structurally unsafe pilings at Sisters Creek Marina); recommended approval for Ordinance 2004-470 (appropriating a \$197,000 grant for Phase II of the St. Johns River Tributary Study); recommended approval of Ordinance 2004-471 (appropriating FWC & City match grant for an "Artificial Reef - Sonar Study"); deferred Ordinance 2004-478 (Approp & Purchase Agreement for various Preservation Projects) Council Member Alvarez indicated that the Council Members just received the legislation, had not had an

opportunity to study the bill, there were no maps or property appraisals.

Susan Lucas, Chief, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, North Florida Project Management, addressed the Commission on the matter of the White Shell Bay Restoration project. She reviewed the matter and indicated that the Corps still wished to continue working with the White Shell Bay area community on navigation concerns.

Commissioner Anderson provided the Commission with an update on the upcoming SAIL Jacksonville.

Commissioner Bailey commended Florida East Coast Rail Road (FEC) for the smooth operation of the FEC Bridge downtown. Lauded the bridge tenders' cooperation in working with boaters. There has been only one, minor complaint.

The next scheduled meeting of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission is Thursday, June 3, 2004.

John J. Jackson
Council Research Division