



**JACKSONVILLE  
WATERWAYS  
COMMISSION**

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JACKSONVILLE WATERWAYS COMMISSION  
May 5, 2005

The monthly meeting of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission was called to order on Thursday morning, May 5, 2005, in the City Council Chamber, by the Chair, Council Member Lynette Self.

The minutes for the April 7, 2005 meeting were approved.

Mark Middlebrook, Consultant, and Kelly Boree, Preservation Project, discussed issues regarding proposed Ordinance 2005-60, an ordinance appropriating \$750,000 from FDOT to fund "Jacksonville Water Taxi Stations." These stations would largely serve the Timucuan Preserve areas to link such sites as Sisters Creek, Ft. Caroline, Alimacani Island, Ribault Clubhouse and Kingsley Plantation. A taxi station for Fort George Island has also been proposed. The taxis within the Timucuan Preserve were initially envisioned as a means to enable visitors to see the Preserve's resources by boat. The area is not accessible by automobiles. Not everyone owned their own personal boat, but the taxis would give these visitors access to the Preserve's immense resources. After the issuance of an RFP, the taxis would be privately run. During Q & A, Commissioners raised the issue of silting, sand and the depth of water of the St. George River. Mr. Middlebrook felt that we would have adequate water in the channels that the taxis would be plying. On a vote of 8-0, the Commission voted to recommend approval of Ordinance 2005-60, as amended. The amendment would have \$200,000 of the FDOT funding allotted for a design study, to assess the viability of water taxi stations at the proposed sites. Once the study is completed, the Administration would bring the study's findings back to the Waterways Commission that will enable the Commission to make a recommendation to the City Council on how the remaining \$550,000 could best be used.

Ten different speakers offered public comments on the proposed use of the old Fuller Warren Bridge as a public pier or promenade. John Nooney, Andy Johnson, the Riverkeeper, Neil Armigeon, Mr. Sikes, representing Baptist Hospital, and others presented the Commission with their respective views. It was suggested that the cost in refitting the bridge as a public pier or promenade was not nearly as considerable as the Public Works Department Study indicated; that demolishing the bridge would still entail dumping rock and waste into the river; that a promenade

park would give the City a signature structure. The hospital reiterated its concerns about traffic. Public Works Director Moseley, in his overview of the Public Works Department study stated that the retention and refitting of the bridge is *not* in the best interest of the City. Commissioner Grey opposes the retention of the bridge on aesthetic grounds, that there was nothing attractive in the structure. He supported the City's re-visiting the Downtown Master Plan (that Director Moseley had alluded to). Commissioner Bryan voiced opposition to retaining the bridge, saying that it was not a feasible project, that there were serious safety issues (the river's current), and that parking was a big issue (the lack, thereof). Commissioner Lamb expressed his view that the bridge should be demolished. Commissioner Bailey, supporting demolition, allowed how demolition would *not* cost the City any money, that this is a FDOT project. Jim Knight of the Florida Department of Transportation indicated that in the contract for the bridge's construction was a provision for its demolition. On the matter of dumping material into the river, a permit would allow for *temporary* placement into the river until the material can be removed (clarification on this point is being sought). After blasting material into the river, subsequent dredging would remove the material. Commissioner Anderson said that from his experience, there is sufficient technology available to locate and remove debris from the river, that FDOT hires outsiders to monitor a demolition project of this nature and magnitude. The Chair, C/M Self voiced support for the bridge's demolition citing safety and traffic concerns. C/M Self wants a Waterways Commission liaison to study and revisit the Downtown Master Plan when Director Moseley undertakes this review. On a motion, the Commission voted 8-2 (Lowe & Pitman) to recommend an endorsement of the Public Works Department study to demolish the remnants of the old Fuller Warren Bridge and to bar its retention as a public pier or promenade.

In the monthly Manatee Update, Dr. Quinton White announced that the manatees are back. The waterways have a 70-degree temperature. In the most recent aerial view, 37 manatees were cited. A manatee fatality in the St. Johns River was reported on April 17<sup>th</sup>, recovered at the Arlington boat ramp. Another fatality was recorded on April 28<sup>th</sup> in Green Cove Springs and it was suggested that the Commission make it clear that this latter fatality did not occur in Duval County. Dr. White announced that his staff would be monitoring any correlation between high gas prices and any curtailment in boating, which would, in turn, reduce the possibilities of manatee fatalities.

On other pending legislation, the Commission deferred ORD 2003-1132, changing the Manatee Protection Motorboat Speed Zones from Year-Road to Seasonal. On ORD 2005-475, Prohibiting Fishing from Posted City-Owned Property, the Commission voted 6-2 to recommend approval. Parks, Recreation & Entertainment Director Bob Baughman suggested that the Recreation & Community Development's Subcommittee on Park Rules look into this issue (fishing from City-owned property).

Waterways Coordinator Steve Nichols noted the recent publication in the *Federal Register* of manatee zone speed regulations that raised an enforcement issue.

Commissioner Lowe informed the Commission that the State House of Representatives had passed the Working Waterfront Bill 114-0 and that the measure was on its way to the State Senate for action.

The next scheduled meeting of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission is Thursday, June 2, 2005, 9:00 a.m.

John J. Jackson  
City Council Research Division