



JACKSONVILLE CITY COUNCIL

**TRUE COMMISSION
LEGISLATIVE TRACKING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
April 17, 2009
9:30 a.m.**

**City Council Conference Room B
Suite 425, City Hall
117 W. Duval Street**

Attendance: Wes Benwick (Chair), Committee Member Joe Andrews and John Palombi

Guest: Jim Suber, City Waterways Coordinator; Jody McDaniel – Recreation and Community Development Department

The meeting was called to order at 9:36 a.m. by Chairman Benwick who invited Jim Suber and Jody McDaniel to discuss the City's process for prioritizing and applying for Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) grants each year. Ms. McDaniel explained that in 2001 a city consultant evaluated the City's public waterfront needs (boat ramps, parks, etc.) and conditions and developed a list of desirable improvements. In 2004 City staff did further evaluation on a points matrix to prioritize the projects and categorize them as either short-term or long-term projects. In 2008 Jim Suber, the City's Waterfront Coordinator and Dockmaster, updated the list of immediate needs.

The FIND process begins with applications in February/March of each year and FIND makes its grant awards in October. The Florida Wildlife Commission, which operates the FIND process, is notoriously slow about releasing grant funds after awards are made, so projects sometimes do not get underway until well after the grant awards are announced. The Recreation and Community Services Department, which is responsible for FIND grant applications, prepares the annual list of projects to be submitted for consideration and requests approval from the Mayor's Office to make the application, which entails a City commitment of matching funds. City Council only sees FIND projects after they have been applied for and awarded and acceptance of the grant and appropriation of the funds requires legislative action. The City puts FIND matching dollars in the budget each year (currently \$1.2 million) because the City qualifies for a FIND allocation each year and the grant match is needed to recoup City ad valorem tax dollars collected by FIND. If we did not make application, then Jacksonville tax dollars would be allocated to other counties. Jacksonville is also eligible to apply for funds through another program (BIG P) that are awarded on a competitive basis and which the City, if successful in getting the award, matches out of the City's general grant match account using "first come, first served" dollars. In answer to a question about who makes the decision about how to use the "first come, first served" grant match dollars and how competing priorities are evaluated, Ms. McDaniel indicated that those decisions are made by the Mayor's Budget Review Committee.

The FIND system works on multi-year cycles if a project can't be completed in one year. The first year can be a design grant followed by a construction grant in the following year, and it is possible to get another year's extension if there is a design or construction delay. However if a design grant is not followed up within a year or two by construction, then the City must repay the design grant to FIND.

Jacksonville has had to repay several design grants in the past due to lack of funds for the subsequent construction.

There used to be a committee of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission that reviewed and commented upon the annual FIND grant list, but that hasn't been done in the past couple of years since the Chair of the Waterways Commission changed. The Waterways Commission as a whole does see and vote on the list before the application is submitted to FIND. Potential FIND projects are suggested by the department, by citizens, by City Council members, by the JEDC, and others.

The City of Jacksonville's FIND allocation is somewhat reduced this year since the cities of Atlantic Beach and Jacksonville Beach submitted FIND grant applications and their awards come out of Jacksonville's allocation as the county government. Also, due to falling real estate values the FIND ad valorem collections will probably be down slightly.

Old legislation

- The appropriation to SMG for maintenance and repairs at public assembly facilities has been withdrawn but will be reintroduced eventually.
- The new fleet management/take home car policy is being reviewed by the Council Auditor's Office to determine if it will produce any cost savings.
- The Northwest Area Economic Development Fund grant and loan to the Cedar Grove truck wash facility has been withdrawn.
- The lease extension for the Southside mulch site was approved by Council on February 24th. Mr. Benwick intends to follow up to see what progress is being made on the cleanup.
- The TRUE Commission passed a resolution at its last meeting with regard to the proposed closure by the JEA of its 5 satellite offices, and that resolution has been forwarded to the JEA, Mayor, and City Council President.
- Fleet vehicle purchase using the Banking Fund – Mickey Miller has been invited to the next TRUE Commission meeting to discuss the Banking Fund and City borrowing policies for capital purchases.

New legislation

The committee discussed and asked questions of staff about the following bills:

- 2009-314: declaration of a restrictive covenant over City property on Talleyrand Avenue - Mr. Palombi will inquire about what this is and what it means.
- 2009-334 and -335: approval of settlement agreements for property condemnations - the committee discussed the variation between the City's and the owner's appraisals and the amount of attorney fees and court costs. Would it be cheaper to pay more than the City's appraised value to avoid the costs of going to court?
- 2009-330: expansion of the JIA Community Redevelopment Area to include property on Pecan Park Road determined to be slum and/or blighted. What constitutes "slum" and "blight"? Why does the JIA CRA exist and what does it do?

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

Jeff Clements, Chief
Council Research Division
630-1405

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9:15 a.m.