

Mayor's African American Advisory Board – MAAAB

Wednesday, May 14, 2025

9:30 a.m.

Revised

Location: Ed Ball Building, 214 N. Hogan Street, 32202 – First Floor Hearing Room #1002

Meeting Attendance: Lee Brown, III; Dawn Curling; Chair Barbara Darby; Latrina Dowdell; Kelly Frazier; Kiaira Nixon; Vice Chair Ronetta Wards; Errol White; Menelik Vereen.

Excused: Audrieanna Burgin.

Staff and Elected Officials: Nikita Reed, Public Works department; Pat McCoullough, Mayor's Office; Garrett Dennis, Mayor's Liaison Boards and Commissions, Schnell Chin, Neighborhoods Department; Edwina Henry, Neighborhood Services and MAAAB Coordinator.

Guests: Ken Covington, NASEMBA Business Alliance; Sir Isaac Singleton, Young Christians at Work; T.R. Richardson; Lindsey Santa, Trinity Rescue Mission; Sondra Evans, Florida State College at Jacksonville.

Meeting Summary

1. **Call to Order and Verify Quorum** – Chair Darby called the meeting to order and verified that a quorum was present.
2. **A Moment of Centering** – Chair Darby read a quote from “Black Voices” for a Moment of Centering to begin the Board meeting.
3. **Approval of Agenda** – The May 14, 2025, meeting agenda was approved.
4. **Approval of Previous Meeting Summary** – The April 9, 2025, meeting summary was accepted.
5. **Presenter:** Nikita Reed, Engineering Operations Manager, Public Works Department, provided an overview of the department's eight divisions and focused on Engineering and Construction Management.

Ms. Reed also discussed Mayor Deegan's Transparency Dashboards and noted that the dashboards are located on the coj.net website. Currently, there are 35 active construction projects underway and as of October 1, 2024, 25 projects have been completed.

Due to technical difficulties with the AV equipment, Board members will receive Ms. Reed's presentation via email at the conclusion of the meeting. The average citizen may ask questions through 630-CITY. All inquiries are routed to the appropriate department/division for a response.

6. Mayor's Staff Updates – Garrett Dennis, Mayor Deegan's Boards and Commissions Liaison had the following updates to share with the MAAAB:

- As a procedural matter, please place Ms. Pat McCollough on the MAAAB to provide the Mayor's Staff Updates. Ms. McCollough is the point of contact for community engagement.
- Event and promotional fliers – moving forward, please forward fliers to Ms. Henry and she will get approval from the Public Affairs Office.
- A reminder that committees must operate in the "sunshine." Meetings must be accessible to the public, publicly noticed, sign-in sheets, and minutes taken.
- It was noted that the MAAAB is a powerful advisory board and has an impact on the African American community, and as such, the African American community and Mayor Deegan will be looking for great things coming from the MAAAB.
- Chair Darby attributed the board's growing pains to "new group dynamics," meaning the group must go through stages of "Forming, Storming and Norming" to reach Performing.
- Board Member White asked about the remaining vacancy on the Board. Mr. Dennis indicated that he is working to fill a number of vacancies on boards and commissions city-wide and hopes to extend an appointment offer soon.
- Chair Daby asked about the status of the MAAAB Bylaws that were submitted for review. Mr. Dennis stated that the Office of the General Counsel is looking to standardize the Bylaws for all advisory boards. The process will take some time, but the work is already underway.

7. Public Comments: (three-minute limit) – several members of the community made comments pertaining to filling the current board vacancy, provided updates on upcoming community events, and voiced support for the MAAAB and the work that they are undertaking.

8. Chair's Report – Chair Darby commented on or stated the following:

- After reviewing and discussing the Staggered Board Terms, Chair Darby asked that the reappointment dates be filled in for each board member.
- It was properly moved and seconded that the Board take a Summer Recess in July. The July 9, 2025, Board meeting will be canceled.
- Suggested Speakers for the next two meetings:
 - August 13, 2025, JSEB – Jacksonville Small and Emerging Businesses
<https://jseb.jacksonville.gov>
 - September 10, 2025, JEA – Septic Tank Phase Out Program Update
<https://www.jea.com/septic-tank/>

9. Committee Reports –

- **Arts, Culture & Entertainment Committee:** Met 5/15/2025
- **Economy & Infrastructure Committee:** 5/27/2025 – Canceled due to low committee attendance
- **Health & Public Safety Committee:** Met on 5/5/2025
- **Military & Veterans Affairs Committee:** Met on 5/6/2025 – recommendations submitted for consideration.
- **Program Committee:** 5/13/2025 – Canceled due to low committee attendance.

10. New Business: Congratulations to Dr. Burgin, appointed as the new CEO for 904Ward.

- The Neighborhoods Department invited the Board and those community members present to the 2025 Neighborhoods, USA (NUSA) Conference, free of charge on Wednesday, May 21, 2025, from 9:45 am to 5:00 pm for Neighborhoods Day. Registration is through Eventbrite. A printed letter of invitation was distributed.

11. Unfinished Business: Logistics for the November evening Board meeting. Time and location needed.

12. Next Steps/Board's Open Forum:

- New board member Menelik Vereen would like to join the Infrastructure and Economy Committee.
- Dawn Curling would like to see a focus on Economic Stability.
- Pat McCollough agreed with coming up with a focus; which appears to be a concern from the community.
- Board member Lee Brown feels that there is a disconnect with the community.
- Kiara Nixon commented that no one showed up at the most recent Infrastructure and Economy Committee meeting and therefore she was unable to formulate any recommendations.
- Latrina Dowdell indicated she would like to see open access so that information is more easily shared with the community.
- Kelly Frazier echoed board member Dowdell's comment and said she would like to see a focus on communication.
- Board member Errol White had no comment.

13. Meeting Adjourned at 11:30 am.

The Next Mayor's African American Advisory Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 11, 2025, at 9:30 am, in the Ed Ball Building first floor Hearing Room.