



Duval County Legislative Delegation

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Minutes
Local Bill Hearing
Friday October 22nd, 2021
1:00 PM
117 W. Duval Street
City Hall Council Chambers

Chair Yarborough called the meeting to order, followed by the invocation and the pledge.

Members present: Senator Gibson; Representatives Davis, Duggan, Nixon, and Yarborough.

A quorum was present. The agenda was adopted by voice vote.

Chair Yarborough recognized Rep. Duggan, the sponsor, to introduce the bills. Rep Duggan explained J-1-A, and what the bill is trying to accomplish to further improve the Downtown area. Chair Yarborough opened the floor to member questions on J-1-A. Senator Gibson asked some clarifying questions regarding a map of J-1-A. Representative Duggan explained J-1-B and the creation of a new Special Zone.

Chair Yarborough recognized Council President Sam Newby and thanked him for letting them use the Chambers.

Chair Yarborough recognized the public speakers.

Lori Boyer: CEO of the Downtown Investment Authority. They are the applicant of J-1-A. Requesting a reduction in the minimum seats and minimum square footage in the Northside West and Northside East Special Zone. She explained the boundaries of this area. The request is due to COVID and patrons desire to be seated farther apart.

Allan DeVault: Executive Director of Build Up Downtown. He has previously been in restaurant management throughout Jacksonville. He was a part of previous J-bills of the same subject matter. Spoke in support of J-1-A.

Paul Harden: J-1-B: voiced his support of J-1-B as well as J-1-A. The new zone is near Hendricks Ave. which already received a reduction in seats/square feet. Allows for family and local businesses to compete with larger entities.

Public Speakers not on agenda:

Jake Gordon: CEO of Downtown Vision: Supports J-1-A because he works for a nonprofit that is dedicated to making downtown a better place.

Carnell Oliver: In support of the bills but wants them to not spend as much money on it so the money can go to other programs or city departments.

Michael Schmidt: Bearded Pig- In support of J-1-B because it could help complement their menu and help other smaller restaurants that are near downtown.

Chair Yarborough recognizes Rep. Nixon for questions. She asks Ms. Boyer if she ever called her staff/her office to schedule a meeting to discuss this matter. Ms. Boyer said she did not. Rep. Nixon asks Mr. DeVault the same question and he said he did not. Mr. Harden said he sent a letter to everyone regarding the bills.

Rep. Duggan calls on Mr. DeVault to give a summary of his background in the dining industry. Mr. DeVault explained his background and his involvement in past J-bills.

Rep. Davis is recognized for a question and asks where the map for J-1-A is. Ms. Boyer explains it is the same boundaries as the previous J-bill and no new map was provided because it is the map of the CRA boundaries of Downtown. Rep. Davis asked if there will ever be a consideration to extend the overlay. Ms. Boyer said the current community redevelopment boundaries will never be expanded but that does not mean new zones could be created in the future.

Chair Yarborough recognizes the members for debate on J-1-A. Senator Gibson wants to make sure there is fairness and does believe these bills are fair. She fully supports the idea of smaller establishments being able to compete with larger establishments. Chair Yarborough recognizes Rep. Duggan to close on the bill. Rep. Duggan closes on J-1-A.

Votes:

Yes: Senator Gibson, Representatives Davis, Duggan, and Nixon

No: Representative Yarborough

Chair Yarborough recognizes the members for debate on J-1-B. Rep. Davis finds it hard to vote against economic development but wants agencies to reach out to the members before presenting in front of the Delegation. Rep. Nixon also had the same sentiments. Chair Yarborough recognizes Rep. Duggan to close on the bill. Rep. Duggan closes on J-1-B emphasizing that City Council approved of both J-1-A and J-1-B.

Votes:

Yes: Senator Gibson, Representatives Davis, Duggan, and Nixon

No: Representative Yarborough

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.