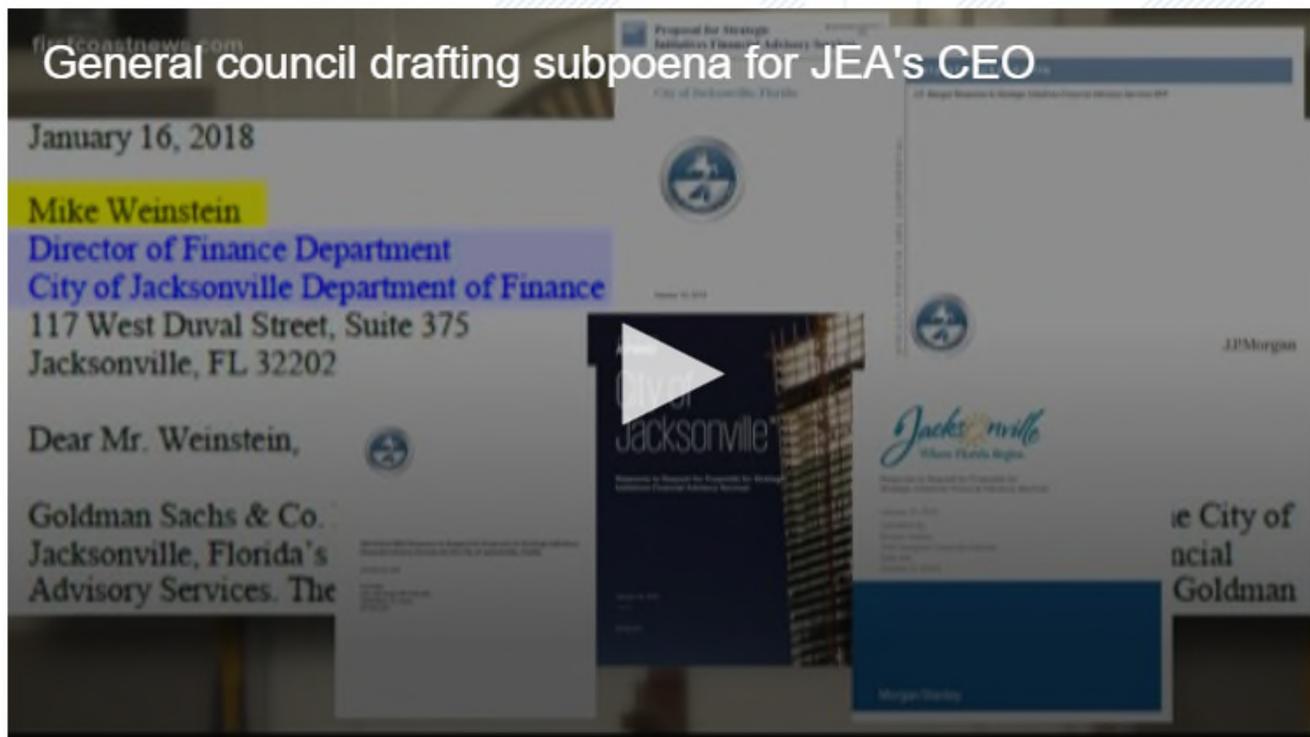


EXCLUSIVE: Investigation into the timeline of the potential JEA sale

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. -- In interviews with First Coast News, Mayor Curry has made his message clear when it comes to the potential sale of JEA.



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JACKSONVILLE, Fla. -- In interviews with First Coast News, Jacksonville mayor Lenny Curry has made his message clear when it comes to the potential sale of JEA: "There is no deal to sell the JEA right now," he said.

"Certainly not out of my office" Curry said. "I do not have an opinion on the sale of JEA. I think it's important we know the value, I mean the taxpayers, know the value of their assets."

So why are City Council members so upset?

They've been so concerned with transparency that the Special Committee on JEA passed a motion Thursday to require everyone to be under oath.

Sam Mousa, the Chief Administrative Officer for the mayor, and Paul McElroy, the CEO of JEA, refused to be put under oath. The council will now be serving McElroy with a subpoena to appear before the on March 29.

First Coast News obtained exclusive documents to investigate the timeline surrounding JEA to see if the Mayor's Office is involved, contrary to what they've stated.

According to those records:

On December 20, the city finance department, headed by the Mayor's CFO Mike Weinstein, asked several financial companies to essentially send in their resumes for a job; that process is called a request for proposal or RFP.

That request went out without the knowledge of the council, which isn't the way it's historically been done.

The goal of the RFP was to find out who would be the best at researching the potential for "the lease, sale, and/or disposition of city assets."

JEA is not specifically mentioned. It's also not excluded. Although JEA is mentioned in some of the responses to the RFP by the financial companies.

The Mayor's Office says these RFP bids were for Jacksonville's infrastructure, like bridges, roadways, the seaport and airport. However, the mayor's office says no public records exist to support these claims.

The mayor's office does emphasize that the RFP was not meant for JEA; something council auditor Kyle Billy contradicts in this email to City Council staff:

"The RFP appears to request Financial Advisory Services that would be needed to solicit bids to purchase JEA, evaluate those bids, assist City staff in negotiations, and assist in bringing the transaction to financial and commercial close."

He then makes the RFP bids public.

The Mayor's Chief Financial Officer, Mike Weinstein, responds to Billy:

"Your premise and opinions are totally incorrect and I am extremely disappointed in you."

But Billy found other aspects odd too, writing in that original email:

"I thought it was unusual because it appears to be a City of Jacksonville RFP, but the responses were not coming to the City."

That's because those bids were sent to PFM, a consulting firm in Orlando.

The same firm JEA hired to tell them how much it is worth.

Now for a closer look at the timeline of events.

NOVEMBER:

- On November 11, two lobbyists, who formerly worked for the mayor's office, visit JEA.
- On November 28, Tom Petway announces he's leaving his post as JEA board chair and recommends JEA be sold.

DECEMBER:

- On December 20, those RFP bids for city assets are requested by the city, again, unbeknownst to council members.
- One day later Michael Mace visits JEA. Mace is a major player in the JEA timeline because he's the managing director for PFM, the company JEA hired for a valuation.

JANUARY:

- Mace returns to JEA on the 23, of January and then again on the 24, but this time he's joined by Mike Weinstein, the CFO for Mayor Curry, and a senior leadership team from a banking investment firm called Moelis.
- Immediately after their meeting the Moelis team heads over to City Hall for a meeting with Mayor Curry, according to Curry's calendar.
- Leading up to that meeting First Coast News uncovered emails between JEA, Moelis and PFM discussing conference calls.
- In response to our questions over their interactions with JEA, Moelis tells us "no comment."
- Two days after the Moelis meeting, the Mayor's Chief of Staff, Brian Hughes, meets with Greg Black, a government affairs consultant lobbyist. His firm specializes in regulated industries like utility companies.
- After their meeting, Hughes and Weinstein visit JEA together. They meet with JEA's Chief Financial Officer. One hour later they meet with JEA's board Chair Alan Howard.

FEBRUARY:

- It isn't until February when council members start to learn about the potential sale of JEA.
- February 14, is when Michael Mace presents the PFM valuation report to City Council.
- But, before the meeting Mace visits JEA, and so does the Mayor's CFO, Weinstein, clocking in four times that morning.
- This time Weinstein uses an issued JEA access badge so he doesn't have to sign in.
- First Coast News requested his badge details and they show he clocked into JEA 13 times in February.
- First Coast News has made multiple requests for information and for interviews with the city's finance department and the mayor's office. The mayor's office says they are still processing our requests and provided this statement: *"Members of this administration meet with agencies throughout this city on a myriad of topics and citizen needs. The mayor, Mr. Hughes, Mr. Weinstein and Mr. Mousa are no exception and manage their calendars to fulfill the responsibilities held in their respective roles."*

Editor's Note: This story has been updated to remove a line that stated Jax Chamber members visited JEA since Jax Chamber has since notified First Coast News that their November meeting was in no way related to the potential sale of JEA.