

City of Jacksonville

117 W. Duval Street
Jacksonville, FL 32202



Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 11, 2026

9:30 AM

Council Chamber,
1st Floor, City Hall

Jacksonville Waterways Commission

CM Ken Amaro, Chair

CM Mike Gay, Vice Chair - Excused

CM Jimmy Peluso - Excused Late Arrival 9:40 a.m. & Early Departure 10:00 a.m.

CM Matt Carlucci, Alternate

Jon Michael Barker

Robert Birtalan - Excused

Representative Dean Black - Excused

Mark Devereaux

Andrew Fraden

Marc Hardesty - Excused

Richard Hartley - Excused

J. Hobson

General Public Rep - Vacant

General Public Rep - Vacant

D. R. Repass, Planning Commission

Adam Hoyles, Environmental Protection Board

Barbara Ireland Hobson, Legislative Assistant II

Shannon MacGillis, Office of General Counsel

Dr. Gerard Pinto, Jacksonville University

Brandon Russell, Council Research

Jim Suber, Waterways Coordinator

COUNCIL RULE 4.505 DISRUPTION OF MEETING

Any person who disrupts a regular meeting of the City Council, standing committees, special or select committees, sub-committees or any other public meeting presided over by a City Council Member may be forthwith barred, removed, or otherwise ejected, in the discretion of the presiding officer, from further attendance at that meeting. If necessary, due to the nature of the disruption, the audience may be cleared from the Council Chambers or meeting location in the discretion of the presiding officer.

Any person who refuses to leave the City Council Chamber may be subject to arrest.

Disruption of a meeting includes the following types of behaviors:

- 1) Any form of political campaigning or electioneering regarding a specific candidate or group of candidates in City elections;
- 2) Impeding the orderly progress of the meeting by shouting, yelling, whistling, chanting, singing, dancing, clapping, foot stomping, snapping fingers, cheering, jeering, using artificial noise makers or musical instruments, waving signs of any size, or engaging in any other display of excessive noise, sounds, or movement;
- 3) Displaying or waving signs of any sort, except where used to support the speaker's presentation at the podium, and only where the sign is 21 inches by 21 inches or smaller in size and cannot be displayed in a manner which unreasonably obstructs the view of the dais for any member of the audience, regardless of message;
- 4) Audible noise from cellphones or other electronic devices;
- 5) Consumption of alcohol or controlled substances;
- 6) Making vulgar or offensive remarks or gestures, or using threatening language or gestures, including but not limited to pantomiming discharging a firearm, choking, or throat-cutting;
- 7) Refusing to stop speaking when his or her time has expired or is otherwise directed by the presiding officer to do so due to disruptive behavior as described herein;
- 8) Returning to the meeting after having been removed or ejected, or attempting to do so.

REQUEST TO SPEAK:

1. Fill out a speaker card.
2. Sign it if you are going to speak.
3. Read the rules on the back of the card.
4. Return the card to the Legislative Assistant.

1. **Meeting Convened: 9:30 a.m.** **Meeting Adjourned 10:17 a.m.**
2. **Attendance**
3. **Pledge of Allegiance**
4. **Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the February 11, 2026, meeting were not approved due to a lack of quorum.

5. St. Johns River Status Report on Water Quality and Manatees

Dr. Pinto provided the St. Johns River Status Report. He stated that salinity levels are a little high because there has not been much rainfall recently. Specifically, salinity levels at Mayport were 17-22 ppt, at Jacksonville University were 11-14 ppt, and at Buckman Bridge were 2.4 ppt, which is considered slightly elevated.

Dr. Pinto stated that water temperatures were around 52-62 degrees Fahrenheit. However, he stated some areas saw water temperatures reach 69 degrees Fahrenheit.

Dr. Pinto then stated that one manatee was spotted last week at Blount Island before presenting his water levels and rainfall findings. He stated that water levels were normal while rainfall totals experienced a deficit of five inches at Jacksonville International and a deficit of about three inches at the St. Johns Water Management District.

Dr. Pinto then explained that mixed algae appeared in Mandarin Point, Doctors Lake, and Shands Bridge; however, none of the algae blooms were toxic or harmful.

Finally, Dr. Pinto announced two manatee deaths: one pregnant female found at Queen Harbour Lock, and one found decomposed at an undetermined location, with the cause of death attributed to possible cold stress.

Commissioner Suber confirmed with Dr. Pinto that the decomposed manatee was the same one reported to him on the Trout River.

6. Presentation from the St. Johns Riverkeeper

Lisa Rinaman, St. Johns Riverkeeper, provided a presentation. She gave a mission overview of the St. Johns Riverkeeper and a detailed description of the St. Johns River and the system that encompasses it. Ms. Rinaman then explained that the initial reason for the formation of the St. Johns Riverkeeper in 1999 was due to nutrient pollution in the waterways from wastewater treatment facilities, failing septic tanks, agricultural runoff, and runoff from urban fertilizers. She then explained that increased regulations over the last 25 years have reduced point source pollution; however, nonpoint source pollution is still a concern.

Ms. Rinaman explained that following the Florida Legislature's 2007 ban on land disposal of sewage in Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades, the state permitted 70,000 tons of South Florida sewage sludge to be disposed of in the headwaters of the St. Johns River, resulting in nitrogen and phosphorus runoff that undermined the river's water quality and triggered outbreaks of harmful algae blooms. Ms. Rinaman further explained that the Florida Legislature in 2020 introduced new rules limiting the disposal of South Florida sewage sludge in the St. Johns River to 50,000 tons annually. She also noted that a study estimated a \$1.12 billion cleanup liability transferred from South Florida to North Florida.

Ms. Rinaman then stated that the Florida Legislature recently passed a future ban on the land disposal of Class B Biosolids that will go into effect by 2028. Ms. Rinaman expressed concern that this might lead to more Class AA Biosolids, which, while better treated, are not currently regulated. However, she noted that the Florida Legislature passed guardrails on Class AA Biosolids the day before the Waterways Commission meeting.

Ms. Rinaman announced that the Riverkeeper has been conducting a pilot project called 'Resilient Ribault,' sampling the water quality of the Ribault River and Moncrief Creek to identify sources of chronic pollution and the causes of flooding in the area. Ms. Rinaman then provided an overview of various projects utilizing oysters to increase flooding resilience.

Ms. Rinaman then gave an overview of the importance of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) and wetlands, noting their role in providing wildlife habitats and biofiltration.

Ms. Rinaman then discussed the launching of the "SAVe our River's Grasses Expedition" in 2023 to investigate why grasses have not returned since Hurricane Irma and highlighted multiple stressors contributing to the issue.

Ms. Rinaman then discussed the Rodman Dam, later renamed the Kirkpatrick Dam, which was constructed in 1968 and severed the connection between the Ocklawaha River and Silver Springs. She noted the Riverkeeper's efforts over the past decade to restore that connection.

She also noted several benefits it would provide to the St. Johns River: restoring 150 million gallons of freshwater flow per day, 100 miles of St. Johns River estuary, 56 miles of warmwater habitats, and 17,500+ acres of floodplains, as well as improving fisheries and providing several economic benefits. She reported that while legislation restoring the Ocklawaha River passed in committee and on the floor in the House and in committee in the Senate, it has not reached the floor of the Senate. Finally, Ms. Rinaman discussed educational initiatives for students and a "State of the Watershed" symposium hosted by the St. Johns Riverkeeper on April 22, 2026.

CM Peluso asked for Ms. Rinaman's perspective on septic tank phaseout. Ms. Rinaman discussed the financial uncertainty for homeowners who convert from septic to sewer. She noted that outreach and offering incentives to homeowners may alleviate their uncertainty and encourage quicker conversion to sewer.

Commissioner Fraden asked Ms. Rinaman whether submerged grasses near waterfront properties have shown improvement over the last four years. Ms. Rinaman explained that progress has been uneven between areas due to several stressors affecting each area differently. Commissioner Fraden then asked Ms. Rinaman about the potential to expand sample testing of submerged grasses in Duval County. Ms. Rinaman explained that they have done limited testing in Duval County and that they are launching a small program this year to conduct further testing.

Commissioner Barker noted that average water levels in the Ortega River are two to three feet lower this year than in previous years and asked whether that has had any effect on submerged grasses. Dr. Pinto explained that water levels have been elevated since Hurricane Irma, reducing sunlight availability for submerged grasses to 44% of what they need to grow. He noted that while the recent dry season may have created an opportunity for growth, conditions remain too mucky for grasses to grow. Ms. Rinaman added that while lower water levels increase sunlight exposure for grasses, if caused by drought, saltwater intrusion may offset the benefit.

CM Amaro asked Ms. Rinaman what the Riverkeeper's position is on the future of the Rodman Dam. Ms. Rinaman stated that since 2016, the St. Johns Riverkeeper's formal position has been to reunite the Ocklawaha River and the St. Johns River by breaching the dam and investing in outdoor recreation around it.

Jim Suber, Waterways Coordinator, asked Ms. Rinaman about the location of the vertical oyster project. Ms. Rinaman stated that the area that they are looking at for the project is north of the Mathews Bridge. Mr. Suber then asked if the oysters were harvestable. Dr. Pinto explained that the oysters won't be harvestable due to bacterial problems in the area.

Commissioner Hobson asked Ms. Rinaman about the future impact of restoring 150 million gallons per day of freshwater to the water quality and ecosystem. Ms. Rinaman stated that several agencies and independent scientists have concluded that full restoration is the most beneficial option, while a partial restoration through breaching the dam is a compromise position.

7. Public Comment

James Bell addressed the commission regarding the George Crady Bridge Fishing Pier State Park, requesting the commission's continued attention to the park.

John Nooney asked the commission why OGC was not present at various citizen boards and commissions meetings. He also advocated for increasing the public access to waterways.

8. New Business

[2026-0184](#) ORD Approp \$120,000.00 in Grant Funding from the FL Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission ("FWC") for Reimb of Certain of the City's Costs to

Construct a Marine Artificial Reef Complex in the Harm's Ledge Permitted Area; Prov for Oversight by the Office of Admin Svcs, EQD (B.T. 26-051) (Dillard) (Req of Mayor)
3/10/26 CO Introduced: NCSPHS, F, JWC
Public Hearing Pursuant to Ch 166, F.S. & C.R. 3.601 - 3/24/26

Shannon MacGillis, OGC, explained the context of the bill and noted that while a quorum was not present, the commission could still express a consensus of favorability or non-favorability so that the bill can continue to move forward in the legislative process. Jim Suber, Waterways Coordinator, provided additional context for the bill. CM Amaro asked the commission members present to indicate their support for the bill by a show of hands. The bill received unanimous support from those in attendance.

9. Old Business

2026-74 Resolution - "Northeast Florida Rivers, Springs, & Community Investment Act"

CM Amaro stated that Ms. Rinaman already gave an overview of Resolution 2026-74 through her presentation.

10. Adjournment

Pursuant to the American with Disabilities Act, accommodations for persons with disabilities are available upon request. Please allow 1-2 business days notification to process; last minute requests will be accepted; but may not be possible to fulfill. Please contact Disabled Services Division at: V 904-255-5466, TTY-904-255-5476, or email your request to KaraT@coj.net.

Minutes: Steven Libby, Council Research
slibby@coj.net, (904) 255-5147
Posted: 3/13/26, 2:00 p.m.