

City of Jacksonville

117 W. Duval Street
Jacksonville, FL 32202



Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

9:30 AM

Council Chamber,
1st Floor, City Hall

Jacksonville Waterways Commission

CM Ken Amaro, Chair

CM Mike Gay, Vice Chair

CM Jimmy Peluso

CM Matt Carlucci, Alternate

Jon Michael Barker

Robert Birtalan

General Public Rep - Vacant

Representative Kiyon Michael - Excused

Mark Devereaux - Absent

Andrew Fraden

Marc Hardesty - Absent

Richard Hartley - Excused

General Public Rep - Vacant

Jill Haskell - General Public Rep - Absent

Charles Garrison, Ex-Officio

Adam Hoyles, Ex-Officio

Barbara Ireland Hobson, Legislative Assistant II

Shannon MacGillis & Carla Schell, 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: 10:38 a.m.**
2. **Roll Call**
3. **Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Ken Amaro called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees. Members introduced themselves and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the November 12, 2025, meeting were not approved due to a lack of quorum.

5. **Presentations**

St Johns River Water Management District
Cori Hermle, Strategic Planning Coordinator for the Lower Basin

Corrine Hermle from the St. Johns Water Management District began her presentation with an overview of the organization and its work. She stated that her organization was one of five water management districts in the state that cover all or part of 18 counties in northeastern and east-central Florida. She said the goal of the management districts is to balance the water needs of the state's residents and visitors with the needs of nature. She said their work was guided by four core missions: protecting and improving surface water quality, protecting natural systems, preventing increases in flooding, and ensuring adequate water supplies for both people and the environment.

Ms. Hermle continued to explain that the St. Johns Water Management District is subdivided into four strategic planning basins, allowing it to develop water resource management strategies unique to each area. She said there is a different set of divisions focused on water supply, driven by cooperative partnerships and agreements with other agencies and local governments; in Northeast Florida, this is the North Florida Regional Water Supply Partnership. She explained that the partnership comprised the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the St. Johns Water Management District, and the Suwannee River Water Management District. She stated that the partnership covers approximately 14 counties.

Ms. Hermle explained that more than 90 percent of drinking water comes from the Florida aquifer system, which is replenished by rainfall. She said that excessive groundwater use can lead to unacceptable impacts on wetlands, spring flow, lake levels, and groundwater quality. She said the management district has numerous tools to protect water resources from excessive groundwater withdrawals, including water-use regulations, prevention and recovery strategies for areas of concern, and extensive water-supply planning programs to prepare for future water needs.

Ms. Hermle then discussed the regional water supply planning process, which she said was required by statute for all five water management districts. She explained that the overarching question guiding water supply planning is: do we have enough water from our traditional sources to meet projected needs over 20 years without harming natural systems? To answer this, she said they evaluate water supply alongside population growth and demand. If the analysis shows that demand cannot be met without acceptable impacts to water resources, they identify programs and projects to ensure a sustainable supply. She said the plans are updated every five years to account for changes in growth patterns, agricultural needs, and other factors. She said the first-ever regional plan for Northeast Florida was approved in 2017, and the five-year update was approved in 2023.

Ms. Hermle reiterated that about 90 percent of users rely on water from aquifers, with the remainder relying on surface water and alternative water supplies. She said that by 2045, the total population in the North Florida Regional Water Supply Planning area will increase to about 3 million, with most of the growth — about 800,000 — occurring within the St. John's portion of the planning area. As such, she predicts that groundwater demand will increase by approximately 135 million gallons per day, primarily due to growth in the public supply sector. She stated that in the Suwannee portion, the increase would be due to agricultural expansion.

Ms. Hermle said that their water resource assessment led them to determine that traditional sources cannot meet the 135 million-gallon-per-day increase in demand without causing unacceptable impacts on natural systems in the region. These impacts include drying of wetlands, reduced spring flows, lowered lake levels, and degraded groundwater quality. She said there are two options to address this:

withdraw less water from the system or return water to the system. She said that they work across county and governmental boundaries to develop projects that help meet this mission.

She said one of North Florida's key challenges is protecting water bodies with established minimum flow levels (MFLs). She then described a map that showed areas where MFLs are currently not met, where MFLs are met but expected to fall below MFL, and where MFLs are currently met and expected to remain met for the next 20 years. She said that if water bodies are expected to fall below MFL in 20 years, they must implement a recovery or prevention strategy. These include conservation, aquifer recharge, alternative water supplies, reclaimed water, and new regulations that limit withdrawals to protect the system. She said there are 60 MFLs, mainly in the Santa Fe Basin, including two MFLs in Keystone Heights that are not meeting their minimums under current conditions. She said there are recovery strategies, including projects and mandatory measures, to address the impacts on these MFLs. For the region, she noted that their impacts include the Black Creek Water Resource Development Project in the Keystone Heights area. Another was the Water First North Florida, which is located closer to Lake City. She said they would look at increasing water conservation efforts among residential users and agricultural producers in both areas. She also said they have over 100 additional local-scale project options in their implementation strategy, which is part of their plan.

Ms. Hermle then explained the Black Creek Water Resource Development Project, which she said was nearing completion. She stated that they have water on it but are awaiting rainfall. She also stated that they are drawing water from Black Creek, which currently has minimal flow, but that if it ever fails to meet minimum flow, they cannot pump water from it. She stated that the primary purpose of the project is to recharge the upper Florida aquifer with environmentally sustainable flows from Black Creek. She said it provides a secondary benefit for water levels. She said the project will divert up to 10 million gallons per day from the south fork of Black Creek during wet-weather or high-flow periods, and that no more than 4 percent of the total flow can be drawn at any time. The water then flows through a transmission line and a series of treatment beds to address water quality or color issues. She said low flows are expected to occur about 25 percent of the time.

She then detailed the Water First North Florida project. She said it was currently in the pre-design phase and that they had received bids and reviewed wetland conditions to determine the best project design. She stated that it was included in their 2025 implementation strategy for the Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and Priority Springs. It will provide current consumptive use permit holders with relief from offsetting existing impacts and allow them to participate in regional projects. The project will redirect approximately 40 million gallons per day of reclaimed water currently discharged to the St. Johns River to a newly constructed treatment facility in Columbia County. The water will be treated in a wetland treatment system and then pumped into strategic recharge locations within the Suwannee Management District, thereby improving flows in the priority springs in Santa Fe. She said the project can meet the region's water needs in conjunction with water conservation over the next 20 years.

Mr. Garrison asked about the difference between the expected 2045 water usage and the available flow. Ms. Hermle stated that the data could be found in their water supply plan, but did not have that exact number. Doug Conkey of the St. Johns Water Management District said they anticipate being 135 gallons short but expect demand to be 155 million gallons per day. Mr. Garrison then asked how statutes prohibiting discharges directly to rivers would affect recharge efforts. Ms. Hermle said that many utilities in the area have the option to expand reclaimed water use, conduct deep-well injection, or

connect to transmission lines in other areas. Mr. Garrison then asked if the Black Creek project was the same one championed by Senator Bradley; Ms. Hermle confirmed it was. Mr. Garrison then asked how many municipalities within the St. Johns Water Management District were looking to add reuse to their services. Ms. Hermle said many of them have been working toward that, as population growth has led to increased demand. She said that utility companies that are not currently using reclaimed water do not have the capacity or technology to do so, and they are seeking ways to support their transition.

Mr. Fraden asked if the Black Creek project would help with flood times. Ms. Hermle said it would not. CM Gay asked whether their agency regulates retention ponds in new developments. She said their environmental resource program covered that. He then asked where the organization stood regarding the new regulations on retention ponds. She said they were in the process of incorporating those new rules and stated that existing users are grandfathered in and may continue to work under the existing laws. She noted that the new regulations applied to new applications. CM Gay said he would follow up after the meeting because he had received concerns that the process was not moving forward. CM Gay then asked what they thought about deep-well injection. Ms. Hermle stated that their modeling indicates that deep-well injection should not have a negative impact. She added that some areas use deep-well injection to mitigate saltwater intrusion. She said they would like users to use reclaimed water or recharge, but that deep well injection was a viable, less expensive option. CM Gay asked whether mining was still occurring in Goldhead and whether that was affecting the lakes. She stated that anyone who applies for a consumptive use permit must undergo a review process and that if the application is more complex, they will run models to assess potential impacts. If the impact is excessive, they will request a modification to the request.

Mr. Suber asked about the status of the Black Creek project. She said everything was complete, but they are just waiting for wet conditions. He wondered if there had been any withdrawals. She said there were.

Mr. Hoyles asked when they would begin reducing irrigation for lawns. She said they were expanding their water conservation program. She said they also have programs for governments and utilities seeking to implement conservation measures.

Northeast Florida Regional Council
Fara Ilami, Regional Resiliency Manager

Fara Ilami from the Northeast Florida Regional Council presented on Redefining Regional Resilience. She provided an overview of the Council, including its history, composition, and mission. She explained the Spheres of Action for their Resiliency Program, which included assessing vulnerabilities, military and community involvement, and mitigation and adaptation, all of which overlap to form the Resilient First Coast program. The program was established in 2022 and aims to promote regional cooperation on initiatives to improve the environment, quality of life, infrastructure, and economic resilience. She said their membership includes local governments, businesses, nonprofits, academia, and federal and state agencies, as well as at-large community members.

She explained that regional resilience is the ability of systems to adapt and thrive in the face of acute shocks and stressors. She said that significant regional hazards for northeast Florida include flooding, heat, and hurricanes. She then explained that they have developed a regional resilience action plan that outlines goals, objectives, and actions to help the region mitigate and adapt to current and future challenges. She said they initiated the action plan at the start of the collaborative in 2022, followed by subsequent subcommittees. She then said they completed Phase 1 in 2024, which established goals, objectives, and best practices.

Ms. Ilami then explained Phase 2, which included drafting actions and subactions for the winter of 2025. They then developed narratives of those actions in spring 2025 and created a list of partners in summer 2025. She said they then released the full Phase 2 in September 2025. They are now moving into Phase 3, where they will establish metrics, relevant resources, and funding sources to accomplish the action items.

She then described the Regional Resilience Action Planning structure. The author of the plan is the Northeast Florida Regional Council; the implementer is the Resilient First Coast Collaborative, with partners; the beneficiaries are user groups, including local governments, regional entities, businesses, nonprofits, and other organizations. She said the action plan includes 34 actions and 83 subactions that outline how regional entities can facilitate cooperation to find effective solutions to regional challenges.

She said the vision for Resilient First Coast consists of four main goals: create a durable and adaptive built environment; ensure a vibrant quality of life; develop a thriving regional economy; and promote a healthy natural environment. She said the plan is organized into three main buckets: facilitate, guide, and analyze. She said "facilitate" actions influence regional resilience in ways that individual counties alone cannot achieve. "Guide" actions provide resources to counties and organizations throughout the region to inform resilience at the local level. "Analyze" actions generate, report, and/or synthesize data to inform decision-making at the regional and local levels.

She provided an example of each type of action. For Facilitate, she provided the example of promoting the conservation and restoration of ecologically significant natural ecosystems. For Guide, she provided an example of supporting shoreline stabilization for both natural and modified shorelines. For Analyze, she offered the example of creating an inventory of projects utilizing nature based solutions.

Mr. Birtalan asked which potential funding sources would be consulted and how they would be used. Ms. Ilami said examples of funding could include the Resilient Florida program and other national resilience programs, but ultimately, it could include a variety of public and private funding sources. She said the funding would be used to execute the plan's actions, which could include a range of items to

support implementation.

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

Contact: Dr. Gerard Pinto
Jacksonville University

Dr. Pinto stated that water temperatures have dropped by about 4-5 degrees to around 65-64 degrees Fahrenheit. He said salinity remained unchanged from the last meeting and noted that the recent rain was insufficient to reduce it. Regarding algae blooms, Dr. Pinto said no significant problems or toxins were detected. He noted that most manatees have left the area, resulting in no reported deaths since last month. He noted a manatee rescue near Queens Harbor due to cold stress. He said they have had four rescues this year, and most end up at the zoo, then at SeaWorld, and are then released back into the wild. Across Florida, there have been 94 watercraft deaths, for a total of 609 deaths. Last year, there were 91 watercraft deaths and 515 total deaths.

Dr. Pinto informed the Commission of the Environmental Symposium at UNF on February 13.

Mr. Hoyles asked whether the level of manatee deaths was sustainable. Dr. Pinto said that manatee deaths range from 500 to 600 per year, with about 20 percent due to watercraft. He said over the past five years, the number of deaths has been essentially flat but still rising. He said law enforcement and speed zones are the way to address this issue. He said watercraft deaths in Duval County have been lower in recent years. He also noted that fewer manatees have been observed in the area. He added that there has been an increase in perinatal deaths since there has been an increase in births in response to a prior period of starvation.

CM Peluso said he wanted to get the full River Report before the Commission. He also asked whether the river's health has improved, noting fewer algae blooms in recent reports. Dr. Pinto said he was hesitant to say that conditions have improved and noted that algae blooms are normal. He said there haven't been as many harmful blooms, but noted that higher temperatures due to a warming planet and increased rainfall could lead to more frequent algal blooms. He also said that the level of monitoring has decreased, which may confound their understanding of the issue. He said that as development increases and phosphorus levels rise in the water, there will be an impact. CM Peluso then asked about the manatee treatment area in the zoo. Dr. Pinto said it was a matter of available veterinarians and that the manatee exhibit is expanding at the zoo. He said SeaWorld has specialized staff trained to treat manatees.

7. Public Comment

John Nooney asked why OGC was not present at various citizen boards and commissions meetings. He also noted that less legislation comes before the Waterways Commission than in the past.

8. New Business

2025-0859

ORD Transmitting to the State of FL's Various Agencies for Review, a Proposed Large-Scale Revision to the FLUM Series of the 2045 Comp Plan at 0 Yellow Water Rd, North of Normandy Blvd, btwn Yellow Water Rd & POW-MIA Memorial Pkwy - (337.29± Acres) - RR in the Rural Dev Area to LDR in the Suburban Dev Area - Yellow Water Land Holdings, LLC (R.E. # 002275-0005) (Appl # L-6082-25A) (Dist. 12-White) (Read) (LUZ)
11/25/25 CO Introduced: LUZ, JWC
12/2/25 LUZ Read 2nd & Rerefer
12/9/25 CO Read 2nd & Rerefer
LUZ PH: 1/21/26
Public Hearing Pursuant to Sec 163.3187, F.S. & Ch 650, Pt 4, Ord Code - 1/13/26 & 1/27/26

Ed Lukacovic presented on 2025-0859, a large-scale transmittal ordinance. He provided the upcoming hearing dates for the bill: Planning Commission on January 8, 2026; City Council first hearings on January 13, 2026; LUZ Committee on January 21, 2026; and final City Council hearing on January 27, 2026.

He said the property being revised is located at 0 Yellow Water Road, on the south side of Wells Road, the east side of Yellow Water Road, and north of Normandy Boulevard. It is 337.29 acres with 61.39 acres of wetlands. Its current land use is rural residential, and the proposed land use is for low-density residential. Its sub-drainage basins are Yellow Water Creek and an unnamed stream, and the drainage basin is Black Creek.

He said the current development potential was either 337 single-family dwelling units with no sanitary sewer or water lines, or 674 single-family dwelling units with sanitary sewer and water lines. The proposed development potential is 1,686 single-family dwelling units, with sanitary sewer and water lines.

He said the surrounding land uses include agricultural, rural residential, public buildings and facilities, low-density residential, community/general commercial, recreation open space, and residential-professional-institutional.

He showed a map of the proposed expansion of the suburban development area. He said that sanitary sewer and water lines would have to be brought to the application site. He presented an area map showing pasture, woodlands, and wetlands. He noted multi-family units along the application site's southeast boundary. He then showed images from the southerly and easterly views of the application site. He said that 18.10 acres of the site are in Flood Zone A and 10.39 acres are in an undocumented wetland Flood Zone. He also noted that 61.39 acres are wetlands, of which 54.60 acres are Category II and 6.79 acres are Category III. He showed an elevation map of the site and a soil map. He said the two most important are the Surrency soils and the Goldhead, Wet, and Lynn Haven soils, as they frequently flood. He showed a map of the subdrainage basins and a drainage path map starting at the site and ending in the St. Johns River after exiting the Black Creek basin.

CM Amaro deferred the bill to the January 14, 2026, meeting due to a lack of quorum.

9. Old Business

Shad Creek Resolution

Contact:

CM Gay

CM Gay said that the proposed resolution was provided the Commission and would be discussed at the next meeting.

George Crady Bridge

Contact:

CM Gay

CM Gay said dialogue was still occurring, and he would bring in principals after the start of the new year. He said they also have a new representative at the Department of Environmental Protection. Mr. Hoyles offered his assistance with the Bridge.

Shoaling & Artificial Reef Task Force

Contact:

Commissioner Hardesty

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.