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RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**FINANCE COMMITTEE WORKSHOP MINUTES
REVIEW OF ORDINANCE 2023-807**

**November 29, 2023
9:30 a.m.**

Location: City Council Chamber, 1st floor, City Hall – St. James Building, 117 West Duval Street

Attendance: Committee Members Nick Howland (Chair), Randy White (Vice Chair), Raul Arias, Reggie Gaffney Jr., Will Lahnen, Ju'Coby Pittman

Excused: Committee Member Kevin Carrico

Also in attendance: Council Members Ron Salem, Chris Miller, Joe Carlucci, Matt Carlucci, Ken Amaro, Michael Boylan, Jimmy Peluso; Kim Taylor, Phillip Peterson, Brian Parks – Council Auditor's Office; Mary Staffopoulos – Office of General Counsel; Merriane Lahmeur, Maritza Sanchez, Vanessa Galan – Legislative Services Division; Jeff Clements – Council Research Division; Anna Brosche and Angela Moyer – Finance and Administration Department; Joe Inderhees, Bill Delaney – Mayor's Office

Meeting Convened: 9:32 a.m.

Chairman Howland convened the meeting and the attendees introduced themselves for the record. Council President Salem thanked the committee members and the visiting council members for their willingness to attend these review meetings and work on a good final product for this appropriation. The Chair noted that the three bills – 2023-807, -808 and new Ordinance 2023-847 introduced at the council meeting last night – are in several committees next week for final action before the full council takes them up on December 12th.

Bill Delaney of the Mayor's Office introduced the second half of the review of 2023-807 and thanked the council members for their cooperation in working through this important legislation.

Mr. Howland said he uses 3 filters when reviewing legislation: is the proposal a legitimate function of government, are there valid assumptions behind the estimated costs, and are these proposals redundant of work being done by other governments. He also looks at whether the proposed appropriations create a future funding obligation. He noted that there is a proposal in the Florida Legislature to eliminate local government business taxes, which would cost Jacksonville \$7M if adopted. The Chairman briefly

recapped the committee's actions at its last meeting where approximately 80% of the spending proposal was reviewed.

Chairman Howland asked for clarification of what items can be talked about in today's meeting since Ordinance 2023-847 was introduced in City Council last night to carve out a substantial portion of the original programs from 2023-807. Mary Staffopoulos of the Office of General Counsel said that this meeting was noticed for discussion of 2023-807 only so that must be the focus. Questions related to items moved from 2023-807 to 2023-847 should be reserved for the committees next week so that members who have a potential voting conflict with those items can participate fully in today's meeting about the remaining appropriations. Ms. Staffopoulos offered to meet with any council members in advance of next week's committee meetings to draft any amendments they may wish to propose to the two ordinances.

Addressing Homelessness

Home roof initiative: In response to a question from CM Arias, Travis Jeffrey of the Housing and Community Development Division said this would be a pilot project to help people who are being told by their insurance companies that they must replace their roof or lose their property insurance. He would also like to expand the program to cover property owners who are being cited by the Code Compliance Division for substandard roofs. He briefly described the qualifications to participate in the program. CM Arias proposed reducing the appropriation to \$450,000 and placing the remainder of the funding (\$546,000) "below the line" until the pilot program proves itself. In response to a question from the Chair, Ms. Staffopoulos said that amendments will need to be offered in the standing committee meetings next week. CM Lahnen suggested that the pilot project could be funded with federal ARP funds. Kim Taylor recommended that it not use ARP funds because of the clawback provisions and the potential to lose the federal funds because of that. CM Matt Carlucci said this program should keep flexibility for either full roof replacements or roof repairs because sometimes a repair will be sufficient to meet the need and advocated for full funding of the pilot from the start. He offered to assist the administration in the development of this pilot program because of his years of experience in the insurance business.

CM Peluso said there is a tremendous need for this program, and he urges full funding from the start. CM Miller asked if the intent is to serve primarily low-income homeowners or owners of any income who have gotten roof replacement letters from insurance companies. He sees a tremendous need for assistance with roofs among low-income homeowners who may or may not have gotten an insurance company letter. CM Amaro asked how the amount of \$996,000 was derived and whether there are similar programs in other parts of the state. Mr. Jeffrey said the ability of the division to spend the funds by the end of the fiscal year helped inform the amount allocated. He described how the City's previous roof program worked. CM Gay asked if it would be possible to open up the program eligibility to anyone who has an inspection of their roof by a licensed home inspector who finds that the roof needs replacing. CM Pittman said roof replacement was a hot topic at a recent meeting of the Florida Association of Counties and many people don't have property insurance at all because of all the conditions and requirements that homeowner's insurance entails. CM Joe Carlucci said roof replacement fraud is a big reason for Florida's current insurance crisis, so he recommends strictly concentrating on homeowners with an insurance letter and not letting third-party inspectors recommend replacements. CM Matt Carlucci said that an inability to pay for a replacement roof can lead to loss of insurance which then leads to mortgage problems and people ultimately lose their homes in a cascade effect.

President Salem said that the administration will develop the details about how all of the programs will work after the Council approves the funding and urged the administration to work with individual council members to address their issues on specific programs in their development. In response to a question from CM Arias, Mr. Jeffrey said his office will be hiring several new staff to administer its programs, including this pilot, and thinks that they will be able to find enough roofers to do the work needed. Council Auditor

Kim Taylor said that there are no specific guidelines in the mayor's proposals and if the Council wants specific requirements included then it may want to amend the bill to include them.

CM Joe Carlucci said he will be proposing an amendment to rename the Neighborhood Stabilization and Homelessness Program Special Revenue Fund to the Homelessness Trust Fund and to create another fund to be named the Homelessness Prevention Trust Fund, both as recommended by the City Council's Special Committee on Affordable Housing and Homelessness.

A Healthier Jacksonville

The Chair noted that several pieces of this proposal were carved out and moved to 2023-847. CM Joe Carlucci said he has gotten more information on the 9-8-8 helpline following his questions at the last meeting and believes it will help alleviate the workload on the 9-1-1 emergency call center.

Building Local Businesses

Joe Inderhees, the mayor's Deputy Chief of Staff, reviewed the mayor's proposed programs.

Permitting Evolution First Step: this initiative will hire a consultant to thoroughly examine the City entire permitting processes to identify business needs and gaps, training, performance metrics, etc.

Small Business Capital Access: this will include a micro-grant initiative and tiered low-interest loans, overseen by an outside agency.

Small Business Education and Augmentation – UNF Small Business Development Center enhancement.

Film and Movie Incentive – 10% rebate for local direct expenditures on qualified projects.

President Salem said he has heard from several council members about the need to improve and speed up the local permitting process, so he recommends letting that initiative take place before the Council creates a special committee on the subject. CM Arias asked about JSEB participation; Gregory Grant of the JSEB office said that JSEBs could participate in any of these programs. Mr. Arias said there needs to be a greater focus on JSEB access and success. In response to a question from CM Arias, Todd Roobin of the Film and TV Office said that these funds will enhance an existing program in the Public Investment Policy and is not a pilot program. Mr. Arias said the City's program only funds a maximum of \$50,000 per project which is very little compared to other jurisdictions. He wants the incentive to go to companies that use local small businesses on their productions and plans to offer an amendment to that effect. Chairman Howland asked about the typical return on investment for film projects. Mr. Roobin said it typically can be as high as 10:1 and other jurisdictions in Florida offer much higher incentives than Jacksonville. CM Pittman said much more needs to be done to engage and assist small businesses, particularly JSEBs, and teach them how to get involved in state and federal government contracts and not just local contracts. Mr. Grant said education to businesses is crucial and his office offers various training programs.

CM Joe Carlucci made several observations about the City's permitting process and suggested that the study be funded from the existing Building Inspection Fund immediately rather than from a new appropriation. Josh Gideon, Chief of the Building Inspection Division, said the intent is to have a recognized national firm do a comprehensive study of all of the City's permitting, land use and zoning processes for efficiency and streamlining opportunities. Some of those functions would not be eligible for funding from the Building Inspection Fund. Assistant Council Auditor Phillip Peterson said the comprehensive study will need to be procured by an RFP so there probably would not be much of a time savings by use of the Building Inspection Fund as the funding source. Mr. Gideon said that the Fund is permitted by state law to accumulate up to one year's operating costs for the Inspection Division in order

provide resources to sustain operations during a downturn in the economy and building activity. CM Amaro said the permitting process needs to be rectified as quickly as possible, so recommended the use of available funds and get started as soon as possible. Mr. Gideon said new permitting software will be going online in the next few weeks which should save time for applicants, and 10 new plan reviewers and building inspectors will be requested by separate legislation in the near future. CM Miller said he knows of businesses that have left Jacksonville or chosen not to locate here because the permitting process is so cumbersome and time consuming. He said there are lots of smart business people in Jacksonville who could consult with the City and solve this problem in just a few months without the need for a long consultant study.

CM Arias asked if the Film and Television Advisory Commission has reviewed and opined on the proposal. Mr. Roobin said they had. He added that there will be some tweaks to the current program when the City's planned overhaul of the Public Investment Policy takes place. Mr. Arias asked that the members of the Advisory Commission be involved in the improvements to the incentive program. CM Boylan said Jacksonville has inherent advantages over other parts of Florida for film and TV projects because of its varied natural and built environments and its consolidated form of government. In response to a question from CM Pittman, Mr. Gideon said that legislation will be filed in the next few weeks to fund the 10 new positions and a contract is nearly complete to hire a company to handle overload permitting workload, particularly in the commercial area. The new online software should help improve speed. CM White said the City needs inspectors to inspect PUDs for compliance with approved conditions. Mr. Gideon said PUD enforcement falls under the Planning Department except for some plan reviews in his division. CM Arias said he doesn't see the need for a consultant study of the permitting process since the mayor's transition team made several recommendations that already seem to be underway in the department with more personnel and new software. He will offer an amendment to keep those study funds "below the line". In response to a question from Chairman Howland, Kim Taylor said that the bill has carry-over language so funds appropriated will carry over to FY24-25. She also noted that federal ARP funds will need to be encumbered by the end of 2024. In response to another question from Mr. Howland, Gregory Grant said that the micro-grant program is planned to be privately managed by a company hired via an RFP process. President Salem noted that if this bill is approved in December, it will be several months into 2024 before the programs can get up and running, particularly if RFPs must be developed and issued.

Honoring Service

CM Peluso asked if the \$50,000 for the Military and Veterans Program Outreach is being coordinated with the local military bases. Harrison Conyers, Director of Military and Veterans Affairs, said they participate in the TAP (Transition Assistance Program) programs at the local bases and the local VA facility to let those processing out of the military know what services are available locally.

Accessible Duval

Disabled Community Support: will provide replacement parts for necessary medical equipment and free short-term loan of equipment while persons newly diagnosed with a disability go through the insurance coverage process.

Grant Application Process Evolution: will develop a paperless grant application process to allow applying agencies to efficiently compete for grant opportunities and track their applications online.

Community Open House for Non-profits:

Will produce an event to bring non-profits together and introduce their work to the general public.

Beautiful Jacksonville

CPAC Art Initiative: will facilitate citizen-created art to beautify the 6 CPAC areas, operated by the Cultural Council.

Direct Grants for Artists: will provide grants and professional development opportunities to working artists, cultural workers and creative entrepreneurs.

Black History Destination Activation: will issue an RFP for mapping, marking and marketing of Black history sites to attract and inform tourism.

MLK Week of Service: will be funded by separate legislation for programming and awareness of Week of Service activities.

“Cool Communities” Initiative: tree planting on vacant City land in targeted zip codes (launching in Health Zone 1) to address neighborhood heat islands and climate change.

Riverfront Parks Conservancy: seed funding for public/private partnerships to plan for world class design and operation of resilient and unified riverwalk facilities and events.

President Salem said the Tourist Development Council has talked about African American tourism in the past and Visit Jacksonville already has an African American tourism app for sites in the city. He wants to have someone communicate with the TDC and Visit Jax and make sure this is not duplicative of what is already available.

Chairman Howland said he will be sending out a notice shortly regarding the City Council’s 2024 strategic planning process which should be starting in January.

CM Peluso praised the CPAC Art Initiative and said direct artist grants are part of what makes great cities great and beautiful. CM Pittman said Jacksonville has a long and great African American history and there is a businesswoman in Springfield who leads African American tours; she needs to be included in this project. CM Lahnen asked if the \$750,000 proposed for direct grants for artists can feasibly be expended in a year given that the grants are anticipated to be small (\$5,000 to \$15,000). CM Joe Carlucci asked if the Cool Communities Initiative could be paid from the Tree Protection Fund. Kim Taylor said the Auditor’s Office is looking at that possibility, particularly what kinds of trees can be planted using that fund. CM Arias said there are other minority communities in Jacksonville beyond African American that deserve some recognition. He asked if local artists are small businesses or individual Form 1099 filers; if they are small business then they should be participating in the JSEB program to help increase the impact of that program.

CM Boylan, Chair of the NCSPHS Committee, asked council members to please get all proposed amendments to Mary Staffopoulos by noon on Friday so they can be drafted for distribution and consideration by the NCSPHS Committee on Monday morning, and asked that they provide copies of those amendment proposals to the Mayor’s Office so they can be aware of what is coming. He said he will try to take up as many amendments as possible at NCSPHS on Monday and the remainder can be taken up at the Finance Committee on Tuesday. President Salem noted that the bill is in three committees.

Meeting adjourned: 11:30 a.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division
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