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RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN**

**Meeting Minutes  
June 10, 2024  
10:30 a.m.**

**Location:** Council Chamber, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, City Hall

**In attendance:** Council Members Carrico, J. Carlucci, Diamond, Gaffney Jr., Miller, Peluso, Arias, and Carlucci

**Also:** Mary Staffopoulos, OGC; Ed Linsky, Auditor's Office; Colleen Hampsey, Council Research Division

**Meeting Convened:** 10:30 a.m.

Chair Carrico convened the meeting and called for introductions.

Daniel Davis, JAX Chamber, talked about the Chamber's recent trip to Phoenix. Mr. Davis listed some of the factors contributing to a thriving downtown Phoenix, including a focus on Fintech, light rail public transportation, driverless Ubers, and the presence of a higher education institution with residential students. Lori Boyer, DIA CEO, spoke about what she gleaned from the Phoenix trip. Ms. Boyer noted that the ASU campus downtown was designed intentionally to not be a satellite campus, located near planned light rail locations, with residential students not commuters. Ms. Boyer said that the City of Phoenix assisted the University with property acquisition, including a former hotel that was converted into student housing. Ms. Boyer mentioned downtown Indianapolis and the joint presence of Indiana University and Purdue University and noted that such a partnership could work in Jacksonville also with a downtown presence from UNF, JU and UF. She mentioned the impact from having basketball and baseball in downtown Indy, wherein the game frequency impacts tourism and increases hometown visitors, and the venues have become prime locations for playoffs and tournaments. Ms. Boyer suggested considering that impact when planning for the future of Veteran's Arena.

Council Member Carrico said that Jacksonville is comparable in that there are multiple sport teams, and he said that there has been growth for downtown restaurants, residents, entertainment, transportation and hotels. Council Member Miller expressed optimism for the future of downtown. Council Member Carlucci emphasized the importance of the urban core and the challenge and expense of restoring historic buildings. Council Member Diamond commented on the prosperity of downtown Phoenix, despite lack of natural resource that we have in Jacksonville - the St. Johns River.

Council Member Diamond talked about the goal of this committee to determine appropriate legislation related to DIA reforms to provide for more independence, decrease the timeline for project approval, and remove the political component to authorizing DIA incentives. Council Member Peluso concurred and mentioned giving DIA bonding authority, and in-house counsel and planning staff. Council Member Carlucci reviewed the history of DIA and talked about possible complications from budgetary independence.

Lori Boyer, DIA CEO, gave a presentation about parking and downtown garages. Ms. Boyer talked about how on-street parking impacts adjacent retail, residential, construction activities, and sidewalk and bike lanes. She spoke about the rates for City garages and City employees and how rates impact on-street availability for visitors. She talked about CRA goals to make Downtown more pedestrian and bicycle friendly and less focused on motor vehicles. She spoke about vouchers for city staff to use at a City owned garage of their choosing. Ms. Boyer talked about the uses for the Arena/Sports Complex, and the high vacancy rate in the Courthouse garage. She talked about the Office of Public Parking (OPP) which moved from OED to DIA as part of the 2012 reorganization, and which operates City owned garages.

Ms. Boyer talked about parking revenue, dynamic pricing, and financing for capital projects. She talked about the possibility of selling the Waters St. garage. Ms. Boyer mentioned possible revisions to Chapter 802, *Ordinance Code* already approved by the DIA board, waiting in OGC to be drafted since March. Some of the revisions include: Permit night and weekend charges when appropriate; allow dynamic pricing; Allow discount programs for garages; Address multiple legacy agreements and free and discount parking arrangements; Provide OPP or DIA a voice in the CIP process or allow use of fund balance and shift maintenance responsibility; Provide greater autonomy to implement best practices, upgrades; Possibly eliminate 30% net revenue transfer to PFPF. Chair Carrico reiterated the need for an in-house DIA attorney.

Council Member Diamond asked about the status of a recent RFP related to the old courthouse garage. He questioned the validity of the scoring process. Ms. Boyer explained the scoring process, and she mentioned a memo written by Mr. Crescimbeni to explain some of the scores. Chair Carrico asked Council Member Diamond to head a subcommittee or have a noticed meeting to delve into the issue. Mary Staffopoulos, OGC, said either method would be acceptable. Council Member Diamond volunteered to head the subcommittee to review the scoring.

Council Member J. Carlucci asked about the vacancy rate and future uses of the Waters St. garage. Ms. Boyer said she has talked with a developer who may be interested in the property. Council Member Peluso spoke in opposition to privatizing parking, and he asked about parking discounts for downtown residents and hourly downtown workers. Chair Carrico talked about the 2 buckets of parking, strategy which should be under the purview of DIA, and operations which could be more efficient if shifted to a different entity.

Jake Gordon, Downtown Vision, spoke about DVI's history and role in downtown development. DVI is funded through property owner assessments in the business improvement district (BID), which is a 1.34 square mile area. They have a staff of 10, and 22 downtown ambassadors. Mr. Gordon talked about supporting DIA, national recruitment for investment and events, lessening bureaucratic hurdles, raising

maintenance standards, public safety issues and the homeless population, more arts and culture, more sports tourism, and adding more retail. Council Member Diamond asked about merging DVI and DIA. Council Member Peluso asked about DVI's strategic plan, and Mr. Gordon said they don't currently have one. Council Member Carlucci asked about summertime indoor events. Mr. Gordon talked about Sip-n Stroll, which is paused for the summer. Council Member Arias asked about the River Jams concert series, which lost money last year and struggled to secure sponsorships.

Ed Linsky, Auditor's Office, provided a brief update on DIA projects. He said the Office of Public Parking has \$4.8 million in their budget, Northbank CRA has \$17.8 million, and he described funding for various future projects. Council Member J. Carlucci asked about DIA bonding capacity if changed through ordinance.

Public comment

Mr. Harell spoke about updating the DIA project selection process.

Mr. Hammond talked about bringing an aquarium to Jacksonville.

Mr. Nooney talked about alcohol on the riverwalk.

With no further business, CM Carrico adjourned the meeting.

**Meeting adjourned:** 12:16 p.m.

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research Division

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