

City of Gainesville

*City Hall
200 East University Avenue
Gainesville, Florida 32601*



Minutes

October 28, 2019

1:00 PM

**County Administration Building, Grace Knight Auditorium
12 S.E. 1st Street**

Joint Water Policy Committee

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Gainesville City Commissioner Harvey Ward.

ROLL CALL

Present: Gainesville City Commissioner Harvey Ward; Gainesville City Commissioner Adrian Hayes-Santos; Alachua County Commissioner Robert Hutchinson; Alachua County Commissioner Mike Byerly; Archer City Commissioner Melanie Wells.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The motion to adopt the agenda passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[190489.](#) Minutes of the August 26, 2019 Joint Water Policy Committee Meeting (B)

Attachments: [190489 JWPC 8-26-19 Mtg Minutes 20191028](#)

RECOMMENDATION *Approve the minutes as drafted.*

The motion to adopt the previous meeting minutes passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

[190488.](#) Paynes Prairie / US 441 - Discussion of Transportation, Ecological & Hydrological Concerns (B)

Attachments: [190488 Draft Hydrologic Aspects Raising 441 Across Prairie 20191028](#)
[190488 PaynesPrairie 441 Ecological Summary rev 20191028](#)
[190488 SRWMD JWPC Presentation 20191028](#)

- I. FDOT Plans/Options for US 441: Karen Taulbee from FDOT discussed the status of resurfacing plans to raise the grade point for an 11 mile stretch of 441 by 5". The LET date for Phase 4 is August 2020. A quick evaluation of elevating further would require a bridge with an estimated cost of \$176 million as a long range estimate. The current plan involves travel lanes, shoulder widening, guardrails, sidewalks in some areas and delineation of the travel vs. bike lane. FDOT will consider proposed minor modifications. Time is running out to request modifications.
- II. Hydrology 101: Casey Fitzgerald from SJRWMD conducted his presentation via phone. He discussed the drainage and flow of

Paynes Prairie how the hydrology has been altered from its natural state. He explained the “recent” changes, Reservation Rule, watersheds and water budget, and storage potential.

III. Potential Higher Water Level Benefits:

- a) Dan Pearson from FDEP, State Parks, discussed the ecological benefits of high water at the prairie. When the water is up it helps push back the hardwoods that have invaded the basin and causes wetland vegetation to flourish. He explained that higher water levels are more effective than fire in managing the basin. The hydrology aspect is most important in managing the basin; high and low water levels foster the balance of that system.
- b) Tom Mirti with SRWMD presented on the benefits to the water supply/aquifer/springs. He discussed local groundwater dynamics focusing on historical changes with varying weather patterns including periods of drought and periods of significant rainfall.
- c) Rick Hutton of GRU described the potential impacts of raising Paynes Prairie water levels on the Sweetwater Wetlands Park. Significant sustained increases in water levels could impact the operation and vegetation in Sweetwater Wetlands. Modifications could be made to Sweetwater Wetlands to accommodate higher water levels on the prairie. These modifications could include pumping and could cost in the \$millions. The city would seek state funding for these modifications if they are needed. Modeling would need to be done to understand the impacts of higher water levels.
- d) Casey Fitzgerald suggested that before any major changes were made (an increase of 2 feet or so) the offsite impacts should be considered though analysis/modeling. There are currently no plans by SRWMD or SJRWMD to model for rising surface water in Paynes Prairie.

RECOMMENDATION

Hear presentations and take any action deemed appropriate.

STAFF UPDATES

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

COMMISSIONER UPDATES

- I. Commissioner Hayes-Santos requested a brief discussion on the

legislative agenda with regard to septic to sewer. Thomas Harrington, Coordinator with the Office of the City Manager, reported on the current status of the City's involvement and the group talked about partnering between the County and the City. Commissioner Ward stated that the deadline is nearing for legislative request for 2020. He stated that the next JWPC meeting would be a good forum to present broadly on this topic and discuss a legislative ask for next year.

- II. Commissioner Hutchinson suggested discussion about the proposed Newnans Lake water quality improvement wetlands. Chris Bird, Director of the Alachua County Environmental Protection Department will bring an update back to the JWPC.

A motion was made by Commissioner Byerly to: Discuss the paving projects in the Hogtown Greenway during the next JWPC meeting. The group unanimously agreed to include it on the next agenda.

NEXT MEETING DATE

December 16, 2019

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:48 p.m.