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JAX DAILY RECORD

MONDAY, APR. 16, 2018 09:58 AM EST

JEA board member Aaron Zahn resigns in bid to become JEA's interim CEO

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Chief Financial Officer Melissa Dykes is listed as "Interim Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer" on utility's website.

by: [David Cawton](#) | Associate Editor

JEA board member Aaron Zahn wants to become JEA's interim CEO while the utility searches for a permanent replacement for the role vacated April 6 by Paul McElroy.



In a letter Friday addressed to board Chair Alan Howard and copied to city General Counsel Jason Gabriel, Zahn wrote that "after a week of careful personal and professional reflection, I write to inform you of my immediate resignation from the Board of Directors."

Mayor Lenny Curry nominated Zahn to the board in January and the City Council confirmed him in February to replace former board Chair Tom Petway, who retired in November.

Zahn's term was set to expire Feb. 28, 2022.

"I am disappointed by Mr. Zahn's resignation," Howard said Monday morning. "I think he brought a wealth of experience and good insights from the industry to the board," he said.

Howard said he was not aware of Zahn's intentions to step down and that he received his letter after business hours Friday.

[PREV ARTICLE](#)  On April 6, following McElroy's announcement that he would not renew his employment contract after its expiration in September, Howard nominated Chief Financial Officer Melissa Dykes to fill the role. [NEXT ARTICLE](#) 

Dykes is listed as "Interim Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer" on JEA's website.

"Ms. Dykes is still a candidate," Howard said.

Howard said he would have no further comment before the JEA board meeting scheduled for Tuesday afternoon.

Zahn is managing partner and chief executive officer at Pascal Partners, specializing in the operational aspects of startups, mergers and acquisitions among other responsibilities.

The company focuses on buying infrastructure related to the electric storage and generation industries.

Zahn wrote Friday that it is “common practice” for a board member with chief executive, industry and strategic planning experience to assume the role.

If selected, he said he would begin the search for a full-time CEO immediately, re-establish trust and open communications with JEA stakeholders, build consensus around the purpose and role of JEA in the community, and provide the board with resources, tools and structure necessary to “establish JEA as ‘a utility for the future of Jacksonville’ prepared to navigate and take advantage of the current trends in the electric and water industries.”

Howard previously said finding a permanent CEO for the nation’s eighth largest municipally owned utility company could be difficult considering an ongoing conversation over privatizing JEA.

Petway used his closing remarks Nov. 28 to encourage the board to explore selling the electric and water utility to a private company.

Special committees commissioned at City Hall and the Jacksonville Civic Council are debating the idea.

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A Feb. 14 financial report from JEA’s financial adviser concluded the city could net \$2.9 billion to \$6.4 billion after settling debts and liabilities.

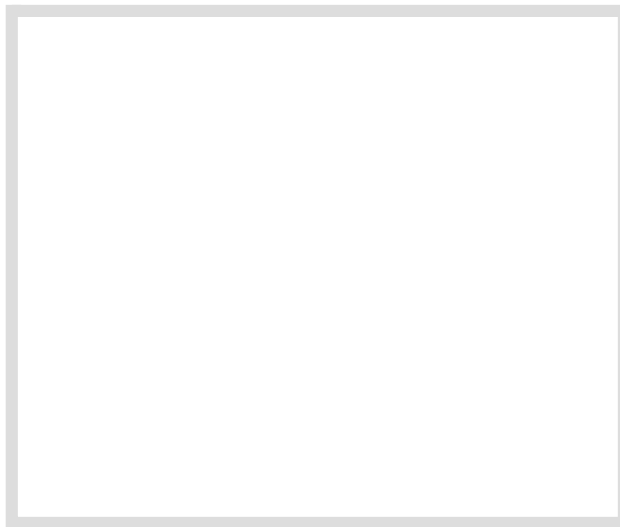
Privatizing more than 10 percent of the utility requires the approval of a council supermajority, which is 13 out of 19 members.

The JEA board meets at 3 p.m. Tuesday at the utility’s Downtown headquarters at 21 W. Church St.

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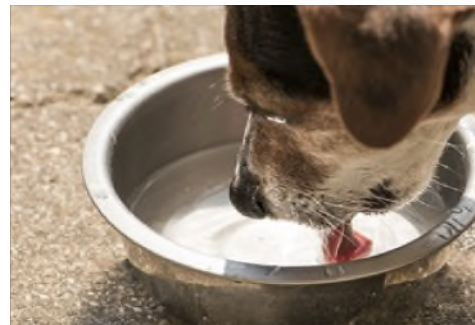
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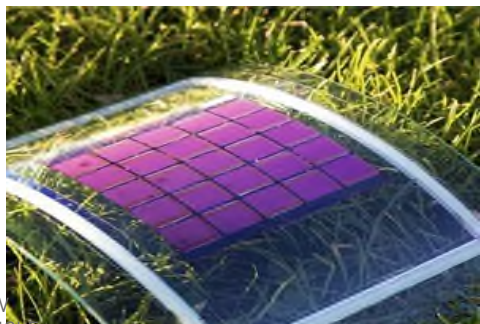
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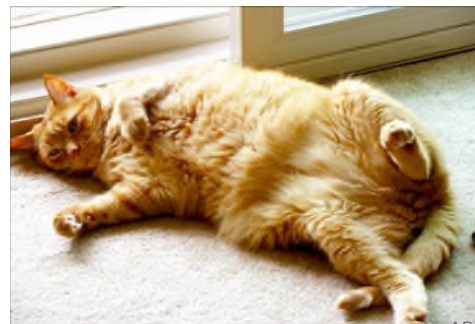
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