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December 12, 2019

JEA Board members,

Thank you for your dedication to our community with your service on the JEA Board during a time of challenge. As you and the senior leaders of JEA know, the utility industry is facing marketplace disruption and technological innovation that presents very serious threats to the future success of a government-owned utility. Turning a blind eye to this would leave JEA on a course toward rapidly increasing rates, unconstrained debt, and more uncertainty for employees, customers, and taxpayers. So, again, thank you for continuing to put the best interest of the community foremost.

In the process of strategic planning, you and JEA leadership have opened a dialog related to five scenarios for the future of JEA. While much attention is focused on one scenario related to possible sale, I know and appreciate that JEA continues to simultaneously explore several scenarios and options that can ensure clean, consistent energy and water for our city. Unfortunately, facts about JEA's strategic planning and exploration of all scenarios in this process remain misunderstood or unknown by large segments of the community.

A process of vetting five different pathways and aligning them for simultaneous board consideration has been complicated, and decision-making of this magnitude is not easy. Nevertheless, I am convinced that you have all conducted the process openly and in accordance with the law.

Furthermore, despite the clear delineation of responsibilities between you as a board for an independent authority and our elected City Council (as defined in the Charter of the Consolidated Government of the City of Jacksonville), City Council has expressed the wish for an active role in the strategic planning options and challenges facing the JEA.

I am requesting a path that will acknowledge the important work accomplished by JEA over the past year and give City Council the strategic opportunity it seeks because both are important for the people of Jacksonville. Therefore, I ask you as a board to do the following:

1. At your board meeting next week, tell JEA senior leaders to prepare specific legislative requests for Council related to each of the five scenarios that have been laid out. The assignment is as simple as this question; What action would City Council need to take for each scenario to be possible and what challenges would remain even if Council accomplished the local legislative fixes for each? These requests would be prepared for simultaneous transmission to Council via a Board vote in January.
2. One of the scenarios includes the ongoing ITN process, so tell the senior leaders and their advisors to conclude the ITN by the end of January.
3. Although the ITN – as written today – seems to contemplate the board being presented and considering a single, final proposal, the leadership team and advisors should amend the ITN and conclude it by the January board meeting with a top tier of proposals rather than any single entity. And, rather than consideration of that proposal being reviewed and accomplished by you as a board, that top tier of the proposals should be given to City Council for them to review and consider their disposition legislatively as they see fit.
4. Immediately make available the time and resources of any JEA personnel or advisors needed to engage in a series of community townhalls on the future of JEA. While the JEA Board and City Council have done a lot of important work, the people of our city need to hear from JEA directly regarding all possible scenarios. Coordination and scheduling community meetings in each of the 14 districts represented on City Council must be the minimum standard. These meetings should be conducted before City Council and I take any formal action on the scenarios as provided to Council by the Board.

5. Finally, City Council has spoken much to old models of municipal utility service, so I would ask you to instruct the JEA team to consider a sixth scenario and prepare research on it. This scenario would be collapsing and moving the independent authority into a municipal department whose operation and budget is directly managed by City Council and the Mayor's Administration. Although, on its face this is a scenario I would be inclined to reject, I believe providing City Council research and legislative changes they can consider is important.

6. Confer with General Counsel Jason Gabriel to ensure the steps I'm proposing are done in compliance with the City Charter and all applicable laws.

I believe City Council has always had the authority to determine the next steps of the strategic planning process, but they have demonstrated they want to exercise this authority sooner with more flexibility. I believe if the December JEA Board meeting provides this guidance to senior leadership and advisors, and the January board meeting advances to Council all potentialities for all scenarios, Council will have every tool it needs to determine the future of JEA. They can take as much time as they need, and you – the JEA Board – and senior leadership can get back to the daily operations as we await Council's work.

The City Council can conclude the strategic planning process in conjunction with myself and JEA personnel as needed. Then, ultimately, the Council can also consider whether one option is sent to a ballot or if multiple options are sent to a ballot for voters consideration. Either way, the elected representatives of every person in Jacksonville will work together to ensure the future of the utility.



Lenny Curry
Mayor