
Opinion

Guest column: JEA's CEO outlines plans to drive value for Jacksonville

By Aaron Zahn

Posted Dec 9, 2018 at 2:01 AM

As the newly appointed chief executive officer and managing director of JEA, I am honored to continue the journey I started as interim CEO and managing director seven months ago. Jacksonville is my home and it is where I am raising my family. I have a personal and professional stake in ensuring JEA provides customers with high-quality, reliable and affordable services. Please allow me to share some recent accomplishments and the future vision of your JEA team.

In the past seven months, JEA has driven positive value. We procured utility scale solar projects for 5% of our capacity at a cost nearly 20% less than our current cost of fuel. We committed additional capital and resources to drive a solution to our community's \$2.5 billion plus septic tank issue. We devised a plan to, over the next five years, pay off \$1 billion in debt and cash fund nearly \$2 billion of infrastructure improvements. Over next 5 years, we committed to over \$600 million in contributions to the City while providing more than \$100 million in water credits.

Our vision for the future is to improve lives by accelerating innovation which includes technology, methods of customer engagement, community development and stewardship of natural resources. We want customers to associate JEA with everything energy and water related rather than just their bill or a service outage. Our culture will seek to embody the heroism demonstrated by our frontline electric and water workers during storm restoration and entire team. We will be safe, adaptive and lead with integrity.

JEA's leadership began implementing a transition by meeting with our stakeholders to ensure our operations and long-term focus aligns with the community's desire for value. We implemented results-based performance

2019 will be a “year of innovation” for JEA as we create a 10-year strategic plan. It is a unique coincidence that 2018 was JEA’s 125th anniversary and due to a dramatically shifting market landscape we must now evaluate our entire approach. As our customers demand services that are more economically and environmentally sustainable that demand is being met by non-traditional providers. JEA will need to adapt our infrastructure and business model to remain your trusted energy and water partner. We plan to strengthen our core businesses rather than diversify. As the State of Florida is gripped by blue-green algae and red tide, JEA will be a thought leader on water supply and water quality issues.

Our strategic plan will be a collaborative work product of all stakeholders. The future of JEA looks bright if we work together.

JEA will drive value for our community. I am honored to serve you.

management and a pervasive commitment to driving value to better align our actions with our stakeholder' expectations.

Insights from our listening tours drove the development of a strategic framework to measure JEA's progress. Our board unanimously approved the framework in August. We will measure success in four key areas: customer, financial, environmental and community impact value. The fundamental goal of the JEA is to maximize each area of value both now and in the future by driving results. Every month, we publish our results in publicly available board books.

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Our recent actions on Plant Vogtle demonstrate our commitment to driving such value. Leadership is not always easy, and it sometimes requires taking unpopular positions on difficult issues. However, without action it is likely that the value of JEA will be negatively affected: customer value will go down due to higher rates; financial value will go down because of pressure on the City contribution; community impact value will go down because of less available resources and capital. The world is different today and JEA possesses more and better data which leads to a different conclusion on the prudence of the project.