



**MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
INFRASTRUCTURE TASK FORCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, JANUARY 6, 2022 – 2:00 P.M. TO 5:00 P.M.**

CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

January-December 2022

Attendance

Marilyn Mammano, Chair (arr 2:08)	P	1	0
Gerald Angeli	P	1	0
Shane Grabski	P	1	0
James LaBrie	P	1	0
Charlie Ladd	A	0	1
Michael Marshall	P	1	0
Peter Partington	P	1	0
Jacquelyn Scott	P	1	0
Roosevelt Walters	P	1	0
Ralph Zeltman	P	1	0

As of this date, there are 10 appointed members to the Committee, which means 6 would constitute a quorum.

Staff

Seemee Callier, Senior Administrative Assistant and Committee Liaison
Dr. Nancy Gassman, Assistant Director of Public Works -- Sustainability
Victor Carosi, Assistant Director of Public Works – Engineering
Omar Castellon, Assistant Director of Public Works – Engineering
Igor Vassiliev, Project Manager II
Carla Blair and Jamie Oppenlee, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communication to the City Commission

Motion made by Mr. Partington, seconded by Ms. Scott, that in principle, the ITF opposes any bridge crossing the New River for commuter rail in the Downtown. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 8-0.



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1. Call to Order

i. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 2:03 p.m. and roll was called. It was noted a quorum was present.

ii. Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Mr. Walters, seconded by Ms. Scott, to approve. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

iii. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – December 6, 2021

Mr. Partington commented that he would discuss infrastructure funding priorities further at today's meeting, as he wished to clarify his statements on this item made at the December 6, 2021 meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Walters, seconded by Mr. Zeltman, to approve with any necessary corrections. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

2. General Discussion and Comments by Committee Members

Mr. Partington addressed infrastructure funding priorities as noted earlier, stating that the Infrastructure Task Force Advisory Committee (ITFAC) has asked City Staff to bring a list of the highest-prioritized projects before the City Commission at regular intervals. This list would include projects involving infrastructure that has been identified as high-risk by City consultants, although funding has not yet been identified for all such projects. He asserted that he did not wish to see a repeat of circumstances from six to eight years ago, at which time it was known that some of the City's infrastructure was at high risk and would be expensive to address. He felt this situation had not been adequately brought to the attention of the City Commission at that time.

Mr. Partington continued that should any incidents involving City infrastructure occur, he wished to ensure that they have been fully reported to the Commission and identified as high-risk. He reminded the Committee that they have made multiple attempts to have the Commission explicitly address the need for additional funding for infrastructure; however, the mechanisms proposed by the Committee were determined not to be acceptable.

Mr. Partington concluded that while he acknowledged that Staff may be under pressure to primarily report good news to the City Commission, he was concerned that there may be insufficient funds to address all of the City's infrastructure needs.

Chair Mammano arrived at 2:08 p.m. Mr. Partington ceded the gavel to her at this time.

Ms. Scott asked how Mr. Partington might wish to proceed regarding the transmission of his comments to the City Commission. Mr. Partington replied that he felt the Committee has fully explored all mechanisms by which they could communicate these concerns directly to the Commission. They have also asked Staff to express these concerns. He noted that Staff has begun work on a list of projects requested at the previous meeting. He wished to see a reconciliation of the various reports and examinations that have been previously provided regarding infrastructure projects, as well as the levels of funding assigned to these projects, to avoid a crisis similar to the one that had existed approximately eight years ago.

Mr. Partington again urged Public Works Staff and the Public Works Director to bring a list of high-priority, high-risk projects before the Commission, with the identification of funding sources or the clarification that no funding has been identified at this time. This would show the Commission that a gap exists between what is allocated to these projects and the infrastructure needs of the City.

Chair Mammano advised that there will always be a gap between needs and funding. She felt the greater issue in light of this is prioritizing high-risk projects correctly, and recalled that priority is assigned depending on the following:

- Items that have already broken and must be repaired on an emergency basis
- Items mandated by the federal and state governments

Omar Castellon, Assistant Director of Public Works (Engineering), stated that Staff is working on the list of projects to which Mr. Partington had referred and would provide it by the next Committee meeting. It will include both funded and unfunded priorities.

Mr. Walters observed that the list should be considered a living document, so items can be added to it as their priority increases. Mr. Castellon confirmed that the list will be updated to add projects and note when they have been completed.

Mr. Partington pointed out that Consent Order projects are only prioritized at present because the City was forced to address them by the state. He recalled that a previous iteration of the Committee had recommended that the City Commission set aside 8% to 10% of the City's General Fund to address these capital needs; however, the Commission did not agree to this.

Mr. Walters suggested that the Committee ask Staff to determine if there is a lesser percentage of the General Fund that the Commission may be willing to set aside for this purpose. Chair Mammano recalled that the Committee had proposed this set-aside funding as a matter of principle, but the Commission has been resistant to this proposal. She noted that the City's Budget Advisory Board has also attempted to identify a funding source for these projects, but was also unsuccessful in this attempt.

Mr. Marshall explained that the City's budget remains thin, and the City had used some of the emergency funds provided as COVID-19 relief to address its budget shortfall. There is very little margin at present, based upon current revenue streams. This was one reason the Budget Advisory Board, of which he is a member, is exploring the possibility of increasing the City's millage rate for the first time in several years.

Ms. Scott commented that the only way to secure funds may be to show that there is a problem. She recommended continuing to bring the City's infrastructure needs before the Commission to show them what is happening and what is needed. This could help in their consideration of increasing the millage rate. She agreed that a 5% to 10% set-aside in the General Fund would be insufficient to the City's needs.

Chair Mammano noted that today's Agenda includes an update for the Committee on the City's strategy for securing federal infrastructure funds, as this may be the only source of funding with a magnitude sufficient to address the City's needs. At present, there is no source of funding for capital improvements other than what is left over after other needs are addressed.

Mr. Marshall advised that the City's Enterprise Funds are intended to maintain levels of service rather than to generate profits. He emphasized that a new injection of funds would be necessary to take on infrastructure needs. Chair Mammano observed that these injections of funding have come through bonds in the past, which have secured funds for Consent Order projects and other public needs. Another source is the Broward County transportation sales tax.

Mr. Zeltman stated that the first order of business should be establishing priorities among the various types of infrastructure projects. He recalled that when the Committee began work in 2017, sanitary sewer gravity mains were the greatest priority, while at present the Fiveash Water Treatment Plant seemed to be emerging as the greatest concern due to its need for upgrade or replacement. Another higher priority at present is the storm drainage system. He emphasized the need to focus on these critical pieces of infrastructure, as their priority is likely to change over time.

Chair Mammano noted that at a previous meeting, Public Works Director Alan Dodd had indicated the highest priority for City Staff is the address of inflow and infiltration (I&I). Mr. Zeltman agreed, pointing out that I&I has a negative impact on gravity sewers, pump stations, and force mains, as well as added flow into the George T. Lohmeyer Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Chair Mammano suggested that Staff could be asked to provide a component-specific report to the Committee on occasion to update them on progress in addressing I&I. This could include the amounts already spent and budgeted, how much more funding is expected to be needed, and other aspects of concern. She expressed concern that continued focus on water treatment plants could be counterproductive, as the funding numbers involved in this discussion are very high.

Mr. LaBrie requested clarification of what the Committee is asking for. Chair Mammano explained that the Committee has previously asked Staff to prepare a "top ten" list of projects to be addressed in the next budget cycle. Mr. Castellon had confirmed that Staff is currently working on this list. Mr. Partington added that he was particularly concerned with projects for which funding has not yet been identified.

Mr. LaBrie referred to backup documents showing the percentage of funding spent to address various issues among Consent Order projects, including I&I, a Master Plan, sewer basins and force mains, and stormwater, among others. He pointed out that stormwater expenses are among the lowest on this list. Mr. Castellon advised that the

Consent Order is intended for sewer and wastewater treatment uses. Some of the sewer projects listed in the documents include a stormwater component, and were added to the Consent Order in order to accomplish them as well.

Mr. Partington further clarified that when work is underway to repair or replace sewer pipes, it is sensible to also address stormwater issues that may occur at the same location. He recommended that in the future, the Committee see an update on the status of the \$200 million stormwater bond as well.

Chair Mammano recalled that consultant Hazen and Sawyer had prepared the City's Stormwater Master Plan. She agreed that the Committee should also be presented with updates on the stormwater bond. Mr. Castellon confirmed that bond funds will be available in October 2023.

Mr. Castellon also clarified that other funding, in addition to the \$200 million bond, is available for some Consent Order projects. Some will be funded through the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Chair Mammano proposed that Mr. LaBrie, as well as any future new members of the Committee, may wish to meet with Staff so they can be brought up to speed on issues the Committee has already discussed over time.

Mr. Castellon advised that the City has not yet received the full \$200 million of the stormwater bond. At present, they are working on two projects to be covered by this bond, which cost a combined \$70 million. Fewer stormwater projects have been completed thus far because the entirety of the bond has not yet been received.

Mr. Partington requested a presentation or update for the Committee on the City's smart water meter program at a future meeting.

Mr. LaBrie asked if the ITFAC has been involved with any agreements for repairs to the Fiveash Water Treatment Plant. Chair Mammano explained that there are ongoing maintenance issues for that plant, and that the Committee has determined they would not become involved in the minutiae related to this plant and other Public Works projects.

Mr. LaBrie also addressed a Resolution from a recent City Commission meeting, which urged the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to consider a tunnel as "the future of commuter rail services." He asked if the Committee has had any involvement in the development of that Resolution. Chair Mammano replied that the Committee has not been asked to become involved in this issue.

Ms. Scott stated that she would like the Board to consider having a discussion of the tunnel issue, pointing out that they have an opportunity to support the Mayor's interest in the potential construction of a tunnel. Mr. Zeltman noted that he had been involved in this discussion and had offered a number of pros and cons for the tunnel concept, including environmental considerations related to different types of aquifers, as well as other concerns. He felt one of the most important considerations for a tunnel in South Florida

was likely to be the potential for water intrusion into the facility, particularly saltwater, which is prevalent in the area for which the tunnel is proposed.

Mr. Zeltman continued that he would like to see a tunnel successfully constructed, as it would have a positive effect on reducing traffic; however, he reiterated the importance of considering the pros and cons of this infrastructure before undertaking a project of this nature.

Mr. Partington noted that the issue Mr. LaBrie had raised was the Mayor's position, which opposed FDOT's proposal to cross the New River with a high-level bridge to serve commuter rail. The Mayor had expressed concern for the potential consequences of this proposal, and has encouraged the public to oppose the bridge as well. He suggested that the Committee may have a role to play in understanding why FDOT appears to strongly oppose a tunnel, as this opposition has not yet been adequately explained.

Chair Mammano pointed out that the Committee was not involved in the discussion of the recent Resolution, as it does not address the construction or cost of a tunnel but instead states the City's preference for a tunnel. The Committee may be able to provide input at a later point in discussion of the proposed tunnel.

Ms. Scott asserted that a bridge would serve to divide the City and harm neighborhoods located beneath it, and she did not feel it was appropriate to take a position on the bridge or tunnel based on cost alone. She was supportive of the tunnel concept because she felt it would be better for the City in the long term.

Mr. Walters commented that while he would be supportive of a tunnel beneath the New River, he would not support a tunnel that goes to the Fort Lauderdale Beach, the airport, or other potential destinations. Mr. Zeltman agreed that if the geology of the subject area and other considerations provide evidence that a tunnel would be feasible, he could also support a tunnel beneath the New River. It was clarified that the only item the Committee would discuss would be a tunnel beneath the New River, with no consideration of a tunnel leading to the beach.

Mr. LaBrie advised that the Mayor had made a compelling case in favor of a tunnel, although some concerns were raised regarding potential funding for this proposal. The item was tabled by the Commission pending a meeting with FDOT before the Commission offers a final comment in support of a tunnel. He noted, however, that the Commission appeared to show consensus in favor of a tunnel, and there is support at the County and federal levels as well. Ms. Scott agreed with this assessment.

Mr. Angeli observed that the Committee should request "the whole story" regarding the proposed tunnel, including reasons why it would be preferable to a bridge. He pointed out that marine traffic would also be a factor in this decision, as boats use the New River to access marinas. There are already conflicts between the rail and marine communities, both of which have different concerns regarding the positioning of the bascule bridge.

Mr. Marshall agreed that there are a great many missing details at this point which could provide context to a discussion of a bridge or tunnel. He felt it was obvious that a tunnel would be aesthetically preferable to a bridge, due in part to the potential for negative effects of an elevated bridge on neighborhoods near it. Other concerns include the design, structure, and substructure of a bridge. He also noted the potential expense of a tunnel, and concluded that there may be more options than just a bridge or tunnel to reduce commuter congestion.

Mr. Grabski commented that he was also hesitant to offer an opinion without more information, particularly with regard to feasibility. He noted that he would like to see FDOT's information, as they may have seen something to dissuade them from moving forward with a tunnel. Chair Mammano suggested that the Committee consider asking FDOT to provide them with a presentation on this issue. Ms. Scott did not agree with this proposal, as she felt strongly that the City needs all the support they can get regarding a tunnel versus a bridge.

Mr. Marshall cautioned that he did not feel he could say what is best for the City at this point, as the Committee does not have all the information at this time. Ms. Scott asserted that several Downtown neighborhoods would be adversely affected by construction of a bridge. It was noted that the proposed bridge would be as high as and longer than the 17th Street Causeway.

Mr. Grabski advised that three alternative heights were proposed for a bridge: 25 ft., 55 ft., and 80 ft. The 25 ft. bridge would be raised and lowered as often as the existing bridge, which would not alleviate the issues between marine and rail traffic. At 55 ft., the starting and ending points of a bridge would have to be elongated in order to provide sufficient grade for trains. For 80 ft., this would require even more distance. Mr. Grabski concluded that the 55 ft. bridge was the only viable bridge alternative, and this would still need to be raised and lowered at times.

Mr. Zeltman observed that other considerations for a tunnel would include its effect in 20 to 30 years if the density of the City's zoning areas continues to intensify. While it could address immediate problems, its long-term consequences are still unknown, which made it difficult to determine whether or not it might work. He felt the positives, negatives, costs, and prospective lifetime of the proposed tunnel must all be considered.

Chair Mammano expressed concern with the possibility that the Committee might feel pressured to take a position without having been provided sufficient information. She suggested that they encourage the City Commission to urge FDOT to "back off" on the proposed bridge. It was noted that FDOT's project development and environmental (PD&E) phase, which evaluates the feasibility of various options, is scheduled to conclude in 2022.

Mr. Partington made the following **motion**: that the Infrastructure Task Force is opposed to any bridge crossing the New River for commuter rail and Brightline, and the only new crossing of the New River should be in a tunnel, if needed. Ms. Scott **seconded** the **motion**.

Mr. LaBrie recalled that some of the discussion of this issue at the previous night's City Commission meeting had addressed the fact that the owners of the train currently using the bridge do not want to travel further west to use a different track, as they would have to pay for use of a track they do not own. They do not want to use a tunnel for the same reason.

Mr. Marshall suggested adding a clause to the **motion** addressing the feasibility of a tunnel. Mr. Partington did not wish to add this qualification, however, pointing out that at present the discussion is in very broad terms. He emphasized that thus far, no member of the Committee has spoken in favor of a bridge.

Mr. LaBrie reiterated that the Commission had not voted on this item at last night's meeting, as they have a meeting scheduled with FDOT. He felt it would behoove the Committee to be involved in or at least attend this meeting if possible. Ms. Scott was in favor of this as an opportunity to offer support for a tunnel. Mr. Zeltman agreed that they should seek more information on the issue.

Mr. Partington restated his **motion** as follows: **motion** that, in principle, the ITF is opposed to any new bridge for commuter rail within the Downtown crossing the New River, and is only in favor of a tunnel if there is to be a new crossing for rail. Ms. Scott **seconded** the restated **motion**.

Mr. Marshall suggested an **amendment** to the **motion**: to state only the Committee's clear opposition to a bridge in the Downtown. Mr. Partington accepted the **amendment** and agreed to drop the second half of his **motion** which mentioned the tunnel.

The **motion** was restated once more: **motion** that in principle, the ITF opposes any bridge crossing the New River for commuter rail in the Downtown.

In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 8-0.

3. Public Comments (at Each Item)

4. Old Business

i. Update on Communication to the City Commission

Chair Mammano asked when the Committee's most recent communication to the City Commission would be seen by the Commission. Mr. Castellon advised that it would go before the Commission at their January 18, 2022 meeting. Mr. Partington noted that

January 18 is also the date upon which the unsolicited proposals for the Fiveash plant will “come out of the shade” for public discussion.

Chair Mammano asked when today’s motion of support would go before the Commission as well. Ms. Callier replied that it takes approximately one week for meeting minutes to be produced, followed by Staff review of the document. In addition, the City Clerk must receive any Commission Agenda items by the Wednesday prior to the next Commission meeting, which would mean there may not be sufficient time to receive the minutes and place the item on the Commission’s January 18 Agenda.

Chair Mammano asked if it would be possible for Committee members to attend the January 18 meeting and inform the Commission that their motion was made. Ms. Callier confirmed that any resident may attend this upcoming meeting and provide comments.

Boyd Corbin, member of the public, stated that the unsolicited bids referred to earlier are already “out of the shade” and are a matter of public record. He added that at the most recent City Commission meeting, the Commission had indicated that at their January 18 meeting, they plan to make a decision to either accept one of the unsolicited bids or move forward in a different way regarding the construction of a new water treatment plant.

Mr. Corbin continued that City consultant Ernst and Young has also prepared a report for the Commission regarding the unsolicited proposals. He recommended that the Committee request both information on these bids and the Ernst and Young report.

Chair Mammano requested clarification of whether the unsolicited bids are now publicly available. Mr. Castellon replied that he did not believe this was the case, but he would check on this for more information.

ii. Update on the City’s response to the “Summary Report and Recommendations of the Broward County Condominium Structural Issues Committee”

Mr. Castellon stated that no update on this Item is available at this time.

iii. Update on the City’s strategy for getting Federal Infrastructure Funds

Mr. Castellon advised that Public Works is hiring an individual to assist with grant applications. They are also applying for mitigation funding from the County for projects that could be damaged in a hurricane or other climate-related event. He estimated that there are nine or ten such projects, and confirmed that the Committee can be provided with a list of these. He added that the City is applying for several grants and other funding.

Mr. Partington expressed concern that the City’s lobbyists need to be briefed on the City’s grant needs and priorities. Mr. Walters requested clarification of the grant assistant’s

responsibilities. Mr. Castellon replied that the assistant will write the grant applications and coordinate their submission.

Chair Mammano asked if it would be possible for the Committee to meet with the City's state and/or federal lobbyists. She also requested clarification of the City's "key priority projects," and asked that Public Works Director Alan Dodd attend the next meeting to discuss the issue of grants further. Mr. LaBrie proposed inviting the City Manager to address the Committee regarding the City's grant strategy.

Ms. Scott asked if the City already has an individual on staff who pursues grants, noting that the addition of a Public Works grant assistant would mean there is now one more such individual who focuses on that Department alone. Mr. Castellon confirmed this. Ms. Scott asked if the City's grant employee has been able to secure any grants specifically related to infrastructure and Public Works. Mr. Castellon confirmed this as well. Chair Mammano asked if a representative of the City's Grant Department could also be asked to attend a future meeting.

Mr. Partington commented that he was still not clear on how the addition of a Public Works grant writer would proceed with seeking state and federal grant funds. Mr. Castellon advised that the City Manager and Public Works Director Alan Dodd would be more familiar with this information. Chair Mammano asserted again that the Committee needed to speak with the City Manager at their next meeting.

iv. Update on the Resolution reestablishing the Infrastructure Task Force Advisory Committee

Mr. Castellon reported that the Resolution continuing the ITFAC has been approved and is awaiting the City Manager's signature. This Resolution extends the existence of the Committee for another three years.

5. New Business

It was noted that New Business had been discussed earlier.

6. Public Works Update

i. Water & Sewer Breaks Report 2021 w/Mapping

Mr. Castellon stated that the Committee members' backup materials included a report on these breaks from January-December 2021. He noted that only six breaks in water infrastructure occurred throughout the entire year, and most breaks occurred in smaller pipes. Mr. Partington added that the last significant sewer main break occurred in October, spilling 1500 gallons.

Mr. Castellon continued that only a small portion of the City's main sewer line remains unaddressed, and will be repaired as part of the Consent Order before 2026.

Chair Mammano suggested that consultant Hazen and Sawyer be invited to attend a future meeting to provide an update on how many of the high-risk areas they had identified have been addressed.

Chair Mammano noted that the City Commission will soon be asked to approve the second \$200 million in bond funding. Mr. Castellon confirmed that the paperwork for this next approval is already underway.

ii. CIP Financial Report

1. Unfunded Balance Account

Mr. Partington expressed concern that the balance of unspent funds does not change significantly month over month. He noted in particular the \$15.7 million balance for upgrades to the Fiveash plant, asking if some of these funds might be freed up depending upon what happens with the unsolicited public-private partnership (P3) proposals. Mr. Castellon replied that if all of these funds are not needed for Fiveash, they would be transferred to other critical projects. He emphasized, however, that it is not yet known how much of this balance may be needed for Fiveash improvements.

Mr. Zeltman recalled that the Committee had previously discussed a proposal for a sixth injection well system at the George T. Lohmeyer plant. Because I&I is currently being addressed, this additional well may not be required. He asked if there has been any indication that I&I is less severe than it once was. Mr. Castellon replied that at present, the sixth well is not needed, and continued work on I&I is expected to eliminate the need for a sixth well. He cautioned, however, that it is possible that the population may continue to increase 20 to 30 years in the future, at which point the additional capacity of a sixth well would be needed.

Mr. Castellon continued that there has been significant improvement in I&I in places where this issue has been addressed. He noted that Hazen and Sawyer has prepared a report that quantifies this difference. Chair Mammano stated that when Hazen and Sawyer addresses the Committee in the future, the Committee would also like to hear their analysis of the impact the I&I work has made. Mr. Zeltman noted that part of this impact is reflected in the City's pump stations, which now pump for shorter periods due to the reduction in I&I.

Mr. Grabski asked if Hazen and Sawyer has prepared a map showing the infrastructure that has been lined thus far as well as what still needs to be addressed in the future. Mr. Castellon advised that the consultant has prepared a map of the six critical basins included in the Consent Order; other basins, which the City is addressing on its own, are being tracked by the City itself.

Mr. Partington addressed an item in the backup materials which shows a \$14 million balance for an effluent pump standby generator and administration building at the Lohmeyer plant. Mr. Castellon replied that this project is currently in the planning phase. Most of these dollars would be used toward the standby generator, while a small amount may have been set aside for improvements to the administration building. He noted that he would need to look into this item further to determine how it was budgeted and how the \$14 million figure was calculated.

Mr. LaBrie requested additional information on the water/sewer fee report included in the members' backup materials. Chair Mammano explained that impact fees are collected from developers and may only be used toward new projects. The report shows the projects toward which these funds have been used.

iii. Impact Fees – Usage

Chair Mammano commented that since the state of Florida has amended its regulations regarding the use of impact fees, the use of these fees is now being reported in the CIP on a project-by-project basis.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 4:14 p.m.

Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]