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MEDIA RELEASE

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CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT WILL NOT CALL FOR WORKSHOP ON DREDGING

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – Our port is an asset for our city and region, and we need to ensure that our region remains competitive. I am confident that we can continue to pursue a balanced approach regarding harbor deepening so we can grow our economy and support international trade while also protecting our environment.

Two of my eighteen colleagues on the City Council have asked me to consider holding a workshop to facilitate public dialogue and further vetting of the dredging project. After evaluating information made available from several years of public consideration of the project, and the recent requests noted above, I have concluded that calling for a public workshop would not be appropriate for the following reasons:

1. JAXPORT is an independent authority of the City of Jacksonville, whose Board appointed by the Governor and Mayor voted to proceed with the harbor deepening project. As such, the harbor deepening project is underway;
2. JAXPORT has not requested any funding during either the 2016-2017 or 2017-2018 fiscal years to proceed with the harbor deepening project, i.e. there is no funding request before the Jacksonville City Council for the harbor deepening project and there is no legislation before the Jacksonville City Council related to the harbor deepening project requiring a vote;
3. Per JAXPORT Interim CEO Eric Green, JAXPORT may not ever make a request of the City of Jacksonville for funding of the harbor deepening project, i.e. JAXPORT may independently fund the harbor deepening project through other funding sources;
4. Per General Counsel Jason Gabriel, the City Council cannot command JAXPORT or its Board to stop the harbor deepening project;

5. The St. Johns Riverkeeper has sued the Army Corps of Engineers, a lawsuit to which JAXPORT formally intervened and became party as host to the harbor deepening project;
6. I have had meetings with the St. Johns Riverkeeper, Riverkeeper advocates, and JAXPORT officials, in which each party asserts the other party is using incorrect numbers and assumptions in the analysis of economic benefits and environmental concerns regarding the harbor deepening project;
7. As a result of the active lawsuit, the Army Corps of Engineers will not be present to respond to questions about the work they performed or reports they issued in connection with the harbor deepening project;
8. On the advice of both General Counsel Jason Gabriel and third-party counsel hired by the General Counsel, JAXPORT will not participate in a public discussion regarding the harbor deepening project in light of the active lawsuit regarding the same matter;
9. The funding requirements of the project and related implications on Jacksonville taxpayers are not certain or known, are continuing to evolve, and may never materialize; and
10. The harbor deepening project has been under public consideration and discussion for 8+ years, including being a hot topic of inquiry during my campaign for office.

Under the above circumstances, I do not believe a public workshop and/or discussion by the City Council will yield results to the satisfaction of those requesting the same, nor do I believe a public discussion will yield an outcome different than the path on which we currently find ourselves. Therefore, I will not sponsor or hold public workshops at this time. JAXPORT Interim CEO Eric Green has made the commitment to participate in public discussions regarding the harbor deepening project upon resolution of the current lawsuit, at which time I will evaluate all of the relevant circumstances and consider sponsoring or holding a public workshop.