

The Florida Times-Union

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\$2

JTA DEMONSTRATES DRIVERLESS VEHICLES

Metro, B-1



WOMEN GO ON STRIKE IN U.S. TO SHOW THEIR CLOUT

Nation, B-6



OVER FOUR DECADES, RIVER RUN ATTIRE AND GEAR HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY

Sports, C-1

JaxPort CEO unexpectedly resigns

Board reveals few details of Taylor's departure during impromptu meeting

By Sebastian Kitchen & Nate Monroe
The Times-Union

JaxPort CEO Brian Taylor resigned Wednesday as the port authority nears construction of one of the

largest projects in its history. This is the second unexpected departure of the port's chief executive officer in four years.

It's not clear why Taylor is leaving or whether he was forced out, but port



JaxPort CEO Brian Taylor resigned. It was not clear why he was leaving.

board members quickly moved forward with little public discussion on the issue.

JaxPort board Chairman Jim Citrano announced

the resignation during a hastily called board meeting Wednesday afternoon, only saying the port and Taylor, who was not in the room, "have agreed to part ways." The board voted 6-1 to approve the separation with Taylor. Board member John Baker opposed the move, and said he's in the dark about the reasons for the departure.

"Brian will pursue other business opportunities," Citrano said.

The board voted unanimously to make senior government affairs director Eric Green the interim CEO. Some board members had expressed concern about making the port's lobbyist, whose efforts the agency relies upon significantly in finding money for

its long-desired project to deepen the St. Johns River, the chief executive. The port will hire a search firm and conduct a national hunt for a permanent replacement.

It has been just a week since Taylor — the former maritime executive hired in 2013 to help shepherd

TAYLOR continues on A-8

Jags outline challenges

Team's performance turning off fans, hurting TV ratings

By Ryan O'Halloran
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Stepping behind the lectern Wednesday morning inside EverBank Field's West Club, Jaguars President Mark Lamping began with a warning.

"You're going to hear some good news and you're going to hear some not-so-good-news," Lamping said. "You're going to come to the conclusion that there may be some reasons for concern and you're going to hear a lot of reasons for tremendous optimism."

With that, Lamping began his 53-minute presentation during the Jaguars' fifth annual State of the Franchise event attended by Mayor Lenny Curry, city leaders, team owner Shad Khan and dozens of team employees, including Executive Vice President Tom Coughlin and the entire coaching staff.

Some of the data was similar to the Jaguars' on-field product over the last decade: disappointing.

Fan interest had steadily increased from when Khan bought the team in 2012 through the end of the 2015 season. Fans believed the Jaguars were poised to improve in 2016. Instead, the Jaguars got worse, finishing 3-13.

"I do want to be clear: I remain extremely unsatisfied with our performance last year, and our disappointment predates the 2016 season," Khan said. "That's why you see Tom Coughlin here and why Doug Marrone is our head



Jaguars owner Shad Khan speaks during the State of the Franchise presentation Wednesday at EverBank Field. (Will Dickey/Florida Times-Union)

JAGUARS continues on A-4

Shipyards plan from Khan 1 of 3 submitted

Details of proposals not released by city, citing state law on proposals

By David Bauerlein
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A stretch of downtown waterfront where tired ships once sat in rusty drydocks would be transformed under an ambitious plan detailed Wednesday by Jacksonville Jaguars owner Shad Khan.

His Iguana Investments Florida LLC plans a massive development stretching south of Bay Street and west from EverBank Field all the way to the unfinished Berkman Plaza II building. Renderings show an "exhibition space," a hotel and spa, residences, a mixed-use entertainment area, a Veterans Park, three marinas, a kids zone and a berth for the museum ship USS Adams.

The Iguana plan was one of three submitted for consideration by the city's 2 p.m. deadline. The other proposals came from Presidium Group LLC and Wess Holdings LLC. Details of the proposals were not released by the city, which cited a state law keeping them confidential until a decision is made on the top-ranked firm.

Presidium Group is a Texas-based real estate development company that is about to break into the Jacksonville market by building luxury apartments in the St. Johns Town Center area. Its proposal for the downtown riverfront land is based largely on a plan that a Ponte Vedra real estate development firm put forward in 2013

SHIPYARDS continues on A-4

Search resumes at cold case suspect's homes

Friends react with shock to mental health counselor's arrest in 1994 slaying of Yulee teen

By Eileen Kelley & Garrett Pelican
The Times-Union

He rose from a bench he shared with other recently jailed men, and with bound hands and feet, he shuffled in

his jail-issued sandals across the floor until he found the spot smack dab in front of the judge.

She told 60-year-old Ronnie Leon Hyde there was probable cause to keep him in jail and that for now no bond will be

set before his next court date March 29. His lips parted as he began to speak before a judge told him Wednesday was not the time.

Andrew Strum, 31, sat in disbelief as the man he credited with saving his marriage shuffled off behind a large door

SEARCH continues on A-4



An FBI crew removes evidence from the Jacksonville Beach home of Ronnie Leon Hyde, who was arrested Tuesday in the 1994 death of Fred Laster. (Bob Mack/Florida Times-Union)

Weather
Partly cloudy
Forecast on A-2

77 Today's high

51 Friday morning's low

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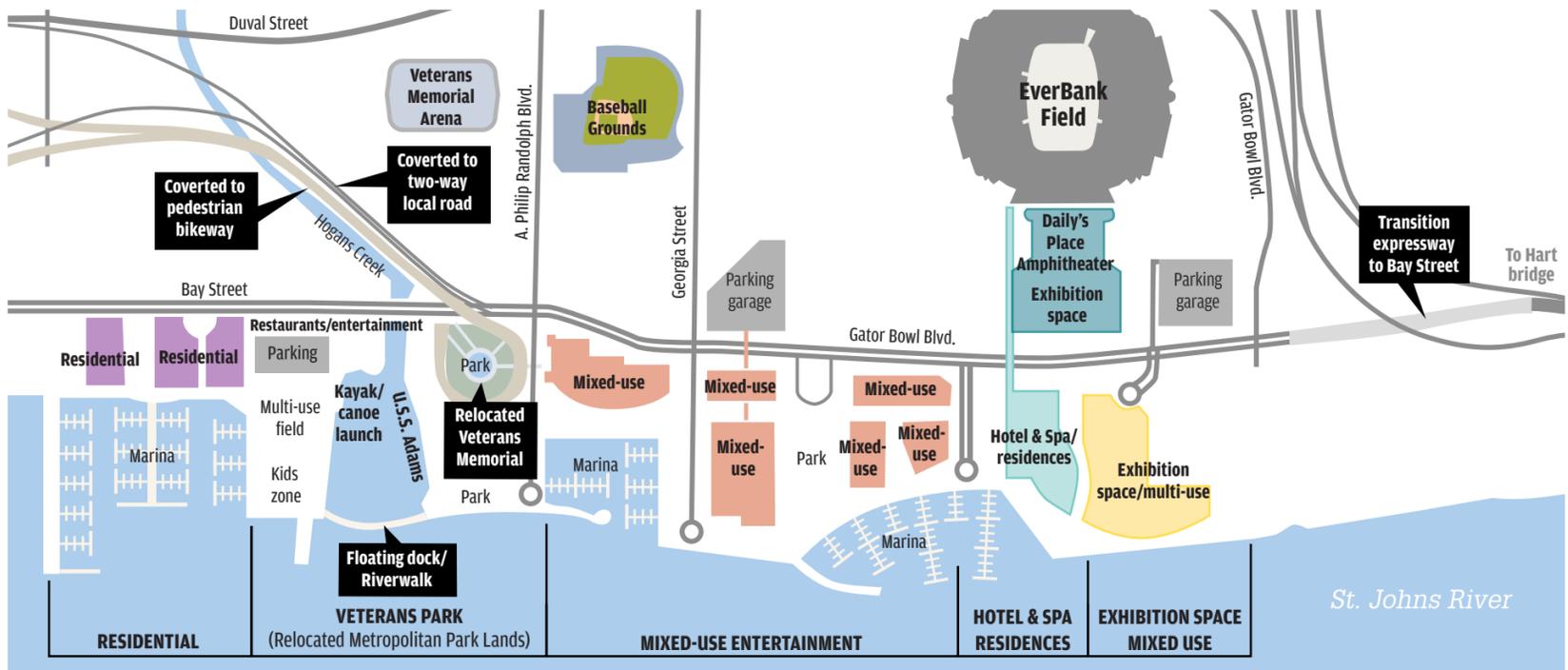
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Khan's vision for the river

Jaguars owner Shad Khan on Wednesday unveiled his newest proposal for bringing a mix of parks and private development, including a high-end hotel, to 70 acres covering The Shipyards and Metropolitan Park. His plan assumes a portion of the elevated road to the Hart Bridge is torn down. It would replace green space lost at Met Park with public parks elsewhere on the riverfront tract.



Source: Iguana Investments

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SHIPYARDS

Continued from A-1

for a mixed-used development anchored by Seaglass Tower, a 1,000-foot-tall observation tower billed at the time as an attraction that would bring tourists into the city as they passed through on Interstate 95.

Wess Holdings could not be reached for comment.

Speaking during the team's annual State of the Franchise event, Khan acknowledged the team's persistent struggles on the field, but said, "off the field the Jacksonville Jaguars are as dynamic as any team in the NFL." He added, "As goes downtown Jacksonville, so goes the Jacksonville Jaguars. We are one."

Later he was much more forceful. "The five years I've been here, well, downtown is dying," he said. "We've had national media here, and I hear from them all the time, they came through downtown, the images, there isn't a Starbucks. Somebody walked in and sort of teed off that they couldn't find a Starbucks on their way down here. Sounds ridiculous, but it's true. Images is what drives Jacksonville's image. This should be real change. This is going to bring Jacksonville back to life."

Khan made his fortune in the auto-parts manufacturing business, but he has branched out with purchases such as the Jaguars five years ago and the \$171 million acquisition of the Four Seasons Hotel Toronto last



Jaguars President Mark Lamping talks about the proposed Shipyards project while standing against a projection of an artist's rendering. (Will Dickey/Florida Times-Union)

September.

Khan said it would be great if the high-end hotel envisioned in Iguana Investments' plan ends up being a Four Seasons, though he added it remains to be seen whether Four Seasons would pick Jacksonville.

"I think we need to be aspirational," he told reporters after the event. "There's nothing like that in Jacksonville. You are defined by the highest-end experience you have, so to me, that would be the logical brand for us."

He said the Four Seasons has hotels in some of the best mixed-use developments anywhere, so the hotelier has a "secret recipe that we want to learn."

During the State of the Franchise, team President Mark Lamping explained the plan, calling the development the organization's most ambitious to date.

"We're excited about what this can do for downtown and for our goal of having a successful, sus-

tainable NFL franchise in Jacksonville," Lamping said. "We know this project will take many years to complete, but we're ready to get started."

He said, "Our plans are for a classic, mixed-use development where people can play, where they work, where they can live."

He acknowledged past plans for the property have failed to come to fruition as well as environmental issues in previously industrial areas.

"We're being very aggressive about interfacing with the river," Lamping said. "Our concept is we have this wonderful river, let's help people use the river."

Conceptual renderings of the project show Bay Street as a paw-printed surface street lined with palms and pedestrians. The vision for the planned Veterans Park along the river has a fountain at its center and a location next to the Adams, a decommis-

NO MAYPORT BIDS

The city and JaxPort came up empty-handed Wednesday in the quest for development of 8 acres of riverfront land in Mayport.

JaxPort bought the property for a potential cruise terminal but later shelved that idea. JaxPort joined the city in advertising the property for development as a collection of restaurants and shops that would welcome tourists looking for "small seaside village amenities." But no companies submitted bids to purchase or lease the land by the 2 p.m. deadline, which means the property will remain in its fenced-off condition until some use is identified for it.

sioned post-World War II era destroyer now berthed in Philadelphia that a group wants to bring here as a museum.

Asked later by reporters when the project might begin, Lamping said, "It would take us probably 60 days at least to work through a development agreement with the city. Is it possible that if we were selected, could we have some actual construction activity in early 2018? I don't think that would be a stretch."

He said it might take five or six years to complete the project, adding, "to the degree that the improvements are well received then that will accelerate the development."

Iguana Investments will face competition from Presidium Group when the city

picks a top-ranked firm to enter negotiations on a development agreement.

Presidium's bid came together quickly after Cross Mocerri, who co-founded the firm in 2002, flew into Jacksonville for meetings about JTB, a planned 350-unit apartment complex on the Southside, and happened to see a newspaper story about the approaching deadline for submitting bids on the downtown riverfront property. Mocerri asked Killashee Investments owner Mark Farrell, who is a partner in the apartment project, about it, and Farrell drove him directly from the airport to the site, Farrell said Wednesday.

"We went to the site and he said, 'We want in,'" Farrell said. "I told them it's tough sledding. It's not easy competition. They said, 'We face that all the time.'"

Farrell said Presidium has invested \$1.25 billion in real estate since 2002, including more than \$200 million last year with \$400 million under contract this year.

"They're a very financially capable of pulling off this project," Farrell said. "They're very dynamic."

Farrell and Killashee Investments put forward their own proposal for the riverfront property in 2013, so Farrell quickly dusted off that plan and made it the foundation for Presidium's bid, with some additions.

Along with the USS Adams docked at the river-

front, Presidium envisions a world-class fine arts museum, an aquarium and the 1,000-foot-tall Seaglass Tower as attraction bringing people downtown on a daily basis. Future phases would be for a convention center and then retail followed by residential.

The long stretch of riverfront property where shipyards once dominated has brought equal measures of inspiration and frustration to Jacksonville's grand plans for downtown.

The first attempt in the early 2000s ended in a messy legal battle over how the developer used city dollars. The Great Recession killed the second attempt by another developer when it declared bankruptcy during the real estate crisis.

Khan and Iguana Investments got the nod in 2015 for the third attempt, but it never really got off the ground because the city didn't have a fully funded plan for cleaning up environmental contamination left over from the era when The Shipyards property was a working shipyard.

This time around, the city expanded beyond The Shipyards to also put Metropolitan Park on the table as a potential development site, which expanded the land area. The addition of Met Park also enables the development to be closer to Daily's Place, the new amphitheater and flex field being built with financing by the city and Khan next to EverBank Field.

JAGUARS

Continued from A-1

coach."

Realizing the franchise was in a critical state - all of the stadium improvements and off-the-field progress has been great, but needs to be matched by more wins - Khan fired coach Gus Bradley in December, hired Coughlin to run the football operations and promoted Marrone.

Last year's exercise in futility had an impact on the Jaguars' analytics:

■ The local fan penetration - NFL fans who list the Jaguars as their favorite team - fell from 40.4 percent (27th in the league) to 36.2 percent (28th).
"We obviously want

that number to grow - our highest was 50 percent in 2000," Lamping said.

■ Overall fan penetration - people in Jacksonville who are NFL fans - fell from 67.4 percent (11th in the league) to 65.4 percent (14th), still above the average of 58.9 percent.

■ The Jaguars' television ratings, percentage of televisions on their games, fell from 23.3 in 2015 (22nd in the league) to 19.9 last year (24th). The average league television rating was 26.1, down from 28.3 in 2015.

"Way too big of a drop in local TV ratings," Lamping said. "What you normally see in small markets across the NFL are TV ratings that are generally a lot higher than the average NFL rating - Buffalo, Green

Bay and even New Orleans are examples. Some of it is team performance, but it's not all team performance. If you put a great product on the field, the TV ratings are going to be great; if you're not, given all of the other opportunities in northeast Florida and southeast Georgia, the TV ratings will be challenged."

■ The portion of the Jaguars' local revenue represented by their annual game in London fell from 12.4 percent to 11.1 percent. In 2013, the Jaguars' first year playing in London, the game represented 15.3 percent of their local revenue.

"Is that something we should be concerned about? I don't think so," said Lamping, who cited the foreign exchange rate

as the main reason for the decrease.

The Jaguars' overall local revenue experienced an 8.6 percent increase.

Each year at the State of the Franchise event, the Jaguars have rolled out development plans for the stadium and surrounding area, from the video boards and club-seat renovation inside to the Daily's Place amphitheater/indoor practice facility and Shipyards proposal outside. But there was definitely a more subdued feeling after Lamping's presentation, like the business side has done about as much as it could to create more revenue without the benefit of a winning team.

But it wasn't all doom and gloom. The presence

of Coughlin has contributed to that. The last time this franchise won consistently, in the late 1990s, he was the coach.

"Tom Coughlin represents everything the Jaguars stood for and again stands for on the field," Khan said. "We're all looking forward to what Tom will mean to the Jaguars in his return to Jacksonville."

The Jaguars feel Coughlin's arrival helped the season-ticket renewal rate; fans who did before Feb. 28 paid the same price as last year.

Lamping wouldn't reveal the season-ticket renewal rate, saying only it was a "sizable percentage ... actually very similar to last year." If fans renew now, they will experience a

7-percent increase.

The Jaguars also plan on a revenue spike because of Daily's Place, which will open May 27 and host 35 events between then and the end of the year.

"This is going to bring a lot of people to downtown Jacksonville, and we think it will be financially successful. Just as importantly, it will add to the quality of life downtown and encourage more people to visit, work and live downtown," Lamping said.

Lamping said the Jaguars can't just "snap our fingers," and add 1 million people to the market. What can help the team's revenue is fielding a team that isn't out of playoff contention by Halloween.

SEARCH

Continued from A-1

at the Duval County jail where he is being held on a murder charge in the death of 16-year-old Fred Paul Laster.

"It's too much to wrap my head around," said Strum, who said he received counseling twice a week from Hyde over the past 2½ years.

Laster seemingly vanished in June 1994. Around the same time, a woman walking her dog discovered a meticulously cut and freshly washed torso of a young white teenage boy discarded behind a Lake City gas station. Two decades passed before authorities learned that the torso was all that remained of Laster. Also discarded in the heap were expensive knives, a mattress pad, la-

tex gloves and a flannel shirt, the latter of which proved to be beneficial with a DNA link that eventually matched to Hyde. A witness told authorities she saw a muscle car backed up, with the driver's door and trunk ajar, to the trash bin June 5, 1994. Hyde drove a Camaro.

Hyde, a former youth pastor to Laster and his siblings who also was a mental health counselor, was arrested Tuesday.

"This just brings tears to my eyes. My heart goes out to the family. I'm praying for the family of this poor murdered, disfigured person," Strum said.

On Wednesday, authorities were back at two of Hyde's properties in Jacksonville and Jacksonville Beach using ground-penetrating radar to help determine whether anything

was buried on the property. Hyde was previously named a suspect in an international child exploitation case, officials with the FBI said Tuesday. No details of that case were released.

Amanda Warford, spokeswoman for Jacksonville's FBI office, said people have been calling the office and providing agents with information on Hyde. She declined to elaborate.

Laster's family issued a statement Wednesday: "We, the immediate family of Fred Paul Laster, have gathered together at this time to support each other as we experience the intense emotions caused by the heartbreaking loss of Freddy and the arrest of his killer."

"We appreciate the thoughts and prayers of the community, and wish to thank our law enforce-

ment personnel and support agencies for their diligence and perseverance in this case.

"Although some extended family has chosen to make statements to the media, we, his father and siblings, decline to be interviewed at this time. We request privacy as we grieve and focus on laying Freddy to rest. Thank you for your understanding."

Understanding is something Hyde embodied, said Reginald Touchton, a mental health counselor who spent several years working alongside him.

"He was compassionate. He was empathetic," he said.

Over the years, the two bonded about self-medicating with alcohol because each of them was molested growing up, Touchton said. Strum also said Hyde told him he had been molested.

Authorities won't disclose whether Laster and Hyde had a sexual relationship. But Laster's sister recalled seeing an unclothed Hyde trying to wake her brother one night when the two of them spent the night at Hyde's home.

An official missing person's report was taken in February 1995. In that report, a sibling of Laster told police she was turned away when she went to the Nassau County Sheriff's Office to file a missing person's report shortly after her brother's disappearance. Under-sheriff George Lueders said Wednesday the agency has no information related to that claim. The sibling said she filed a report with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office around the same time in 1994, though no apparent record existed until 1995.

A lengthy arrest warrant for Hyde suggests that Laster frequently left his family home in Yulee and usually went to Jacksonville Beach, where Hyde lived.

Touchton said he felt sick to his stomach Tuesday after learning about Hyde's arrest. "This doesn't match the person that I know," he said.

Hyde attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Texas. At one point in his life he served on an evangelical team of singers and preachers, Touchton said.

Anyone with information is asked to call the FBI at (904) 248-7000.

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